

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

BOOK 11

REVELATION 4

THE VISION OF HEAVEN

EDWARD IRVING

1831



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*Exposition of the Book of Revelation:
in a series of Lectures*
1831

Reprinted 1867 (vol. 1) and 1870 (vol. 2)

WHY THIS WORK?

The first time I came across the writings of Edward Irving, deep in the back shelves of the Theology Library at UBC (Vancouver, BC, Canada), I was deeply impressed with the unusual treatment he gave to the final book of the Bible.

He wrote as one who knew his calling, and knew that he had a message from God for his generation. Combined with that urgency, Irving had a large sense of the glory of God in Christ, and God's purposes through Christ to reveal Himself unto the world through the Church.

He also possessed a large gift for language and expression, and apparently was quite an orator, as well as being a man of great compassion and sensitivity.

His work on the book of *Revelation*, which originally comprised two volumes, but only covered the first six chapters, towers above other similar commentaries because of its unique blend of gospel and prophecy.

Coming from a church founded on the Advent movement of the mid-1800's, I was somewhat familiar with books on the prophetic parts of Scripture. Irving's commentary was nothing like those.

Whereas the standard prophetic works tended to get quagmired in historical events and details, thus dwelling on the vessel by which God's purposes were worked out, Irving kept his eye single to the glory of God, and searched into those deep purposes as far as he was able. He rightly dwelt on the treasure that was in the vessel of prophecy. Like Moses, he wanted to see God's glory, or as much as was humanly possible. And he did see much, indeed.

And because most of the treasure he unearthed is practically lost to the Church today, I have for a long time had a strong desire to make these works more widely available.

In this republication, I have taken only a few liberties: correcting and modernizing spelling and grammar in a few places (including the language in the KJV Bible references), breaking up large paragraphs and sentences, and inserting full Bible references where appropriate. I have separated the original 2-volume work into smaller books, one for each of the fifteen original lectures. Otherwise it is as Irving wrote it.

This is Edward Irving's parting gift to the Church of Christ. In his own words, from the exposition on Laodicea:

"But my confidence in truth never fails me. I know that these things are not published in vain. It is not for myself, nor for my flock, but for the church of God, that I write these things, which I pray God for His own name's sake to hasten and bless."

Gather up the fragments, that none be lost.

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Revelation 4

¹ After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up here, and I will show you things which must be hereafter.

² And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

³ And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

⁴ And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

⁵ And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

⁶ And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

⁷ And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

⁸ And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

⁹ And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, who lives for ever and ever,

¹⁰ The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that lives for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

¹¹ You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created.

CHRIST THE REDEEMER AND KING

THE single idea which we have given of this book is that it contains what its name declares, a revelation of Jesus Christ; whose person, and whose working, have since the days of his assumption been hidden within the veil of heaven.

Because Christ's person and office are very large, and many-sided, this discovery or disclosure is made by successive efforts and acts of revelation.

The first, occupying the three preceding chapters, presents in great fullness and distinctness, by Divine devices of wisdom, the aspect of Christ as our great High Priest, the only Head of the Church, the true Shepherd of the sheep, the universal Bishop of all the churches of the Living God.

That vision of the redeemed from the earth, of the whole Church militant, is deservedly placed at the head of the whole book because the Church is the beginning and the end of all revelation, but also because everything which follows of good and ill to the earth, and the kingdoms thereof, has its law and its measure from the condition and character of the Church in that time and place where it falls out.

And with all speed, therefore, because time presses, and the combination against Him strengthens apace, we do now proceed to open the second aspect of Christ's person and office, which extends over the four following chapters; and which, as in the former case, may be divided into two parts:

1. The scene of glory represented in chapters 4 and 5;
2. The act of power represented in chapters 6 and 7.

It is at the same time to be borne in mind, that chapters 4 and 5 represent the scene of glory and power within the veil, out of which comes not only the action of the seals contained in chapters 6 and 7, but likewise the whole prophetic action of the book. This scene of glory is the introduction to all

which follows.

For example: in the action of trumpets we have (*Revelation* 11:16) an allusion to this heavenly scene; although that vision of trumpets has an introduction and a scenery proper and peculiar to itself, which is the scenery of the temple.

In like manner, in the vision of the Church and the apostasy or anti-church, we have continual reference to this same common prologue or preface to the whole divine mystery (*Revelation* 14:3).

And the vision of Babylon's overthrow (*Revelation* 19:4) has respect unto the same secret observers and actors within the veil of the heavens.

With respect to the last consummation of the Church's glory, and the new earth, her redeemed inheritance, contained in the last three chapters, I hold it to be nothing else than the letting down of this heavenly scene unto the earth, and the constituting it thereon under the form of an earthly polity.

So much the more necessary then, seeing the whole book is suspended from this vision of the heavenly throne, the elders, and the living creatures, is it that we go into it with a patient and pains-taking examination: and this we will now do, if God permit.

Revelation 4

¹ After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show you things which must be hereafter.

First, as concerns the scene: It is laid in heaven, whereas the act descends from heaven to earth. The moving powers within the veil, the secret and spiritual machinery whereby the visible acts, changes, and revolutions on the earth take place, are first delineated to us; just as in the former aspect, Christ the High Priest, and the seven stars the preaching overseers of the

Churches, and the seven candlesticks the Churches, are first presented to us, before any communications of any kind take place between the invisible and the visible.

But whereas in that vision of the Head of the Church, the place where He appeared, and the out-veil raiment in which He is arrayed, and every thing else, did declare that vision to be wholly of the Church terrestrial; this, upon the other hand, in all its circumstances, as we proceed to show, declares itself to be of things celestial, as well as of things terrestrial. For after the former vision had been concluded, the seer beheld, and a door was opened in heaven; whereas, in the other case, the thing which he beheld was behind him where he stood, upon the earth (*Revelation 1:10*).

This opening of a door into heaven can mean nothing else than the purpose of God to reveal something concerning the invisible state. And seeing the title of the book, and its purport, is to reveal Jesus Christ, this door opened into the invisible must be, not to satisfy vague curiosity, nor yet merely to teach knowledge concerning invisible spirits, but to unfold the glory of Christ, and the person of Christ, as the same is beheld and felt within the veil of the heavens.

Yet inasmuch as we have seen that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning of the creation of God, for whom and by whom are all things visible and invisible, we may expect that this door opened into heaven should manifest much of the mystery of the invisible world. And this I will say, that in these two chapters, though they be but as it were introductory to the act of seals in particular, and to the use of the book in general, is contained more insight into the invisible world than is to be found in all the rest of the Scriptures put together.

Therefore let us, with the more diligence, peruse them carefully, that we may obtain correct information concerning that heaven, and those heavenly things, of which so much is

vaguely spoken according to man's fancy, and so little understood according to the revealed mind of God.

When the seer beheld the door opened in heaven, he heard at the same time a voice, the first of many which afterward proceeded, from the same heavenly region. The voice was as of a trumpet speaking with him. Such also was the voice of the Son of Man, in the former vision,—a great voice as of a trumpet; upon which text, when discoursing, we showed that the voice of Christ the Head, and the voice of the Church the body, were continually set forth by the same similitudes; because, though there be a head and a body in every person, of which both are necessary to the utterance of intelligent speech, yet there is but one voice between them.¹

The words which the voice spoke were these:

Revelation 4

¹ ...Come here, and I will show you things which must be hereafter.

² And immediately I was in the spirit...

The person here I take to be “the angel which showed me these things” (*Revelation* 20:8 and 1:1). He calls upon John to ascend up into heaven, which, by the power of the Spirit, he straightway does; for so I understand the words of the next verse, “And straightway I was in the Spirit.”

I believe John was in his senses; his ear heard a true sound like a trumpet; his eye saw a door opened in heaven, in the blue vault over our heads, and, like Philip under the power of the Spirit, he was transported into the heavenly region and saw the things which he narrates.

When I say that John saw them and heard them with his senses, I do not mean to say that the things shown to him are sensible things which exist in the invisible heavens, but that

1 See *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 3 “Christ the Universal Head and Bishop of the Church”, Chapter: “The Vision”, Section: “A Book for All Churches”, p. 9-11.

they are symbols presented to the sight which are capable of hitting the sense; symbols of things which, in themselves, are invisible, and incapable of hitting the sense.

