

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
Volume 25, Number 2, May 2014

“Aleph-Tau, Alpha and Omega, Even I”

“I am Alpha and Omega” (Revelation 1:8).

It would be comforting to know that the translators of the Bible were working with the original words of the sacred canon's prophets, evangelists, epistle authors, and particularly the text of Revelation. Sadly, this is not the case for many verses of scripture. The problem is particularly acute for the transmission of the text of Revelation. For example, the very important Vatican Codex (identified in scholarly works simply as “B”) does not include Revelation, however, the Ephraemi, when present, more than makes up for that in the book of Revelation. Only portions of Revelation prior to the epoch-making Nicene Council of 325 AD have been recovered, and regarding this most important book, the following is a typical quote from the scholarly community that speaks to the problems — although this author uses a jocular statement to make his point (Hobbs, Edward, “An introduction to methods of textual criticism,” in *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts*, edited by W. D. O’Flaherty, Berkeley Religious Study Series, 1979, page 5):

“The intentional changes [to Bible texts] fall into various groups; some of these are elementary things involving corrections of spelling, grammar, and style; scribes usually know better than the author, and when the text before you is the book of Revelation it’s all too easy to correct. I used to tell my students, ‘If your Greek is not better than Revelation, you will fail Greek.’ This Greek is appalling to a person who is used to reading anything else, and the temptation was to correct everything in it. And so as the middle ages go on, the copies of Revelation have better and better readings, because the scribes knew that the holy Spirit would not have inspired anything as bad, as the text that lay in front of them.”

The issue for consideration is the phrase “Alpha and Omega” that appears four times in Revelation: (1) Revelation 1:8, “I am Alpha and Omega, saith the Lord God, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” (2) Revelation 1:11 (The use of “Alpha and Omega” in this

text is spurious, per ancient manuscripts and versions). (3) Revelation 21:6, “And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” (4) Revelation 22:13, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” Correcting for the spurious reading, one sees a logical progression: 1 to 2 to 3 attributes.

While perfectly workable interpretations of these passages are possible, evidence will be presented here for these being altered from the original. The thesis here holds that “Alpha” and “Omega” may relate directly to the use of a grammatical construction in Hebrew meaning “self,” the word *ayth* or *et* (Strong’s 853). The linkage of “Alpha” and “Omega” with the Hebrew of Zechariah 12:10 comes from R1948 (March 15, 1896), as set forth by the Christian Jewish convert Joseph Rabinowitz. Of great interest is that the Sinaitic Codex Greek Bible from the 4th century provides critical support to the Rabinowitz interpretation of Revelation 1:7-8 not found elsewhere.

SCHOLAR’S RIGHTS AS PROPHETS?

The license for copyists of the scriptures to alter the words — at least for the Old Testament — is openly endorsed in the highly influential *City of God* authored by Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo. This book was authored following the fall of Rome in 410 AD and reflects the dark-

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BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service for brethren to stimulate their appreciation of the riches of God’s Word. It is published free of charge. Subscriptions will be entered for all requestors. Address: Beauties of the Truth, 6748 Breckenridge, Lisle, IL 60532. Editorial Board: Brothers Richard Doctor (Managing Editor), O. B. Elbert, Adam Kopczyk, David Rice, Tom Ruggirello, and David Stein. Online at www.BeautiesoftheTruth.org.

ening understanding of scripture. In *City of God (Civitas Dei)*, Book 15, Chapter 14, Augustine addresses the large discrepancies in chronology noted when comparing the Septuagint Greek and Masoretic Hebrew texts. These differences engendered much criticism of the Septuagint, but Augustine defends these changes:



Augustine of Hippo

“It is worth noticing that no one has in fact presumed to emend the version of the seventy translators [Septuagint] in its many variations from the Hebrew original. The reason is that the differences have not been considered deliberate falsifications, and with this view I wholeheartedly concur. Apart from the errors of copyists, there are discrepancies which may conform to and even emphasize the truth. In such cases, we may well believe that the translators were **inspired** by the divine Spirit to depart deliberately from the original, for along with their duties as scholars they had rights as **prophets** [emphasis added].”

