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The verb *logizomai* to reckon means to account, and the aorist tense expresses a decisive mental act; he made up his mind after thinking the matter over, that God could actually raise the dead; that was a general principle in his mind. Abraham's faith anticipated the death and the resurrection of the child of promise. *Dunatos*, 'able', signifies powerful; this is more than possibility, it here ascribes power to God.

'In a parable' meant not a parable of speech but of the details of the event. *Parabolē* means a laying alongside, and signifies, not a figure, but something that resembles or corresponds to another. Thus the giving back of the offering to the offerer without the slaying, was in parabolic act a resurrection.

Verse 20. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things to come.—This introduces three instances of faith exercised at the time of death. The 'even' suggests the natural difficulty of grasping as facts things of the future and therefore unseen. The blessing Isaac gave was an act of assurance that God would fulfil what the blessing involved.

(To be continued)

THE NEGLECTED PARABLE

By F. W. BOREHAM, D.D.

'I Am the ALPHA and the OMEGA saith the Lord God, which is and which was and which is to come, the ALMIGHTY' (Rev. 1: 18)

Here is the Neglected Parable—the 'least' of the Parables! A million sermons have been preached on the parable of the Ten Virgins, the parable of the Prodigal Son, and all the rest. But here is Christ's crowning parable, a masterpiece of imagery that He left to the last, and only unfolded from the throne of His glory.

'I am Alpha and Omega,' He said, and said repeatedly.

And, since *Alpha* is simply the first letter in the Greek alphabet, and *Omega* the last, it is as if He said: 'I am the A and the Z:

'I am the Alphabet!'

It is an arresting simile, and worthy of the closest scrutiny; yet strange to say, we seldom pay it the slightest attention. It is pleasant to reflect that He, Who loved all common and familiar

things, sparrows and ravens, lilies and wheat, took the commonplace letters that little children have to learn, and transmuted them into an exquisite symbol of His redemptive glory.

Now the alphabet rises to sudden splendour when the risen and ascended Saviour enlists it in His programme of self-revelation. Long, long ago, a startled shepherd, Moses by name, was commanded to address a nation and a throne in the Name of the Most High. He asked as to the credentials by which he might sustain so august a commission. 'Say,' he was bidden, 'say that *I AM* hath sent you!'

'*I Am—!*'

'*I Am—Who? I Am—What?*'

For centuries and centuries that question stood unanswered that sentence remained incomplete. It was a magnificent fragment. It stood like a monument that the sculptor had never lived to finish; like a poem that the poet, dying with all his music in him, had left with its closing stanzas unsung. But the Sculptor of *that* statue was not dead; the Singer of *that* song had not perished. For, behold, He liveth for evermore! And in the fulness of time, He reappeared and filled in the gap that had so long stood blank.

'*I Am—!*'

'*I Am—Who? I Am—What?*'

'*I am—the Bread of Life!*' '*I am—the Light of the World!*' '*I am—the Door!*' '*I am—the True Vine!*' '*I am—the Good Shepherd!*' '*I am—the Way, the Truth, and the Life!*' '*I am—the Resurrection and the Life!*'

And thus, verse by verse, He worked His way to the sublime climax of that closing stanza.

'*I am—Alpha and Omega!*' '*I am—A and Z!*' '*I am—the Alphabet!*' The art of symbolism can rise to no loftier altitude than that. What, I wonder, can such symbolism symbolize?

1. It is the most Sublime Revelation ever given of

The Inexhaustibility of Christ

'*I Am Alpha and Omega!*' '*I Am the Alphabet!*' I have sometimes stood in one of our great public libraries. I have surveyed with astonishment the serried ranks of English literature. I have looked up, and tier above tier, gallery above gallery, shelf

above shelf, the books climbed to the very roof, whilst, looking before me and behind me, they stretched as far as I could see. The catalogue containing the bare names of the books ran into several volumes. And what do all these tons of tomes contain? They contain simply the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, arranged and rearranged in kaleidoscopic variety.

You may tell me that Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*; you may tell me that Dickens wrote *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist* and *The Pickwick Papers*; and so on. But, in point of fact, Shakespeare, and Dickens, and all our other authors wrote nothing but with

the twenty-six letters of the alphabet

Each poet and novelist 'juggled' with the letters, shuffled them, and marshalled them in an order that they had never before assumed; but each drew upon those twenty-six letters for *every line* that he penned.

And have all these hundreds of thousands of writers, in penning these millions upon millions of books, begun *to exhaust the alphabet*? Not a bit of it! The writers of tomorrow will find the alphabet as fresh, as unworn, and as ready to their purpose as did the writers of yesterday and of the day before.

Even if our literature were multiplied a millionfold, the alphabet would be as far from depletion and depreciation when the last page had been finished as it was when the first writer seized a pen.

'*I Am—the Alphabet!*' The Saviour means that, in His redemptive fulness and splendour, HE is absolutely incapable of exhaustion. The ages may draw upon His grace; the men of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, a multitude that no man can number: a host that no statistician can count may kneel in contrition at His feet, availing themselves of His pity and pardon and peace, but they are drinking of a Fountain that can never run dry. His love is as great as His power, and knows neither measure nor end. Like the alphabet, He is *inexhaustible*.

2. It is the most Sublime Revelation ever given of

The Indispensability of Christ

Literature, with all its hoarded treasure, is as inaccessible as the 'diamonds' on the moon until *I have mastered the alphabet*. I may wander through the most gigantic and glorious libraries, with all the wealth of poetry and history and science and travel and philo-

sophy and romance ranged in bewildering luxuriance around me; but, unless I have acquired and mastered the alphabet, it is all barred and bolted against me.