This is not difficult to understand; it is the case of every one who is present in the theater. Conceive that some one gifted with the knowledge of futurity should be setting forth by a dramatic representation in the theater, the condition in which Great Britain shall stand some few years after we have incorporated the Papacy into our constitution, with haply a papal king, a papal Parliament, a papal Church, and everything papal predominant. Conceive a mimic throne, with mimic legates, cardinals, and others; a mimic Parliament uttering speeches, a mimic people giving expression to their sentiments: conceive the whole body of future time to be depicted, as our great tragedian has depicted the body of time past.

Now suppose that I, or any one else beholding the same, should from the window, or any other part of the theater, call to any passer-by:

“Come up hither, and I will show you things to come.”

This, to compare great things with small, would be exactly parallel with that which was spoken to John by the trumpet voice of the angel: for in both cases it is necessarily but a representation of future things; but in both cases, the representation is really made to the eye and ear of the beholder who is in his senses, and has the representation submitted to his senses.

From the expression “I will show you things which must be hereafter,” or, as it is literally, “I will show you what must be after these things,” we gather, that the facts set out under this vision are subsequent to the facts set out under the former vision; that all in the former vision which comes within the conditions of time, is anterior to all in this vision which comes within the same condition.

Now, as we have seen, the only thing put forth under conditions of time are the ten days' persecution threatened unto the Church of Smyrna, likewise the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, from which the Church of Philadelphia was to be preserved. These, we have shown, give a limitation of time to the matter-of-fact part of the former vision: for as to the general truth concerning Christ and His Church therein contained, it is spiritual and universal, and not under conditions of time; and as to the promises made to the Churches by the Spirit, they have their accomplishment not until time is no more; that is, in the eternal age, which is about to be, at the coming of the Lord.

Now these ten days of tribulation I refer to the ten persecutions of the Christian Church², and the temptations which shall come upon all the world, the last and greatest of them all, which endured likewise ten prophetic days, which is the same as ten common years.

If this interpretation be just, it gives to the former vision this specific object with respect to time—namely, to confirm, establish, and crown the Church with victory, under the persecutions which God had appointed her at the hands of Paganism. And, surely, to prepare the Church for that fiery proof was an object worthy the care of her great Bishop.

To make her triumphant over Paganism was an act in the great purpose of God, of which much is made in the sequel of this book. To the faithfulness of the martyrs under those ten persecutions is...

Revelation 12

¹⁰ ...salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

² See *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 5 "Epistle to the Church in Smyrna", Chapter: "His Second Charge", Section: "Tribulation Ten Days".

¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

¹² Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them.

Most worthy, therefore, whether as respects the mercy and loving kindness to the Church without the veil, was it that Christ should set apart a portion of this revelation to the object of confirming and strengthening his Church against the tenfold persecutions of Paganism.

Now, then, if the former vision of Christ refer to this as its temporary object, as I believe it does, then must the temporary object of this vision be the things which immediately succeed; for it is expressly said to the seer by the trumpet voice of the demonstrating angel:

“Come up hither, and I will show you what must be after these things.”

If these things be the things which happened to the Churches in their state of persecution under Paganism, as we have shown good reason for believing, then “what must be after these things” can only relate to the things which immediately succeed.

Now at the conclusion of the last Pagan persecution, and we may say without an interval of time, and what is remarkable, on the same day in distant parts of the world, the two persecuting emperors (for the empire was then divided between two) did resign the imperial dignity, and Constantius, the father of Constantine, was chosen in the room of one of them. He, shortly after dying at York, constituted his son Constantine, born of the princess royal, and heiress of the British throne, to be emperor in his stead. And this same Constantine, emerging as it were out of the last Pagan persecution, brought Pagan persecution to an end, and established Christianity, instead of Paganism, over the bounds of the Roman empire. And from this time forth the Christian Church has a new aspect,

under conditions altogether new.

We should expect, therefore, both from the language of the text and from the revolution in the condition of the Church, that what is temporary in the application of this second vision is to the time immediately consequent upon the Pagan persecution, and commencing with the era of Constantine's advancement to the imperial throne.

With respect to its place, we shall, upon grounds which cannot be disputed, and which are wholly derived from the vision itself, now demonstrate that it is the western half of the Roman empire which acknowledged Rome for its head, after the eastern part had found another head in Constantinople, which this same Constantine built to be the capital of the whole empire, and so to supplant old Rome.

But Providence had otherwise purposed, that by this act the empire should fall asunder into two parts, each under its own metropolitan city; and that this division should be the means of exhibiting a double mystery,—the one the mystery of a Church preserving the truth, but in a state of imprisonment; the other denying the truth altogether: the one of a Church in a state of apostasy: the other of a Church in a state of heresy: the one making idolatries out of truth; the other denying and altogether losing sight of the truth: the one of the Roman, the other of the Greek Church.

And God having thus provided, we have the Western empire, with Rome at its head, as the locality of this vision on which we are now entering, and we have the Eastern empire, with Constantinople at its head, as the locality of the next vision, which is the vision of Christ the Avenger, the vision of the seven trumpets of woe.

Though it be somewhat premature, and does as it were anticipate the progress of the vision, to enter upon the locality of this vision, we do it on purpose, because when laying down the time of the things that occur in this vision, it is natural to

desire likewise to know the place. The time is from the rising up of Constantine, to fight under the Cross the battles of the Church, and triumphantly to establish it upon the throne of the empire; the place is that western half of the empire which Constantine was chiefly instrumental in dividing, by the erection of another metropolitan city.

Of the time little or nothing further need be said; it is expressly after the things of the former vision. But upon the place it may be convenient to enlarge a little. For, as we have observed in our former discourses, time and place are essential elements of every prophecy. Not indeed the highest and noblest elements thereof, which are the knowledge of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the method of their dealings with the nations and cities of the earth. But forasmuch as every prophecy of Scripture needs to have some marks by which it may be known to be of God, and not of man, these marks of Divine authenticity are given to it through the conditions of place and time, which man can judge of, and by which man can know that the prophecy is of God; according to the rule given by Moses unto the children of Israel:

Deuteronomy 18

²² When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken, but the prophet has spoken it presumptuously.

In all Divine prophecies, therefore, there are conditions of time and place, whereby to ascertain the fulfillment of the word spoken, and thus to know that the whole information, instruction, and revelation built thereon for the use of men is truly from the Lord.

Having ascertained therefore the time of the act of this vision to be upon Constantine's setting up his standard of the Cross, we observe, further, with respect to the place, that it is the region called the earth, of which a fourth part was smitten

under the fourth seal, and peace was taken from it under the second seal, and vengeance was called down upon it by the martyrs under the fifth seal, and its kings and great men, and every bondman, and every free man, were astonished by the judgment of the sixth seal and the instant judgment of the seventh.

Now the question arises, and what is meant by the earth in this prophecy? We answer, not the whole world, between which and the earth a distinction is taken:

Revelation 16

¹⁴ They are the spirits of devils working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world.

Without entering at large into a matter which, I may say, has hardly been disputed, and hardly admits of a dispute, amongst those who are read in this book, we answer, that the earth, when used to express a limited space or bounds, to which some action of the book extends, always denotes the Roman territory, the dominions of the fourth beast of *Daniel*.

For example, it is said of the ten-horned beast out of the sea, which is, as we shall show, the Papal Roman empire, consisting of the ten kingdoms of the West,

Revelation 13

⁸ And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

And, in like manner, in the same chapter, all the doings of the other beast, with two horns as a lamb, and speaking as a dragon, extend to the earth (verses 12-14).

And, again, it is the region over the kings of which Babylon, the mother of harlots, ruled:

Revelation 17

¹⁸ And the woman which you saw is that great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.

²With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication; and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

From these and a great many other passages of this book, and likewise from the continuity of Daniel's prophecy, which uses the same language, "the earth," when speaking of the kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, and the Romans, we conclude that the place of this vision is the bounds of the Roman earth, that same space of the world which was under the fourth beast of *Daniel*.

Though *Daniel's* fourth kingdom be undoubtedly the entire Roman empire, which trod down those that preceded it, yet have its symbols, the ten horns and the little horn, and its more specific action, the persecution of the saints by the little horn, a more limited locality; to wit, the Western Roman empire, which fell under the overruling influence of the Papal supremacy.

The like inter-mixture of a larger and more limited locality, never passing beyond the bounds of the Roman empire, and never falling within the limits of the Papacy, should we expect to find in this book, which, as has been said, is only the continuation or enlargement of that part of the book of *Daniel* which relates to the fourth or Roman kingdom.