Aquila made a new Greek translation as did some others later. It is greatly to the credit of Jerome, the translator of the Latin Vulgate, that he set the Western Latin-speaking church on a different footing. Jerome insisted on working with the original Hebrew text and did not use the Septuagint as his primary guide. In contrast, the Greek-speaking Eastern Church was later mandated to use the Septuagint by the Justinian Code of Law. Some later day adherents to the spirit of Augustine’s license are aware of Biblical manuscript variants, but argue that any change of the received text as published by Erasmus of Rotterdam is a questioning the holy Spirit’s guidance and watch care over the sacred text in the Bible. The following comes from the “Trinitarian Bible Web-site”:

“The Traditional Text of the New Testament is understood by conservative Bible-believing Christians to have been providentially preserved by God. God has promised in His Word that He would not only preserve His Word for generations to come, but that His Word was permanent and would be kept free from corruption.”

Nevertheless, the evidence is very clear that the sacred text has indeed been altered, and even corrupted, in places. At times by copyist accident, and at times in a deliberate effort to emend the scriptures to support doctrines invented by theologians centuries after the original authors had laid down their pens. There is a particularly grave warning respecting any emendations in the Apocalypse:

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the

words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19).

This warning speaks to the **reality** of emended scripture and negates the pious-sounding but unfounded and incorrect assertion that, “God has promised in His Word that He would not only preserve His Word for generations to come, but that His Word was permanent and would be kept free from corruption.”

WHAT ARE STUDENTS OF THE SCRIPTURE TO DO?

The guidance provided in R3487 seems most appropriate to Bible Students. In commenting on John 3:13 (“which is in heaven”), the author notes that: “The last three words of the 13th verse are spurious. They were not in the original manuscript, and are not found in the oldest Greek manuscript discovered about half a century ago, the Sinaitic. These words were doubtless added by some well-meaning person who wished to express his faith that the Lord had risen and ascended on high; he did not notice that the addition of these words makes nonsense as they are placed — they would make Jesus say that he was in heaven at the time he was talking to Nicodemus. How important it is that we have a knowledge of the unadulterated Word of God. We must neither add to nor take from it; and when we find, as in this case, that someone either intentionally or unintentionally added these words to the original text, we should cancel them and thus free ourselves from the confusion they would otherwise create. A similar instance of an improper addition to the Lord’s Word is found in the last verse of John’s Gospel, which is a most palpable untruth, and is omitted from the oldest Greek manuscript, the Sinaitic. Another similar case is the first sentence of Revelation 20:5. Concerning this latter see *Millennial Dawn*, Volume I, page 288, footnote.”

An additional, but more challenging suggestion appears in R1584: “It is claimed by some that the church has exercised the authority of deciding and declaring which of the various ancient writings properly belong to the sacred code as we now possess it. But the claim is utterly fallacious. ... The Old Testament Scriptures were all carefully and religiously preserved by the Jews down to the inauguration of the Christian dispensation, and then their testimony was carefully interwoven by Christ and his inspired apostles with the further developments of divine truth due in the new dispensation of the Gospel age. And they are freely quoted and referred to by them as of divine authority, while the New Testament writings are presented as supplemental to them and of equal authority and divine inspiration; and all bear the one harmonious testimony. The various books being thus linked together, so that if one were lost, the others would indicate the loss, and if a false one were supplied it would lack such endorsements and its inharmony would be manifest.”

The path for the Christian — as always — is a cautious balance. In this case, between embracing the sophistry of the higher critics on the one hand (or anything found on a random internet website), or on the other hand embracing some form of the sophistry of the ilk found at the “Trinitarian Bible Website.” An extensive review of the current scholarship on Bible manuscripts and translation by one of the brethren who serves this and other Present Truth journals faithfully may be found in the link to the RVIC, Revised Version (American Edition) Improved and Corrected, available at www.heraldmag.org.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Textual criticism is not to be approached lightly, nor is it an area where all opinions are of equal weight and validity. When the textual critic attempts to decide what the original reading of the New Testament was at a particular place in the text, this leads in a straightforward way to the study of scribal habits when copying. The changes to the original text fall into five broad categories: (1) Additions, (2) Deletions, (3) Deliberate changes to make a reading consistent and in harmony with other scriptural witnesses, (4) Deliberate changes to support a position supposed to be correct according to dogma, or (5) Attempts to clarify difficult readings.