No man can make anything of literature without the alphabet. And, if this neglected parable means anything, it means that, what the alphabet is to literature, *the Saviour is to life*. Without Him it is all a hopeless blank, a baffling enigma, an insoluble mystery. Just as, without the alphabet, I cannot possess myself of the treasures of literature, so, unless I first become acquainted with HIM, I can enjoy neither the choicest treasures of this life nor the radiant raptures of the life to come. I must know

the Lord Jesus Christ, the Key to life!

As the disciples discovered on the road to Emmaus, I cannot understand my Bible *unless* I take Him as the Key to it all. I cannot understand the processes of historical development until I have accorded Him the central place in the pageant of the ages. I cannot anticipate with equanimity the august unfoldings of the ages to come until I have seen the keys of the eternities swinging at His girdle. At every point, Christ is life's Supreme Indispensability.

3. It is the most Sublime Revelation ever given of

The Invincibility of Christ

He is at the beginning, that is to say, and He goes right through to the very end. There is nothing in the alphabet before A; there is nothing after Z. However remote the period at which your interpretation of the universe places the beginning of things, you will find Him there. When things first began, it was because HE began them. When the drama ends, it will be because He rings down the curtain. And, all the way through He is marshalling the pageant of the aeons. He is everlastingly in command. The story of the ages, past, present, and future, may be told in a sentence: 'Christ first, Christ last, and nought between but Christ.' Having begun, He completes; He goes right through!

I was talking to a most interesting young man who, quite evidently, is 'not far from the Kingdom of God'. 'It would be very easy,' he assured me, 'to accept the Saviour tonight; but what about tomorrow, or the day after, or some other day? I feel afraid lest I should go down like a reed before some sudden gust of temptation, and should dishonour the sacred Name I had confessed.'

To this young man I unfolded the Parable of the Alphabet: 'Do you really suppose,' I asked, that Jesus is a Saviour like that, to undertake your soul's salvation today, and drop you tomorrow, or the day after, or on some other day? Why, see, He says Himself that He is the A and the Z. What He begins, He finishes. He does not stop at F or M or R or W: He goes right through to Z. That is precisely what Paul meant when he exclaimed, '*I am confident of this very thing, that He Who hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the end.*' And that is what the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews means when he referred to Jesus as '*the Author and Finisher of our faith*'. He begins at the very beginning: He is the A; there is no element of salvation until He begins to operate upon the soul. And He persists to the very end: He is the Z; He will never surrender His sublime task until He presents the soul faultless before His Father with exceeding joy.

4. And, best of all, this neglected parable is the most Sublime Revelation ever given of

The Adaptability of Christ

Nothing on the face of the earth is as adaptable as the alphabet. No two of us are alike, yet we can each express our several individualities through the agency of the alphabet. In whatever mood I find myself, I can set pen to paper and express that mood exactly. The alphabet is the most fluid, the most accommodating, the most plastic device known to men. The lover takes these twenty-six letters and makes them the vehicle for the expression of his love; the poet transforms them into a song that shall be sung for centuries; the judge turns them into a sentence that sends a shuddering wretch to a felon's cell and the hangman's rope. What could be more adaptable than this?

And, just because of this remarkable quality in the alphabet, Jesus employs it as an emblem of Himself. He adapts Himself, with divine exactitude, to the individual needs of each of us. I do not need Him in the precise sense in which Paul needed Him, or Augustine, or Luther, or Bunyan, or Wesley, or Spurgeon. But

I need Him in a way of my own

and He can match that peculiar need of mine as the alphabet can lend itself to each separate man and mood.

To each individual, the spiritual experiences of others sound unconvincing. Their case is not my case. I may not have sinned more than others, but I have sinned differently. 'We have turned each one to his own way.' The narratives of other pilgrims do not quite reflect my condition. But the beauty of it is that, like the alphabet, Christ adapts Himself with the most perfect precision to my own peculiar and *desperate* need.

Until we have discovered the amazing facility with which Jesus can meet our distinctive yearnings and needs, we cannot possibly appreciate the power and value of the Cross. Frank Bullen tells how, when he first saw the whaling ship 'Cachalot', he thought her the most ugly and unshapely vessel on which he had ever gazed. She looked the sort of ship, he says, that had been built by the mile, and cut off by the yard. Later on, however, he obtained another view of her. In the course of an exciting adventure, he found himself floating on the back of a dead whale on an ocean that was entirely destitute of a sail. He gave himself up for lost, expecting only an agonizing and lingering death. All at once he saw a speck on the horizon. It was a ship! It was the *Cachalot*. As she bore down upon him, he says, he thought her the trimmest, daintiest, loveliest craft that he had ever seen! His *desperate need*, and her *ability to meet it*, made all the difference.

Therein lies the essential glory of the Son of God. There was a time when I looked upon the Saviour. He was to me a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and I hid, as it were, my face from Him. He was despised, and I esteemed Him not. But there came a day when I recognised that, unless the divine Saviour loomed upon my horizon, I was utterly and hopelessly undone. And, in that crucial hour, He seemed to me 'the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely'. Like the alphabet, I found that Jesus adapted Himself with the most perfect precision to my soul's deep longing. HE IS THE VERY SAVIOUR I need.—*Revelation, U.S.A.*

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