There is another observation, confirmatory of what has been said, which, though it may be thought somewhat out of place, we shall now add. It is, that the locality of the next vision, which is the vision of trumpets, is confined to a third part of the earth. Every act of that sevenfold judgment is limited to a third part:

Revelation 8

⁷ ...the third part of trees...

⁸ ...the third part of the sea...

¹² ...the third part of the stars...

Revelation 9

¹⁵ ...the third part of men.

Now it is known to all acquainted with history, that the Roman empire, or the prophetic earth of the *Apocalypse*, was first divided into three parts upon the death of Constantine, whereof one included Constantinople and the East: but within less than thirty years of this division it fell into another division of two parts, the East and the West: the West having Rome for its capital, and the ten kingdoms which submitted to Imperial and Papal Rome for its bounds; the East having Constantinople for its capital, and the Asiatic and Grecian dominions for its bounds. This also became the origin of the division of the Church into Greek and Latin, under which it still continues.

Now it was both due unto Constantine that the empire took the threefold division, and afterward took the twofold division; the one was appointed by his will, and the other grew out of his building of the city of Constantinople, and making it the seat of his empire. In so remarkable a manner is this first of Christian emperors implicated with this second, and likewise with the third, vision of this book.

And so much are we confirmed in making “the things which are to be hereafter” to commence from Constantine’s time; for, except to those 27 years which occurred from his death to the division of the empire into two parts, it never subsisted in three parts. So unless the visions do commence from Constantine’s time, there was no meaning in this third part which continually occurs in the vision of trumpets.

If, as some say, they commence from the beginning of the Christian era, there was then no threefold partition of the earth. If it commenced after Constantine’s time, that division had been done away with.

We therefore conclude, upon the whole, with respect to the place of the vision of seals, that it is generally the Roman

earth, but more particularly the Western, or Papal, part thereof, which for thirteen or fourteen centuries has looked to Rome as its head.

And for the locality of the vision of trumpets, we hold it to be specifically that third part of the earth whereof Constantinople was the head, and which fell to the eldest son of Constantine, and which has kept separate from Rome both by religion and by government unto this day.

Having thus, from the book itself, ascertained both the time and locality of this vision, we now proceed to show first the celestial machinery, so to speak; and, secondly, the terrestrial action thereof; whereof the former is contained in chapters 4 and 5, and the latter in chapters 6 and 7.

Revelation 4

² ...and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

The seer being transported to heaven by the Spirit, as Philip was from place to place upon the earth, and as Paul was, when he heard things unutterable in the third heaven, was permitted to see a scene which, being looked upon generally, exhibits to us that king and council, that throne and government, within the veil of which all the things that happen upon the earth are the results. But being examined particularly, which we cannot now do, but shall as we proceed, opens to us more insight into the condition of Christ, and departed saints, and angels, than all the other Scriptures besides.

The thing which the Apostle saw in heaven may be aptly denominated the vision of Christ as Prince of the kings of the earth. Here He is seated upon His Father's throne; the counselors and the executioners of His counsels are around Him; and every act which is done produces a great revolution upon that part of the earth to which the vision has respect.

It is therefore heaven and earth united, the visible and the

invisible connected, Christ and the creatures, the Church glorified and the Church militant, shown in their relations to one another, all which is within the veil of the heavens;—the secret springs, the moving causes, the guiding personages, of all which is transacted without the veil, in this visible world.

It is a scene the most glorious and the most instructive that was ever revealed to mortal eye; a scene which, under symbols taken from visible and real objects, presents unto us that knowledge of the invisible world which every soul pants after, which even the heathen sought to know, and to which ancient poets were wont to conduct the heroes of their tales.

But to us not through the corrupted tradition of ancient mythology, composed after the imagination of poets, but through revelation of the messenger of Christ and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, comes that knowledge of the invisible world through which we shall be able to discover the causes of those great revolutions in the state of Christendom, and of the world, of which history is the record, but how seldom, alas! the exposition.

As there is, however, some diversity of opinion upon the subject of this vision, whether it be the revelation of the spiritual world as it now is administered and proceeding, or whether it be the representation of that glorious state of things which is to be realized hereafter in the Millennial kingdom, I count it good to set forth the grounds upon which I prefer the former opinion.

First, as has been said above, this celestial agency is throughout the book represented as beholding, interpreting, and bringing the successive actions to pass. For example, each of the four seals is shown to the seer by one of the four living creatures (*Revelation* 6:1, 3, 5, 7), and the seventh is interpreted by one of the elders.

Now no one doubts that the seals are under the succession of time: they bear inward demonstration of this truth. Refer-

ring backward and forward to one another, and seeing that the celestial personages are contemporaneous with the parts of that action, we ought to conclude, that the state of things, the powers, and influences, and persons which they represent, are likewise in existence, to take the parts which are assigned to them. And this remark which I have made with respect to the seals may be extended to the other visions, with which I have shown above that these celestial personages do inter-commune.

Secondly, the action of the seals, which is confessedly under the condition or category of succession in time, depends entirely upon another action contained in chapter 5—the Lamb’s receiving the seven-sealed book, in which action all the celestial personages, living creatures, elders, and angels, and inferior creatures, take a part; and therefore they, and the scene in which they act, must have a priority of time to the actions which depend upon them.

The elders and living creatures sing their song of redemption when He receives the book, and then also do the angels and inferior creatures bring up their offering of homage and worship.

Now the book must be received into the hands of the Lamb before any of its seals are opened, and therefore the celestial action of chapter 5, to which the celestial scene of chapter 4 is the introduction, or rather preparation, must be prior to the action of chapters 6 and 7, and therefore prior to all the rest of the book.

Thirdly, with respect to the difficulties of conceiving where heaven is, and what is the state of the separate soul, and where is its place, and other questions of the like kind, they concern me not, as an interpreter of this symbolical vision and symbolical action; which I do not consider to be either in conditions of time or place, though I have argued above that it is prior in time to the following acts, or, rather, that it has an

existence all the while of their coming into existence.

It is not a history that is contained in chapters 4 and 5, but it is an idea, or representation, of those powers in the invisible world through the causation and instrumentality of which the historical visions are brought to pass. It is a continual presence of celestial agency, revealing itself in a succession of outward events; and the office of an interpreter is to lay out the persons, prerogatives, and mutual dependencies, of these celestial powers, and the parts which it is given them to perform in the historical events which follow. And this, the legitimate office of the interpreter who trembles at God's word, I will by His grace endeavor to perform.

HE UPON THE THRONE

First he saw a throne, and upon the throne one seated; this is "the throne of God in the heavens," of which so much is spoken in the Old Testament:

Psalm 103

¹ The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all.

And in the New Testament also:

Matthew 5

³⁴ Swear not by heaven, for it is God's throne...

Acts 7

⁴⁹ Heaven is my throne...

And to this throne Christ has already made distinct allusion in the last words of the preceding vision:

Revelation 3

²¹ To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.

With these words the former vision concludes; and as if to link them together, as if to make the next vision the argument

and illustration of that which went before, this begins with the description of that heavenly throne, and of Him who sat upon it.

Now, if so be, according to Christ's own declaration, that He is set down upon His Father's throne, whom should we expect to find seated there but Christ Himself? And yet in the Psalm so oft referred to in the New Testament as the great authority upon this subject, the Father says unto Christ:

Psalm 110

¹ ...Sit at my right hand, until I make Your enemies Your foot-stool.

By which words we have Christ advanced unto...

Hebrews 8

¹ ...the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.

And, again, in *Psalm 2*, where the kings of the earth and their peoples are represented in confederacy against Jehovah and His Anointed, it is said:

Psalm 2

⁴ He that sits in the heavens shall laugh; Jehovah shall have them in derision.

Here Jehovah, or the Father, in contradistinction to the Son, is represented as sitting in the throne; for He speaks next concerning Christ:

Psalm 2

⁶ Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.

The Father's throne is in the heavens, and Christ's throne is on Mount Zion. So, in like manner, in the passage already quoted from the former vision Christ makes a distinction between His own throne to be established against a future time upon the earth, not for Himself alone, but for every one who overcomes, and His Father's throne now in the heavens, occupied by His Father and Himself.

There can be no doubt, from these passages of Scripture, that the throne in heaven is properly the throne of the Father, and the throne which is hereafter to be established upon Mount Zion is the throne of Christ.