It is hardly sufficient simply to assert that one reading is original, and that the others are therefore secondary. Rather, as is generally agreed, a prerequisite for making a rational decision is that the critic must form some hypothesis concerning the sequence of changes that have taken place in the transmission of the text at that point, and consequently must give some explanation of why the scribes altered the text in the way they did so as to create the secondary readings from the original one. The critic is thus required to examine the variants and to offer an ordering which almost without fail makes its appeal to the habits of scribes (Royse, James R., “Scribal Habits in the Transmission of New Testament Texts,” in *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts*, edited by W. D. O’Flaherty, Berkeley Religious Study Series, 1979). (See an example, next column.)

RABINOWITZ ON “ALPHA” AND “OMEGA”

Rabinowitz was born on September 23, 1837 in Rezina, Bessarabia, Russian Empire, and lived in Kishinev, now the capital of the Moldova. He died in Kishinev on 17 May, 1899. His ministry has attracted sufficient scholarly interest so that there are historical studies and biographies devoted to him.¹ He was a member of the Jewish Christian congregation in Russia. Bro. Russell met him both on his travels to Europe as well as when Joseph Rabinowitz visited the United States. There are nine citations in the Watchtowers linked to his name.² The short note in R1948 is quoted in full:

“Mr. Rabinowitz says the Jews have kept up great questionings and controversies about the meaning of Zechariah 12:10. ‘They shall look upon **me** whom they

“His Kingdom” and Variants

It will be helpful to look at an actual New Testament variant for Luke 12:31 that Royse uses to illustrate how the principles of textual criticism are applied within the scholarly community.

(1) Luke 12:31 exists in a cleanly written section of papyrus (P⁷⁵) from the second century about year 200. This papyrus stands alone as the earliest extant record of this passage: “But rather seek ye the kingdom; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

(2) The codices Sinaitic (aleph), Vatican (B), and the scribe of the Bezae (D) in addition to a number of other significant witnesses read: “But rather seek ye the kingdom of him; and all these things shall be added unto you.” This is the textual reading adopted in the RVIC2000.

(3) The P⁴⁵ from the 3rd century, the Alexandrian codex (A), a “corrector” of Bezae (D), in addition to some other significant witnesses, carry the reading as it was most widely copied in the West. Bezae (D) is typically held to be the chief Greek witness to the Western “textus receptus.” The earliest “Textus Receptus” manuscript is 5th century. Erasmus issued three print editions of this text; interestingly, the first two omitted the extra words of 1 John 5:7-8! “But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.” This is the textual reading used in the King James Bible.

(4) By the time we reach the 15th century, manuscript 1253 has the reading: “... the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”

Greek manuscripts of the fifteenth century manuscript may be explained in a straightforward way. It appears as though the text has been altered to make it harmonize more closely to the parallel synoptic passage in Matthew 6:33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Similarly, the reading “of God” in variant 3 provides a clear interpretation of either of the first two readings given. Reason suggests that few copyists would take a clear text of Variant 3 and purposely make it less understandable by altering it to variant 2. There is also the possibility that a word was accidentally dropped for variant 1. The reading “the kingdom of him” or, in less stilted English, “his kingdom,” has the weight of many of the most significant witnesses and so seems reasonable. Or this may be an example of well-intended emendation to improve the understanding of a text. None of these variations suggest any malicious intent to add to the word of God. Nevertheless, recalling the grave warning of the Apocalypse, we still wish to seek the original text.

have pierced.’ They will not admit that it is Jehovah whom they have pierced, hence the dispute as to who is meant. Mr. Rabinowitz points out that the word used consists of the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, Aleph Tay [a variant pronunciation of “Tav” or “Tau”] and adds: ‘Do you wonder, then, that I was filled with awe and astonishment when I opened to Revelation 1:7,8, and read these words of Zechariah quoted by John, ‘Behold, he cometh ... and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him,’ and then heard the glorified Lord saying ... ‘I am the Alpha and Omega.’ Jesus seemed to say to me, ‘Do you doubt who it is you have pierced? I am the Aleph Tay, the Alpha Omega.’ “

Possibly, the appellation “Mr.” Rabinowitz suggests concerns on the part of Pastor Russell that Rabinowitz had espoused Trinitarian belief.³ The Hebrew of Zechariah 12:10 must be understood in the same way as the words from our Lord to St. Paul on the road to Damascus: “And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, ‘Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?’ And he said, ‘Who art thou, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom thou persecutest’ “ (Acts 9:3-5).