And, likewise, Christ, who is hereafter to occupy the throne of David promised to Him in all the Scriptures, presently occupies in heaven the throne of the Father; not indeed alone, but at the Father's right hand; with, or beside, the Father.

Are we then, from this the concurrent language of Scripture, to look for two persons seated upon the throne of the heavens? It may not so be expected, because the Father no one has seen, neither can see. He is essentially invisible, incomprehensible; not within the region of creation, nor within the region of the senses, ever to come.

If then the Father, as retaining in His person the uncontained essence of the Godhead, be not by sense, nor yet by comprehension, to be taken in, what are we to expect to find upon the throne which is set in heaven? We are to expect to find thereon the person of the Father, represented in the Son. In the Son, under symbols proper to His incarnation, not as light, but as a man, must the glory of the Father now be exhibited upon the throne.

Under the former dispensation God was exhibited in that most holy place, which was the symbol of the heavens, by light, because Christ was the Light. But now that the Light has become the life of man, now that the Life has become manifested in our nature, and been taken up to the throne of the Father, we must expect to behold the Father manifested through the risen glorified body of Jesus.

It is the Father's invisible person becoming manifest on the throne of heaven through the enthroned Christ. And thus we have the Father and Christ upon the throne: Christ the visible, the Father the invisible; yet, though invisible, revealing what of Himself can be revealed through Christ.

I am the more particular upon this point, because Christ Himself appears in this same heavenly scene as a Lamb that had been slain; and in this character He receives the sealed book out of the hands of Him that sits upon the throne: and to these two persons, to Him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb, are the adorations and exaltations of heaven ascribed. Likewise also the Holy Spirit has His place in this representation of the invisible world, being the seven lamps before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

It is necessary therefore, I think, most distinctly to be remembered, that the person represented upon the throne is the Father, that the person represented in the Lamb is the Son, and the person represented in the seven lamps of fire is the Holy Ghost; all indeed represented under symbols derived from Christ, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, so that it could be said:

John 14

⁹ ...he that has seen me has seen the Father...

John 16

¹³ Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come.

¹⁴ He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

As in the days of His flesh, when wishing to be shown the Father, a certain disciple was directed to look upon Christ:

John 14

⁹ Have I been so long with you, Philip, and you say, Show us the Father?

So I say unto you, if you would know how the Father is beheld by the hosts of heaven, look upon Him, even Christ, seated upon the throne, and say unto yourselves:

“He that has seen Him has seen the Father.”

Revelation 4

³ And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone...

Literally, a stone of jasper and sardine, by which I understand, not that one part of Him was like a jasper and another part like a sardine, but that altogether His aspect was like the combination of a jasper and a sardine. Let us now examine what that combination is, and what truth is revealed under this symbol.

The sardine is the color of flesh, or blood red, by common consent; but the jasper is thus described by the Lord:

Revelation 21

¹¹ ...New Jerusalem, having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper, clear as crystal.

These two, therefore, combined together give us the aspect of flesh beaming forth the light and glory of God; being, as I take it, the best representation which can be given of the appearance of the spiritual body arrayed with its celestial glory, God manifested in glorified flesh unto the celestial, as unto us on the earth He was manifested of the earth, earthy.

THE NAZARITE

Illustrative of this the appearance of the King of heaven, I find two passages in the Old Testament; the one in the *Lamentations of Jeremiah*, and the other in the *Prophecies of Ezekiel*. In the *Book of Lamentations* the appearance of the Nazarite, in the day of Jerusalem's glory, is thus described:

Lamentations 4

⁷ Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies; their polishing was of sapphire.

Here also is the flesh-red color of the ruby, the pure white of the jasper, with the relucant polish of the sapphire. Now

the law of the Nazarite, as it is contained in *Numbers* 6, had reference to the body, and to that only; prohibiting the use of strong drink, by which it is enervated and shriveled up, and likewise prohibiting the use of the razor, as the representative of those arts decorative of the outward person which show themselves, age after age, in such fantastical varieties.

The arts of man, by which he seeks to give inward vigor and outward beauty, being thus cut off, and the Nazarite separated to God, God showed what He could make of him, how fair and comely, and pure and mighty:

“purer than snow, whiter than milk more ruddy in body than rubies; their polishing of sapphire.”

And by this ordinance God did give in flesh a lively presentation of that beauty, and glory, and might, to which the human body should come, when it was wholly taken out of the hands of others, separated from the dead, and devoted to Himself, which it will be in the resurrection. The ordinance of the Nazarite, blessed as it was, of God with such surpassing beauty of body, I consider as a standing type of the resurrection body, which shall be fashioned after the likeness of Christ’s glorious body:

Philippians 3

²¹ Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

This is the reason, as I take it, why the person seated on the heavenly throne is described in His appearance by language so similar to that in which the Nazarite is described by the Prophet Jeremiah.

That it is the resurrection body of Christ which is seated in the throne of heaven, I know for certain from what is written in *Ephesians* 1. This is not written of His Divinity, nor yet of His reasonable soul, but of His body in particular, for that

only was raised from the dead:

Ephesians 1

²⁰ Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places,

²¹ Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

²² And has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church,

²³ Which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.

And accordingly, when the heavens, with their principalities, are revealed to us, the first thing we see is One upon the throne, who to look upon is like a jasper and sardine stone. Now that this identification of Christ with the Nazarite is correct I have other good reasons for believing.

First, because in the days of His flesh He was not a Nazarite, but was reproached for His indiscriminate use of the kindly fruits of the earth:

Luke 7

³⁴ The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and you say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

Moreover we know that when He shall come again, He will drink of the juice of the grape with His disciples:

Matthew 26

²⁹ But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

If therefore at any time He gathers up into Himself this ordinance of the Nazarite, as He does every other, it must be during the period of His session at the right hand of God, even that period which is represented in the vision before us.

The Nazarite surely, like every other ordinance, must testify

of Jesus: He is the end of it. But the Nazarite He was not during the days of His flesh, nor is to be when He comes again: therefore the Nazarite He must be in His present exaltation.

To abstain from wine was the chief part of the Nazarite's vow. To this perhaps also refers what He said:

John 17

¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself [that is, *set myself apart*] that they also might be sanctified through Your truth.

Wherein I think is declared that the one end for which His body was sanctified and separated from all sinful, mortal, and corruptible properties by the resurrection, and the one occupation which it should during its separateness be taken up with, was to sanctify those who believe, to make them perfect in one, and to advance them to the fellowship of His glory, even as He speaks in the passage referred to.

It answers well with the office of the Nazarite to see Christ as the only body, separate from death, through which the Father deigns to execute His purpose, in which the Father dwells, and which is altogether devoted to the Father.

On these accounts I incline to believe, that the embodied Christ upon the throne of God, like a sardine and a jasper, is the antitype of the Nazarite; and that the appearance which is given to Him in the text is for the purpose of teaching us this, along with other truths.

Believing, as I do, that this is the true interpretation of the appearance of Him who sat upon the throne, it furnishes us with the key to the history of Samson, the mighty Nazarite of God, who was given to Manoah and his wife (*Judges 13*), with such glorious circumstances as attend not upon the birth of any other of the Old Testament saints, excepting only Isaac.

If, as we have shown, Christ became the Nazarite upon His ascension into glory, and continues so until His return unto the earth, we must find the beginning and the ending, and all

the particulars, of Samson's history realized within that period of our Lord's being.

Now the first action of Samson's life is the extraordinary, and even unlawful, desire which he had for a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines, which answers to our Lord, upon His ascension into glory, seeking His spouse, His bride, from the uncircumcised Gentiles.

But, before this is accomplished, a lion roars against Samson, which he rent as he would have rent a kid; signifying the resistance made by the Pagan empire of Rome, which Christ had to subvert before He did attain His purpose amongst the Gentile nations.

Out of the carcase of this lion came forth sweetness and nourishment; signifying, as I take it, the delight and strength which flowed to Christ from the Gentiles, after that the wild beast of Paganism was overthrown.

Now the second act of Samson's life is his wrath and revenge upon the Philistines, for depriving him of his wife, which I conceive to be the act of Christ's vengeance upon the nations, for corrupting His Church, and marrying her to the kings of the earth.

And behold how this act of vengeance proceeds, by burning up their standing corn in the time of the wheat harvest, making it to them a harvest of wrath, instead of a harvest of joy, which answers to all the Scriptures; as, for example:

Joel 3

¹³ Put you in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.

Zechariah 12

⁶ In that day will I make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand, and on the left.