As in the human body, the pain for any of the Lord’s body members is felt directly by the head. The pains Jesus suffered were felt by his Heavenly Father.

HEBREW STUDIES FOLLOWING THE TWO WARS OF THE JEWS WITH ROME

If any credence is to be given to the Rabinowitz interpretation, what does this imply about the original text? In answer, it implies that some original construction in the Greek text of Revelation was attempting to convey a point of emphasis based on an allusion to Hebrew Grammar. However, such subtleties would have been lost in the non-Aramaic speaking part of the Roman Empire. As we shall soon show, this subtlety was never lost in the Syriac church who spoke Aramaic.

However, for Greeks and Latin speakers, learning the language of the Old Testament was not considered of importance in the Roman Empire. Both the writings of the church fathers and the political sentiment within the Roman Empire had a high degree of hostility to everything Jewish following the two costly and disastrous wars fought between the Jews and the Roman Empire in 70 AD and 135 AD. Writing about the hard fought campaign that destroyed the temple in AD 70, Tacitus adds fuel to the engine of anti-Semitism that would bring misery to the Jewish people for centuries to come (Tacitus, *The Histories*, “The Jews”, Chapter 4, published 105-108 AD in installments):

“Moses prescribed for them a novel religion quite different from those of the rest of mankind. Among the Jews all things are profane that we hold to be sacred ... The other practices of the Jews are sinister and revolting, and

have entrenched themselves by their very wickedness. Wretches of the most abandoned kind who had no use for the religion of their fathers took to contributing dues and free-will offerings to swell the Jewish exchequer; and other reasons for their increasing wealth may be found in their stubborn loyalty and ready benevolence towards brother Jews, but the rest of the world they confront with the hatred reserved for enemies.”

After the costlier and more devastating campaign against the Bar Kochba rebellion of 135 AD these words of Tacitus would be viewed as mild within the Roman Empire. Both the Greek and the Latin churches had an animosity towards anything Jewish and were unstudied in it.

LINK TO THE HEBREW CONSTRUCTION

How does the Alpha and Omega link to the Hebrew construction of Zechariah 12:10? What is significant here is the insight from Rabinowitz saying that Alpha and Omega equates to the Hebrew particle *ayth* (*’et*) (Strong’s 853). An examination of the Greek alphabet will show that “Alpha” is the first letter and “Omega” is the last letter, and an examination of the Hebrew alphabet will show “Aleph” is the first letter and “Tav” is the last letter.

The Strong’s definition of *ayth* (*’et*) (Strong’s 853) is not easy to follow since it concerns the use of Hebrew Grammar.⁴ However, that definition notes this particle provides the reader with direction. That is, the particle *ayth* (*’et*) serves to “point out” the grammatical construction of the sentence, but is left “unrepresented,” or untranslated. Green’s Hebrew interlinear of the Zechariah 12:10 text shows this to be the case.⁵



Zechariah 12:10, Green's Interlinear

The sense of *ayth* is that it means “even I,” or, “even whom.”

SYRIAC BIBLE TESTIMONY

Since Aramaic as spoken by our Lord and the Apostles continued to be the native tongue of the Syriac church, this subtlety of Aleph-Tau was never lost on them. The Syriac of Revelation 1:8 does not use Alpha and Omega at all, but rather “Aleph-Tau.” Just as Rabinowitz intuited

it should! While it does read only “Alpha and Omega” for Revelation 1:11 (likely because it was a later addition to the Greek!); it makes a special point in both Revelation 21:6, “I am Aleph-Tau, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end” and Revelation 22:13, “I am Aleph-Tau, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end” (Lamsa, George, *The New Testament according to the Eastern Text*, Holman, 1940).

SINAITIC TEXT FOR REVELATION 1:7-8

Early manuscripts for Revelation have been very challenging to locate. The Codex Sinaiticus, one of the best copies of the entire Bible from antiquity, follows the Nicean Council and is considered to be from the mid 4th century. The Sinaitic Codex is an “Alexandrian text-type” manuscript; that is to say, it is written in uncial letters (all capitals) on parchment. There are no spaces between the words. It resided in the library of Saint Catherine’s Monastery at the foot of Mt. Sinai until it came to the wider attention of scholars in the 19th century through the efforts of Constantin von Tischendorf. An interlinear translation of the section of the codex pertaining to Revelation 1:8 is shown.

<p>CHAPTER 1</p> <p>8 εγω ειμι το αλφα και εγω και το I am the alpha even I and the</p> <p>ω αρχη και τελος λεγει κς omega beginning and ending says [a] Lord</p> <p>ο θς ο ων και ο ην και ο the God the being and the was and the</p> <p>ερχομενος ο παντοκρατωρ. coming the ruler of all</p>
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Revelation 1:8, Sinaitic

Before addressing the issue of the Alpha and Omega, a few comments on the text may be helpful. The disagreement between texts again points to the troubling nature of the copyists understanding this scripture.

“KAI” FOR “EVEN” IN JOHN’S WRITINGS

Considerable scholarship has been devoted to the non-standard Greek construction of the grammar in the Apocalypse and there is a general consensus that these deviations from standard grammar — as Greek might be used in Athens — is the result of the author trying to take Hebrew constructions and render them in Greek. One of these non-standard grammar issues is that John frequently uses the Greek word *kai*, which normally is translated “and.” John uses it in the sense of “even.” The word *kai* appears in a critical way in Revelation 1:8 where it needs



The bulk of the Sinaitic Codex is in the British Library, but parts are at three other libraries. The text has been virtually reassembled at www.codexsinaiticus.org.

be translated “even I.” Some examples of *kai* meaning “even” are:

Revelation 17:11, “and the beast that was, and is not, **even** he is the eighth.” Revelation 18:6, “Reward her **even** as she rewarded you.” John 7:37 “And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that **even** this man should not have died?” John 8:25, “Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, **even** the same that I said unto you from the beginning.”

While Greek does permit this use of *kai* as “even,” (e.g. see Liddell & Scott) it is not typical in classical Greek.

SINAITIC SUPPORT FOR ALEPH-TAU

Now looking at the quotation of this text in Revelation, the Sinaitic in contrast to all the other surviving manuscripts follows the word “Alpha” with the two Greek words “*kai* ego.” In translation, “even I.”

These two words were an attempt to convey the sense of the Hebrew *et*. Yet, if you do not know the Hebrew, these additional words seemingly make no sense. Hence, a later editor placed a series of dots under these two words signifying that they should be ignored and not included. The Sinaitic and Alexandrian texts of Revelation differ on the reading of these scriptures in Revelation and this suggests that there was something problematical in the transmission of the original text. It should be noted that neither the Wilson Diaglott nor any other translator could refer to Vatican 1209 (Codex Vaticanus) for these verses because it does not contain Revelation.

However, as noted by Rabinowitz, the intent of using Alpha and Omega, or *et*, was precisely to indicate that “Alpha and Omega” meant “even I.” To a thoroughly Greek-speaking group of monks at St. Catherine’s monastery caring for the Sinaitic Codex for over 15 centuries, but for the most part unstudied in the Old Testament in the original Hebrew, the subtlety of the intent was lost. It was not noticed again until Rabinowitz — who was approaching the text as a rabbi thoroughly schooled in the Hebrew — saw the intent of the Greek in a clear light. (See Inset, following page.)

“A Beginning and an Ending”

Not all Bible texts contain this phrase, and we need to consider it. In Revelation 1:8 the Latin Vulgate Bible, and hence the King James Version, contain the phrase “the beginning and the ending.” However, most modern texts omit this phrase following the discovery of the Ephraemi Codex in the 1830s. Because the phrase presents Trinitarians with a challenge. It negates the Athanasian Creed, and Trinitarian-believing scholars were glad to see it go. The Sinaitic scribe suggests that it is part of the original text (although the first corrector — a contemporary — omits it).