Matthew 13

⁴⁰ As therefore the tares are gathered, and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world.

⁴¹ The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

⁴² And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This battle with burning and fuel of fire being accomplished, the Philistines make war upon the people of Judah; and Samson smites them with the jaw-bone of an ass, out of which in his thirst flowed to him abundance of refreshing water. If I err not, this signifies the destruction of the Gentile apostate lords by the word of the testimony of a few despised preachers of Christ, who are in His hand as the jaw-bone of the ass in the hand of Samson. And from the same word of testimony which destroys the nations proceeds the living water which refreshes the heart of the Lord, when His work of judgment is past and over.

Psalm 110

⁷ He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head.

This now is the first act of the Nazarite's life, in which, as I think, is contained under a type the act and history of our great Nazarite, in respect to His wife whom He takes to Himself from amongst the uncircumcised.

And now we come to the other act of Samson's life, separated from the former by a period of twenty years; and under which we believe the same great action of the mighty Nazarite, from His ascension to His coming again, is set forth with somewhat different emblems.

It consists of two scenes, being both scenes of love, the loves of the Nazarite;—the one for a woman in Gaza, which was a harlot; to whom having gone in, the people of Gaza

thought to have destroyed him in the morning, but in the midnight he arose and carried the gates of the city upon his shoulder to the top of a hill before Hebron.

If I err not, this is Christ in His love coming to the harlot city of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 1

²¹ How is the faithful city become a harlot?

And when they would have destroyed Him, carrying off the gates of hell and of the grave, and ascending into the place of David's government before He reigned in Jerusalem.

Thereafter, and apparently without any great interval, he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah, which if the former signify the Jewish Church, in whose service he carried off the gates of death and hell, then this must signify the Gentile Church, to whom the Lord be-took Himself after Judah would not be His.

And behold Delilah lends her ear to the lords of the Philistines; as the Gentile Church has forsaken her Nazarite, her sanctified and separated one, of whom she has been beloved, and given herself to the kings of the earth: the end of which treachery is, that the seven locks, where was the hiding of Samson's strength, being cut off, he becomes to them a miserable drudge.

Which being interpreted is, that our mighty Nazarite having by the treacherous dealing of the Church been stripped of His seven-horned or royal power, as King of kings and Lord of lords, the kings of the earth do use His name and His religion for bringing to pass all their vile machinations against truth, equity, mercy, and peace.

But at length, in the close of the Nazarite's day, their iniquity rises to such a pitch of daring, that they will use the Lord's Christ for the entertainment of their idol pageantry,—whereupon, at length wearied out, the mighty Nazarite comes

down upon them with hideous ruin.

And so comes to an end the action of His Nazarite condition: teaching us, that when Christ comes forth from His state of separation at the right hand of God and concludes His Nazarite life, it shall be with the destruction and ruin of those apostate kings and judges of the earth who have appropriated His names and attributes, and used them for the service of their idol.

Such is a brief view of the mystery of the Nazarite, which some may think more ingenious than judicious, and which I give rather as the materials for an exposition than an exposition itself. To the students of the Old Testament, who have some insight into its method, these remarks will not seem unprofitable, though by others they be regarded as foolishness.

THE VISION OF EZEKIEL

The other passage in the Old Testament, with a view to which the appearance of Him who sat upon the throne, as well as the whole of these two chapters, is manifestly written, is that glorious vision which occurs ever and anon in the Prophet Ezekiel, and which is written at large in the first chapter thereof.

As the prophetic part of the *Apocalypse* acknowledges the vision of chapter 4 and 5, so the book of *Ezekiel* acknowledges the vision of chapter 1 as the master-key of the events described, the secret moving cause of them all.

To this vision of Ezekiel, the wheels, and living creatures, and enthroned one, we have already referred both in our first and in our third Lecture.³

3 See *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 1 “Name, Authority, Substance, and Sanctions of the Book”, Chapter: “The Substance and Method of the Book”, Section: “Christ Gathering His Church”, p. 99-100; and Book 3 “Christ the Universal Head and Bishop of the Church”, Chapter: “The Vision”, Section: “His Voice”, p. 77-85.

Now the vision of Ezekiel is after this sort: a firmament with an appearance of a throne and a man above it, supported by the living creatures and the wheels beneath it. The living creatures supported upon their heads and wings a firmament:

Ezekiel 1

²⁶ And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

²⁷ And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it: from the appearance of His loins even upward, and from the appearance of His loins even downward, I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

²⁸ As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord; and when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spoke.

This enthroned one, there can be no doubt, is the same with the enthroned one of the text; and indeed the whole of these two visions have so many points of resemblance, as ever to have been regarded as representing the same things and mutually illustrative of one another. And in the exposition which follows we shall have much use to make of the vision which Ezekiel saw by the river of Chebar.

Now, in the verses quoted above, the man who sat upon the throne is called the “likeness of the glory of Jehovah”, and in chapter 10 it is written:

Ezekiel 10

¹⁹ And the glory of the God of Israel was over the cherubim above.

²⁰ This is the living creature that I saw under Elohim of Israel, by the river Chebar, and I knew that they were the cherubim.

There can be no doubt then that the person seen by Ezekiel

is He who dwelt between the cherubim, whose glory first appeared to Moses in the bush, when also He took His name of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

In His humility, in the appearance of His fleshly tabernacle, He ate, and walked, and talked with Abraham on the plains of Mamre; and in the same appearance He wrestled with Jacob at the brook Jabbok.

But when He appeared unto Moses, with a high hand to deliver His people out of Egypt, He appeared in His glory, and in that glory He marched in the heavens by His name Jah; in which pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, though a man appeared not, yet that a man was there is declared in the Covenant itself:

Exodus 23

²⁰ Behold, I send an Angel before you, to keep you in the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.

²¹ Beware of Him, and obey His voice; provoke Him not: for He will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in Him.

²² But if you shall indeed obey His voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto your enemies, and an adversary unto your adversaries.

²³ For my Angel shall go before you, and bring you in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.

This Angel of the Covenant is the same with Him of whom Jacob speaks in his blessing of Joseph's sons:

Genesis 48

¹⁶ The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

And this is the same with the man with whom he wrestled, and with whom he had various intercourse in all his wander-

ings.

The same also is it who appeared unto Joshua, as the Captain or Leader of the Lord's host, who in the same place is called Jehovah, and stood as a man over against Joshua, as a man with a sword drawn in his hand (*Joshua* 4:13).

Of this the Angel of the Covenant, who dwelt in the cloud that rested upon the wings of the cherubim of the most holy place, Ezekiel had the appearance presented to him. It was not the very glory, because the Son had not yet assumed the form of man. It was not the likeness of the glory, which did not come into existence until the resurrection of Christ from the dead, who then became the brightness of the glory of God (*Hebrews* 1:3). But it was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah; it was an exhibition or showing beforehand of that form in which God's glory should in the fullness of time appear.

Now the Apostle John sees the reality of that, of which Ezekiel saw the appearance. It was not the appearance of a man which John saw, but a man. Ezekiel saw only the appearance of a man, teaching us this great truth, which we have so often asserted, that though the Son acted from the beginning in the character of the incarnate God, He had not taken to Him any creature substance, but only appearances thereof, to accomplish the ends of God.

But from the Incarnation it was no more appearance, but very truth: wherefore it is written:

John 1

¹⁷ ...truth came by Jesus Christ.

And again:

John 14

⁶ ...I am...the Truth.

That is, the Verity of all types, ordinances, and appearances.

Now the appearance which Ezekiel saw he describes as the color of amber outward, and as the appearance of fire inward; that is, as I understand, the ground-color was red, and the brightness emanating from the ground was as amber, which together form the best resemblance that can be had from the material of fire to that flesh which John saw, in color as a sardine stone, blood red, with an effulgence like that of jasper, which is clear as crystal, and as the glory of God.

Ezekiel's representation is made altogether with the element of fire, which in the Old Testament is the standing symbol of the glory of Jehovah. But in the New Testament it is expressed, without a symbol, by glorified flesh.

And so much have we to say with respect to the appearance of Him that sat upon the throne; and methinks it ought to teach us a lesson of the dignity and glory to which this our mortal tabernacle shall yet be advanced. For though, as has been said, no one shall or can sit upon that throne of heaven, save He alone who is God as well as man, yet shall we who are raised from the dead surely be like Him in that glorified body in which He now subsists.

Philippians 3

²⁰ For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

²¹ Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.

1 John 3

² Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

This now is what flesh shall come to, when mortality and corruption, and weakness and dishonor, are expelled out of it. We are now wearing the image of the earthy; we shall then wear the image of the heavenly.

THE RAINBOW

Revelation 4

³ ...and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

So also in the corresponding vision of *Ezekiel*:

Ezekiel 1

²⁸ As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.

This is no more an accidental or ornamental accompaniment of the throne, given, as it were, for beautiful effect; but, as we shall see of everything else in this book, a Divine appropriation for the risen God-man of another great department of the goodness and providence of God, whereof the rainbow is in Scripture the standing sign and symbol.

Nor is it difficult to discover of what it is the sign and symbol. We have only to refer to the 9th chapter of *Genesis*, and read with faith the words which are written:

Genesis 9

¹² And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

¹³ I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

¹⁴ And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:

¹⁵ And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

¹⁶ And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

¹⁷ And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

We may not doubt, after reading these verses, that the rainbow is as sacredly and certainly the sign and seal of the covenant made with Noah, as circumcision is of that made with Abraham, and baptism of that made with Abraham's seed, which is Christ.

The rainbow from this time forth is not common, but a holy thing in the works of God, being unto mankind the seal of a covenant which still endures. What that covenant was given to secure is now the question. This also is written in plain, simple, and intelligible language:

Genesis 9

⁸ And God spoke unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,

⁹ And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

¹⁰ And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.

¹¹ And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

These verses give us to understand that the covenant whereof the rainbow is the standing memorial concerns the preservation of the earth, and nothing else.

It is an everlasting covenant (*Genesis* 9:12, 16), for the security of animal life, and of the earth whereon it is sustained. Against the destruction of the earth with a flood it is a security forever and forever. And I think also it is a security for the earth's perpetual endurance, and for the perpetual endurance of animal life, in all those varieties in which they were originally created and made.

Of this I am sure, that throughout all Scripture there is not a hint of destruction to the kinds of animal life, but contrariwise assurances (*Psalms* 8, 96, and 98), that in the world over which Christ reigns there shall be sheep and oxen, fowls of

the air and fish of the sea, as well as living men. And why the ungenerous and, I will say, unholy humors of self-sufficient man should be permitted with supercilious contempt to exclude from the redeemed earth those creatures which existed in the completeness and blessedness of the created state, is what I cannot understand, and will never pander to.

It is not for nothing that my fathers, and my nation and my Church, anathematized the infallibility of the pope, general councils, and every creature, that Christ only may be the True One and the Truth. And I, their son, am blessed with a portion of their spirit, sufficient to set at naught the scoffs and names and silly argumentations of any class of men, who will ask me to believe in a heaven and a future state of their imagining and of their peopling.

The covenant made with Noah is not only a covenant for the continuance and preservation of the life of every creature which came forth of the ark, but that it is also their salvation from the deluge itself (*Genesis* 6:18). The Apostle declares (*Romans* 8:20-21), that the creature itself, also, shall be delivered from that bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God; which corruption is mortality.

Therefore what am I, or what is any son of man, or what even is the Church, if the Church should be so left to herself, which she never yet has been, that we should take upon us to gainsay the Holy Ghost and limit the power or the faithfulness of the Holy One of Israel?

In what state they shall be, when delivered from the bondage of corruption, I know not; but that they can be in such a state, and that it is good in the sight of God so to be, I well do know from that *bene placitum*⁴ of God which concluded His work of creation:

4 From the Latin: "good pleasure", "to please well".

Genesis 1

³¹ God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good.

I for my own part, therefore, dare not but believe that the rainbow is the sign of God's covenant, that the earth, and the animated dust of the earth, its numerous tribes, shall have an existence beyond the period of death's dominion as they had an existence above it.

Let no one suppose by this, for they lie in wait to wrest my words, that I mean hereby the resurrection of the inferior creatures. I mean only their continuance as a part of God's creation, which sin and death possessed by the fall of man, and of which by the resurrection of the Second Man, sin and death shall be dispossessed.

I hold it to be a principle, and not a notion, an eternal principle of God's being, and not a fleeting notion of man's brain, that the complete work of creation should be completely redeemed, from the lowest base to the loftiest pinnacle, and that it has been so by the presentation of Christ's body, holy upon the cross, and glorious in the heavens.

Again, to take, if possible, the subject out of the mouth of my enemies, who are many, and who cover their sectarian malice under the cloak of their reverence for orthodoxy, I further clear this great truth by declaring, that I nevertheless believe in a hell eternal as the being of God, into which shall be cast beings possessed of a responsible will—men and angels, who having known God have not obeyed Him, but preferred to obey themselves. All such as would not believe Him, nor listen to Him, shall be cast into hell, and shall know thereby, and thereby with trembling believe, that God is the Lord.

But of men, and of angels too, there is a holy portion, an elect and chosen portion, who shall preserve the continuity and eternity of that creature-work which man and angels are. And so believe I, that not by resurrection, but by continuance

of being, shall the inferior forms of creation subsist in the redeemed world, whereof the Son of Man is King and Lord.

The assurance of this great truth, even the continuance of the earth, and of the animal life thereon, was the grace given to Noah, whereof the rainbow is the appointed sign; and methinks, like all the signs and symbols of God, it has a great appropriateness to the things which it signifies. For upon the bosom of the dark cloud its resplendent colors show themselves like the beauty of an eternal world arising out of the darkness of this world's present sinful estate.

It is produced from the light of the sun; yea, it is nothing different from the light of the sun, of whose pure whiteness it discovers the hidden parts of beauty. It is light disclosed in its essential component parts, for beauty and for glory.

But, in order to this glorious manifestation of the mystery of light, it must first pass through the rain drops of the falling shower, whose waters as they fall catch the beams of the glorious sun, and spread their parts of beauty upon the dark clouds of the sky.

Now the falling showers, the rain and the small rain, and the dew drop, and water in all its forms, are symbols of the Holy Ghost; and the effluence proceeding from the matter of light, the very light of very light, the effulgence of the glory, are the continual symbols of the Son. And the rainbow, thus produced, becomes the proper symbol of the attributes of Godhead, manifested by the coming forth of the Son and His dissemination through the Holy Ghost.

And whereas the rainbow, light's revealed glory, displays itself upon the bosom of the wintry cloud which threatens to deluge, and once did destroy, all life; even so, upon the bosom of the death-producing creation, upon the bosom of this world and its animated dust, now death-stricken, shall the varieties and the beauties and the glories of the Divine goodness, through redemption, be for ever and ever revealed.

And, oh, much further, if I were not speaking to a dull-eared generation, who scoff and sport themselves with their infidelity, could I say concerning this glorious symbol and assurance of a creation washed from sin with the washing of regeneration and the purifying of the Holy Ghost

Having thus ascertained that, whereof the rainbow is the token, even the covenant of Noah, as distinguished from the covenant of Circumcision and the covenant of Baptism, I may be permitted to confirm it by a reference from Isaiah, where the Lord being engaged in comforting His people Israel with the assurance of the everlasting kindness with which He will yet have mercy on them, and the great mercies with which He will yet gather them, and desiring to make the assurance of this doubly sure, for that purpose refers to this very covenant which He had made with His servant Noah:

Isaiah 54

⁹ For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with you, nor rebuke you.

¹⁰ For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord, that has mercy on you.

This passage places upon the same level, in respect of dignity and distinctness in the Divine purpose, the covenant made with Noah and the covenant made with Abraham; yea, confirms the latter by the former. Now men do not confirm by a lesser, but by a greater; and therefore we may be assured that nothing which God has constituted is more certain and durable than the covenant He made with Noah.

We see also from this passage that the proper subject of the covenant of Noah is the earth, the habitable earth, with its animated tribes, from man downwards, just as the proper sub-

ject of the covenant made with Abraham is the natural seed of Isaac.

But the covenant made with Abraham for the natural seed of Isaac did not prevent the grafting thereon of what was always implied therein, even the privileges and prerogatives of the children by regeneration of Abraham's seed, which is Christ,—their spiritual life, their spiritual body, their spiritual glory, their spiritual kingdom. So likewise does not the covenant made with Noah for the earth's perpetual continuance preclude the further benediction of it, the further purification of it, the eternal purging of it by fire, which is contained in the Scriptures of the New Testament; as, for example:

2 Peter 3

⁶ Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

⁷ But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

¹¹ Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

¹² Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

Here the coming of the Lord is declared to have two blessed ends to accomplish: the first of which is, "the judgment and perdition of ungodly men," which is treated of in the preceding chapter; and, secondly, the purification of the heavens and the earth, and all the elements of creation, by the instrumen-

tality of fire,—out of which complete purification (for by the law vessels that would stand the fire were required to be purified therewith) shall come a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

Peter distinguished the heavens that now are from those that were before. So out of the heavens and the earth of the antediluvian time came the heavens and the earth which now are. And those which are to be hereafter are distinguished from these which now are.