“Saith Lord [the God]” and “the Almighty”

Here, Bible Student interpretations have gone two directions. On the one hand some have said that this phrase refers to Jesus. On the other hand, some assert that this is a quote from the mouth of Jehovah and that He is asserting His authority. The interpretation advocated by Pastor Russell and Bro. Streeter asserted that these two titles are scriptural when applied to our glorified Lord Jesus Christ. That approach appears to work out well, the reasons being that the phrase “The God” refers not only to Jehovah, but also to Satan, “the God of this world,” see 2 Corinthians 4:4. Since “all power on Heaven and Earth” has been given to Jesus (Matthew 28:18), “almighty” is appropriate while recognizing that this power is circumscribed within the limits set forth in 1 Corinthians 15:27-28.

As noted, Revelation 1:8 shows some variations among the best manuscripts, and this can best be interpreted as the intent of the writer **not** being at all clear to the copyists. Each copyist would feel obligated to provide some form of the text that made sense. The best sense appears to be that set forth in the brief note from Rabinowitz as supported by the Codex Sinaiticus (the original scribe, but not the first corrector), and the best reading of the text is:

I am the Aleph-Tau [from the Syriac]; [the *et* of Zechariah 12:10] “Alpha” and the “Omega” — even I — the beginning and the ending says a [the] Lord God, the “one being,” and the “one who was,” and the “one coming,” the “ruler-of-all.”

— Br. Richard Doctor

(1) I. Fauerholdt: Joseph Rabinowitsch. A prophetic figure of the modern Judaism, in: Small writings on the Jewish mission, Volume 8, Leipzig 1914; Kai Kjaer-Hansen: Josef Rabinowitsch og den messianske bevægelse. Forlaget Okay-Bog, Århus 1988. English translation: Joseph Rabinowitz and the Messianic Movement. The Heart of Jewish Christianity, Handsel Press [u.a.], Edinburgh 1995, ISBN

1-871828-37-6 and ISBN 0-8028-0859-X. There are several variants on the spelling of the name “Rabinowitz” because he lived in Russian-controlled Moldova and his name is transliterated from Cyrillic.

(2) R703, 750, 1035, 1302, 1325, 1559, 1589, 1918, 1948.

(3) There are sufficient reasons for concern about Rabinowitz drifting toward Trinitarian belief. For example, the famed 19th century evangelist Dwight L. Moody invited Rabinowitz to Chicago to see if the Jewish Messianic Christian Ministry could be expanded. Doubtless the two would have spoken about how closely the views of Rabinowitz conformed to “orthodox” Christian belief. Following these meetings with Moody, Rabinowitz returned via Pittsburgh and met with Bro. Russell. This visit is related in R1559 that calls Rabinowitz “Brother” consistently. R1948 represents the last reported communication between Pastor Russell and Mr. Rabinowitz. Rabinowitz died three years later in 1899.

(4) Strong’s Concordance definition of *ayth* (*et*, or *eth*) (Strong’s 853): Apparently contracted from 226 (*oth*, a signal) in the demonstrative sense of entity; properly, “self” (but generally used to point out more definitely the object of a verb or preposition, “even or namely”): — (as such unrepresented in English.)

(5) Green, Jay P., *The Interlinear Hebrew-Greek English Bible*, Associated Publishers and Authors, Wilmington, DE (1976). (So also Kohlenberger.)

A Different View of Alpha and Omega

As soon as it is recognized that “A and Ω” is not supported by any of the ancient and best manuscripts of Revelation 1:11, the need goes away to allow that expression to apply to Jesus, rather than always to God.¹ What results is a progression from 1:8, “I am the A and the Ω,” to adding “the beginning and the end” (21:6), to adding “the first and the last” (22:13). Perhaps there is a progression from the Gospel age to the Millennial age to the Eternal Kingdom.

— Br. James Parkinson

(1) Only two unnotable manuscripts of Revelation 1:8, 1894 (12th century) and 2049 (16th century), read “the Lord,” while 195 manuscripts read “the Lord God.” Critical editions of the Greek New Testament now also reject the additions, “the first and last” in verse 8, and “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, and” in verse 11.



John the Revelator, with Peter, entering the tomb of Jesus

The Prophecy of Obadiah

“How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!” (Obadiah 1:6).

Obadiah’s prophecy relates the judgment to come on symbolic Edom, which symbolizes Christendom. There appear to be four aspects of Edom in prophecy:

- (1) EDOM = Christendom overall — Political, Religious, Civil, Financial, Social, etc.
- (2) BOZRAH (Capital of Edom) = Religious Segment of Christendom
- (3) MOUNT SEIR = Civil Governments of Christendom
- (4) TEMAN = Church State Union of Christendom.

EDOM AS THE POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, CIVIL, FINANCIAL, AND SOCIAL ELEMENTS OF CHRISTENDOM

Edom was the name given to Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, after he sold his birthright (Genesis 25:29-34). The name was subsequently applied both to the people descended from him and to the country in which they settled. Consequently, the name Edom is an appropriate symbol of a class who, in this age, have similarly sold their birthright; and that, too, for a consideration as trifling as the mess of pottage which influenced Esau. The name is frequently used by the prophets to refer to that great group of professed Christians that is sometimes called “the Christian World,” and “Christendom” (i.e., Christ’s Kingdom). In Volume 4, page 17, the symbolic Edom of prophecy corresponds to the symbolic Babylon of Revelation. This may also be found in the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

BOZRAH AS THE RELIGIOUS SEGMENT OF CHRISTENDOM

Bozrah was the capitol of Edom. Two scripture citations from Isaiah are the foundation for the view that the Bozrah represents the religious segment of Christianity.

Isaiah 53:1-4 NIV¹ — “Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? “It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.” Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? ... “I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. For the day of vengeance was in my heart.”

Isaiah 34:6 ASV — The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, with the blood of lambs and goats ... for Jehovah hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom.”

From Volume 4, pages 17,18: “As all of the land of Edom symbolizes all of ‘Christendom,’ so its capital city, Bozrah,

represented Ecclesiasticism, the chief citadel of Christendom. The prophet represents the Lord as a victorious warrior who makes a great slaughter in Edom, and especially in Bozrah. The name Bozrah signifies ‘sheepfold.’ Bozrah is even yet noted for its goats, and the slaughter of this day of vengeance is said to be of the ‘lambs and goats’ (Isaiah 34:6). The goats would correspond to the ‘tares,’ while the lambs would represent the tribulation saints (Revelation 7:14; 1 Corinthians 3:1).”

MOUNT SEIR, THE CIVIL GOVERNMENTS OF CHRISTENDOM

Joshua 24:4 — “I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it.” Genesis 36:8,9 — “Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom. And these are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in mount Seir.”² Mountains represent governments. Mt. Zion in prophecy symbolizes the Government of the Kingdom, sometimes the spiritual phase and other times the earthly phase. Mountains will melt like wax and be cast into the sea. All Governments are removed in Armageddon following the union formed of Papacy, Protestants and Civil Government:³

Revelation 16:13, 14 — “I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, (Civil Government) and out of the mouth of the beast, (Papacy) and out of the mouth of the false prophet (Protestant Church Federation). For they are the spirits of devils ... which go forth ... to gather the whole world to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

CHURCHES FALL BEFORE CIVIL GOVERNMENTS

Revelation 18:8 shows that the Churches fall first, before the civil governments. “Therefore shall her plagues come in one day ... and she (Babylon) shall be utterly burned with fire.” Revelation 18:9 shows that the Civil Governments are still on the scene. “And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.” In harmony with this, symbolic mount Seir in prophecy shows Civil Governments are the last to fall.

Ezekiel 35:3,4 NE (Ezekiel 35 is a prophecy all about mount Seir’s fall) — “Behold mount Seir, I am against you: I will make you a desolate waste ... thus you shall know that I am the LORD. For you have maintained an immemorial feud and handed over the Israelites to the sword in the hour of their doom, at the time of their final punishment.”