This purification by fire of the elements of nature, though it be not expressed in the covenant of Noah, is not denied therein, is not contrary thereto, does not supersede it, any more than the spiritual covenant of baptism is denied or contradicted in the natural covenant of circumcision.

And my own opinion is, that as the covenant made with Abraham for the seed of Jacob, the twelve tribes of Israel, shall be realized upon the earth to them at the same time that the spiritual covenant of baptism shall be realized to us who believe, by the first resurrection; so the covenant of Noah shall be realized upon the earth to all creatures, and to all men abiding thereon, at the same time that to us in the New Jerusalem, in that spiritual locality of the earth, shall be realized the super-added, or rather unfolded, part of that covenant which the New Testament contains.

And my opinion further is, that at the end of the Millennium, when the period of God's justifying His faithfulness is over, the whole earth will be brought into the glorified state of matter in which the New Jerusalem during that time subsisted.

The covenant with Noah is therefore, in few words, the eternal permanency of the earth and its animated tribes; the earth and its animated tribes redeemed from the dominion of death into an everlasting life; and the rainbow is the appointed sign of the earth redeemed out of death's harm. This

point this very important point, being ascertained, we are ripe for interpretation.

The rainbow round about the throne of Him which was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone is a token that in heaven God has not forgotten the covenant of Noah. It is a token that the God of heaven deems it not low-thoughted to think upon the earth. Yea, verily, moreover, the throne of God insphered with a rainbow glory, as Ezekiel and John did see it, denotes that His seat of government and of power is the earth spanned with the rainbow's arch.

A very daring thought were this for mortal man to think, a very daring word for mortal man to utter, were it not most certainly declared in all the Scriptures, and held up in the promise to the church of Philadelphia (*Revelation 3:12*) as the great object of the Church's desire, and delineated in *Revelation 21* as in very being, where the new Jerusalem being come down from heaven, God is said to have His tabernacle with men (verse 3), and there to sit upon His throne (verse 5).

If any stagger at the thought of the glory of the Father being exhibited on this earth, let him consider what has been said above concerning the cloud that abode with the Israelites for a thousand years and more: this *Jehovah's* dwelling proves to be *the Father's* dwelling by what was exhibited on the Mount of Transfiguration, when it insphered not Christ only, nor Moses and Elias only, but likewise Peter, James, and John; and the Father's voice came forth from it, saying:

Matthew 17

⁵ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

And if the Father's glory there clothed the glory of the Son of Man, for He was seen both in the glory of the Father and in His own glory, why should men doubt that it shall be so seen again on the earth? Yea, it shall be so seen forever thereon; seeing Christ Himself declares that when He comes again, He

is to come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels:

Luke 9

²⁶ ...he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

Nor is it for nothing that in the three Evangelists: Matthew, Mark, and Luke; the act of the transfiguration follows next upon that declaration of Christ's; nor that the transfiguration is said to have occurred about an eight days after these sayings; nor that the transfiguration should be referred to by John in his Gospel as the instance of that glory He is to come in, opposite from that tabernacle of flesh in which he has already come (*John* 1:14), and by Peter as the great proof that the kingdom and glory of Christ is a matter of fact. *2 Peter* 1:16-19.

But, on the other hand, all this much-making of the transfiguration by the Holy Ghost does, beyond a doubt, demonstrate to me that it was intended to be the standing instance, the *experimentum crucis*⁵, the realized fact, that Jesus Christ, in the glory of the Father as well as of His own glory, in the glory of the Godhead as well as of the manhood, should yet be exhibited upon the earth; yea, dwell upon the earth; yea, abide upon the earth forever.

And be it plainly spoken,—I consider the man who disbelieves and denies that the Son of Man in the Father's glory shall abide on this earth, either does not understand or disbelieves the transfiguration. We may not, therefore, wonder that the throne of God should have around it the glory of the rainbow, which is His own symbol, as we have seen, for expressing the glory of the redeemed earth.

This conclusion which we have arrived at concerning the symbolical import of the rainbow we can confirm and put be-

5 From the Latin: "crucial experiment" or "critical experiment".

yond a doubt from this book itself. In *Revelation* 10, a mighty Angel, whom we assuredly know to be Christ, as well from His action (which is to take possession of the earth), as by the identity of His symbolical appearance with that of the vision of the first chapter (which we have already explained: “*His face was as it were the sun, and His feet as pillars of fire*”)—this Angel is described as coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow upon His head.

The cloud is the cloud of His Father’s glory, which covered Him on the transfiguration, and at His appearance to Saul of Tarsus, and with which He Himself promises that He shall come arrayed:

Luke 21

²⁷ And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

And, as has been said, it is the same cloud in which His Father ever has shown the face of His glory, and made the word of His power to be heard, since the day He showed Himself to Moses in the burning bush by the back of Horeb; wherein dwelt the Angel of the Covenant, the glorious Messiah, the Christ in His assumed form of risen God-man, which at the resurrection he attained unto in real created substance.

In this cloud clothed, He descends from heaven to earth, in order to take possession of His own redeemed terraqueous globe; and in sign thereof He set His right foot upon the sea, and His left foot on the earth, and roars like a lion against His enemies, and with the sevenfold thunder of the seventh vial discomfits them. Such is the action. It is the act of taking possession of this terraqueous globe.

Now, behold, the rainbow is upon His head, where kings do set their crowns. He surrounds His head with the glory of the rainbow, to signify that the jewel of His crown is the redeemed earth. Like a king coming to do battle for his kingdom, which a usurper has long oppressed, He puts upon His

head the symbol of the right which He is come to reclaim, and battles as a crowned king.

This is very beautiful and very grand: and oh, you skeptical, unbelieving men! though you be called Christians and ministers of the Gospel, not less skeptical and unbelieving of this book than the scoffing infidel, I tell you that it is a better thing to see deep into these doctrines which are thus symbolically set forth, than to admire from a distance these visions as splendid works of fancy or unintelligible hieroglyphics intended to confound the eyesight of the mind, and forever defy, and forever defeat, every effort of human reason, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, to unravel them.

I tell you, oh you sentimental idlers! that these are not venerable gewgaws⁶, to be stared at and wondered at, but that they are as truly intelligible symbols for revealing deep and eternal truths of God, as is the sacrament of baptism or the sacrament of the supper. Idle no more, you idlers, lest the Lord scourge and whip you to the work of interpreting His word.

There is yet another circumstance noted in the text concerning the rainbow round about the throne, that it was in sight like unto an emerald, or, to preserve the same translation which is adopted at the beginning of the verse:

John 4

³ ...to look upon like...an emerald.

Now this addition does not take away the reality of its being a rainbow, which it is expressly said to have been; not the appearance of a rainbow, but a rainbow; and though we never see a rainbow of the pure and unmixed greenness of the emerald; we are not therefore to say this was only something like a rainbow, but essentially not a rainbow, which by its constitution has indeed the green color, along with the other six, but

6 *Gewgaw*: a showy thing, especially one that is useless or worthless.

never has, nor can have, the green color alone.

The answer to such a way of reasoning is: God calls it a rainbow, and therefore a rainbow it is! And that of which the rainbow was a symbol it signifies.

But in this, as in other symbols, in order to make the symbol express more, an addition is put upon it which in nature never occurs. And this we have already seen in those symbols we have explained, and in all those which we have to explain we shall see it to be the law of symbolical writing.

Anyone looking upon the Sphinx, where the lion's body is united to the virgin's bust, to denote, as is believed, that the rising of the Nile took place while the sun was in the signs of the Lion and the Virgin, sees an instance of this.

Every figure in the model of the mausoleum, or tomb, exhibited by Belzoni in this country was an example of it, where the bodies of men were seen with the heads of hawks.