Obadiah, by Michelangelo

Ezekiel 35:10-13 NE — “The two nations and the two countries [Judah and Israel united] shall be mine and I will take possession of them, though the LORD has been there ... you have said, ‘The mountains of Israel are desolate [after Gog has ransacked Israel]. and have been given to us to devour.’ “

Ezekiel 35:14,15 — “These are the words of the Lord God: I will make you so desolate that the whole world will gloat [rejoice] over you. I will do to you as you did to Israel my own possession when you gloated [rejoiced] over its desolation. O [mount] Seir, you will be desolate, and it will be the end of all Edom. Thus men will know that I am the LORD.”

The churches of Babylon fall first, then afterwards, symbolic mount Seir falls, that is, the civil governments of Christendom. When this occurs it is the end of all Christendom.

TEMAN AS THE CHURCH STATE UNION OF CHRISTENDOM

Teman was the grandson of Esau. Thus Teman’s lineage descended from faithful father Abraham, through Isaac, then Esau, then Eliphaz, to Teman. Teman’s mother was the daughter of Seir, who had nothing in common with God. Thus Teman is a fitting symbol of the Church/State union. He was the offspring on one side, of the false church who were aware of God’s promises (but sold their birthright), and of the state or government who were not believers in these promises.

BOOK OF OBADIAH DEPICTS JUDGMENT OF CHRISTENDOM

Obadiah 1-6 NAS — “The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom — We have heard a report from the LORD, And an envoy has been sent among the nations saying, “Arise and let us go against her for battle.” (For God knows what she will do.)

Obadiah 2-4 NAS — “Behold, I will make you small among the nations; You are greatly despised. The arrogance of your heart has deceived you, You who live in the clefts of the rock, In the loftiness of your dwelling place, Who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to earth?’ Though you build high like the eagle, Though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down, declares the LORD.” (Christendom’s pompous arrogance is described, and God will bring down this arrogance.)

Obadiah 5,6 LB — This verse speaks to how thorough the judgment will be: “Far better it would be for you if thieves had come at night to plunder you — for they would not take everything! Or if your vineyards were robbed of all their fruit — for at least the gleanings would be left. O how Esau will be ransacked, And his hidden treasures pilaged!” (Nothing will be left.)

Obadiah 7-9 Address how the Confederacy of Christendom to be reversed. “All the men of thy confederacy ... the

men that were at peace with you, have deceived you, and prevailed against you; they who eat your bread will set an ambush for you.”

As in Revelation 17:16, the Union of Church and State will be reversed. The 10 horns picture the civil governments of Europe who were in union with the harlot supporting her throughout the age. This union will be reversed and they will destroy her.

Revelation 17:16 — “The ten horns which thou sawest and the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.”

Obadiah 8-9 NIV — The Church/State leaders are to be destroyed and the “Warriors of Teman” introduced. “In that day, declares the LORD, will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, men of understanding in the mountains of Esau? Your warriors, O Teman, will be terrified, and everyone in Esau’s mountains will be cut down in the slaughter.” Hence, all the wise men leaders of Christendom will be removed.

“WARRIORS OF TEMAN”

The “Warriors of Teman” symbolize the Armies of Christendom’s civil governments. The warriors of Teman that will be cut down on the mountains of Israel in Jacob’s Trouble aptly symbolize the armies of the church/state union of Christendom.

Obadiah 10-14 RSV. This text gives us the greatest insight into the role of Christendom in Jacob’s Trouble. “For the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. (11) On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth, and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. (12) But you should not have gloated over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; you should not have rejoiced over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin; you should not have boasted in the day of distress. (13) You should not have entered the gate of my people in the day of his calamity; you should not have gloated over his disaster in the day of his calamity; you should not have looted his goods in the day of his calamity. (14) You should not have stood at the parting of the ways to cut off his fugitives; you should not have delivered up his survivors in the day of distress.”

— Br. George Tabac (adapted from discourse handout)
(To be continued)

Financial Report

5,342.55	Balance January 1, 2013
1,402.00	Donations
-2,322.92	Expenses
<hr/>	
4,421.63	Balance January 1, 2014
615	Current subscribers