And wherefore, then, it may be said, is the color of greenness in this rainbow made so much to prevail? Nay, but let any plain man answer this question, To what part of creation does the color of greenness belong? Is it to the sun, moon, or stars? is it to the hues of the heavens seen so brilliant at the rising or setting of the sun? No: it is in the earth that this color alone exists, and in the sea, under peculiar circumstances; as certain also of our poets have said:

Farewell, you fair day, green earth, and ye skies,
Now bright with the gay setting sun.

By this addition to the symbol of the rainbow we conceive therefore, that every possibility of misinterpretation is removed; and that it is put beyond a doubt that the eternal redeemed earth is that which in the symbol here encompasses and contains, and in the reality shall hereafter encompass and contain, the throne of God.

And what then does this complete symbol convey? It con-

veys this, that the throne of these heavens, the eternal throne of God, which rules over all, which is the place, the proper seat, of creation's Sovereign Lord and absolute Monarch, was seen by John the seer filled by a risen and glorified man, in risen and glorified flesh, even the Son of Man, whom the Father has glorified with His own glory, Jesus our Elder Brother; who heretofore travailed amongst us in much sorrow, the same who was made of a woman, made under the law, born in a stable, and laid in a manger; who had not all His life long where to lay His head, and ended His sorrowful and persecuted life like a common malefactor upon the accursed tree.

This, even this One, brought into the condition of a worm and no man, is now seated upon that throne which rules over powers, and principalities, and dominions, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come: and being there enthroned Lord of all, that in which He is embodied withal is flesh. Not indeed flesh in that state of flesh and blood in which He formerly appeared, and which cannot inherit the kingdom of God, but flesh in that changed state into which it is brought by the resurrection from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15

⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

There He sits on the throne of His Father's glory encompassed with our nature, the Son of Man, the Redeemer of man, and bearing about with Him the redeemed substance of man.

Oh what a work is resurrection, whereof creation is but the manger-cradle and the stable birth-place! Oh how great a work is resurrection! More excellent than creation, which was

so good; and the morn of the resurrection more glorious than the creation morn, when the morning stars sang together, and the angels of God shouted for joy.

He is there seated in the height of heaven, clothed with, united to, one of person with, having in Himself redeemed glorified manhood. But the earth He has not yet redeemed, which lies still in the evil one. But in token and assurance to the seer, and to all who from the seer should receive the report of what he saw, He has the symbol of the earth redeemed, the symbol of the earth indestructible, nearest to and around His throne, even the sign of the covenant of Noah.

And in *Revelation* 10 we see Him coming in the same glory to take possession of the earth. And so much have we to say with respect to the throne, and Him that sat on it, and the glory that was around it. It is redeemed manhood in the person of the Son of God, exalted to the eternal throne of God, and not ashamed to insphere Himself with the symbolical glory of the redeemed earth.

THOSE AROUND THE THRONE

We now come to the subordinate personages in this glorious vision of the court of heaven, who are exhibited to us under the threefold aspect of elders, living creatures or beasts, and angels, of whom the elders and living creatures do act in concert, and worship in concert, and in concert sing the same song of redemption, together declaring their common obligations unto the Lamb that was slain:

Revelation 5

⁹ You have redeemed us to God by Your blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

¹⁰ And have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

These words being looked at without any exposition whatever, do broadly declare that those who use them are re-

deemed men, men redeemed and elected from the kindred and nations of the earth; that they are the Church, of whom, and for whom, John declares in his prelude to the book that they were made kings and priests unto God.

And lastly, these words declare that the seat of their royal priesthood is to be upon the earth, where, accordingly (*Revelation* 20:6), we find them enthroned, after the present kings and judges had been removed in the wrath of God.

Why the Church in glory should thus be represented under the twofold symbol of twenty-four enthroned elders and four living creatures will come to be unfolded in its proper place.

Here then we have, besides the throne of heaven's King, a representation of the redeemed Church, and besides them there are no other beings except the numerous host of angels (*Revelation* 5:11) who encircle and guard in the court and council of God; being like, nay, being truly, the ministering spirits ever ready to go forth and minister to them which shall be heirs of salvation.

These angels, be it also observed, take no part whatever in the momentous action of obtaining the sealed book out of the hand of the King of heaven, but merely bring in the offering of their sevenfold adoration to the Lamb, when He has accomplished that glorious deed.

They are witnesses of the mighty act, and bear their part in celebrating the glory of it; as does also every creature which is on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea. But interest and part either in the action itself, or in the consequences of it, they have none. They are, as it were, the ring of the subject people, who, in the Saxon times, might surround the king and his *witenagemot*⁷, or council of wise men, assembled on some moats of judgment, such as there be many still visible in this our native land. Or they are as the guards

7 *Witenagemot*: an Anglo-Saxon national council or parliament.

and messengers which surround the council of our king, ready harnessed to go forth and execute the things which shall be decided on.

Such is a general notion of the personages in the scene and act whereof we have already described the Head and Principal, the great Author of power and authority, the One worshiped, being even God the Father, shining forth in the Son of Man, or rather the Son of Man clothed with the glory of the Father.

To the other personages of this the celestial court and council we now proceed with grave and solemn thought, walking in nothing by our own wisdom, but meekly and humbly interpreting the word of God by the wisdom that comes from above, which, as a minister of Christ's Church, we believe that we are furnished with, even with the Spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind, the gift which was in Timothy by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. *2 Timothy 1:6-7.*

THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS

Revelation 4

⁴ And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

TO divide exactly between the elders and the four living creatures is perhaps one of the nicest points connected with the interpretation of this book; surely it is that which has cost myself most thought; and I would not proceed on this undertaking without every help with which revelation and sound reason can furnish me.

The four living ones are evidently the same in substance as the four cherubim which Ezekiel saw, being, like them, full of eyes (*Ezekiel* 10:12), and having the same faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (*Ezekiel* 1:10), and, like them, upbearing the throne of the Highest (*Ezekiel* 1:26). There are diversities, indeed, but not of such a kind as to cast any doubt upon there being the same mystery in the substance of it.

Now those cherubim which Ezekiel saw, he expressly knew to be the cherubim which were in the most holy place of the temple of Jerusalem. They are the same in substance with those which were formed by Moses at the express commandment of God, and which bore upon their wings and heads the cloud of glory wherein Jehovah dwelt. Ezekiel saw them upbearing this glory unveiled in his vision. John saw them upbearing this glory in heaven.

The place of these four living creatures is in the midst of the throne, and not round about, as in our version, but in circle of the throne. Their place was the midst of the throne, and all within its circumference, and no part of them was without. They are, in a word, the bearers of the throne, even as they were in the most holy place and in Ezekiel's vision, and as

they are promised to be when Christ shall come again:

Psalm 18

¹⁰ And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.

What is signified by this constant accompaniment of the cloud, or presence-chamber of God, what is signified by these upbearers of the throne of God, I have already ascertained to be, the Church, in my third Lecture⁸, and the time is not yet arrived in the order of this vision for confirming this conclusion. Only I thought it good to say thus much concerning it, in order to help us in our exposition of the elders, who, adopting the same song as the four living creatures, do declare themselves to be of the same redeemed Church.

Now in the most holy place of the cherubim and the cloudy presence-chamber and throne of God there was nothing answerable in any way to these four and twenty elders; nor in the veil, which was also embroidered over with cherubim (*Exodus* 26:31); nor on the walls of the holy place, whereon all round about were carved figures of cherubim (*1 Kings* 6:29), is there any mention whatever of these elders.

Only the high priest, with the blood of the sacrifice, could come in to the most holy place, the cloudy presence-chamber of the throne of God, where the cherubim were. But into the holy place without the veil, which was all encircled around with carved cherubim, all the priests of the house of Aaron might enter to minister.

Now these priests were divided into twenty four courses in the days of David the king, as it is written in *1 Chronicles* 24. And this ordinance of the kingdom of David was not suffered to go down, but continued in being until the days of our Lord, seeing we are told that the Baptist's father was of the course of Abia. *Luke* 1:5.

⁸ See *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 3 "Christ the Universal Head and Bishop of the Church", Chapter "The Vision", Section: "His Voice", p. 76-86.

Moreover the singers also who were instructed in the songs of the Lord, even all that were cunning, were likewise divided into twenty-four courses. *1 Chronicles 25*. Thus, then, the whole of the men of Israel who might come near to God, to do the service of His house, were represented by the number twenty-four.

And if each of these courses is seen represented in the head person thereof, then, as the whole tribes of Israel were represented by the twelve patriarchs and the twelve princes of the tribes, so the whole priesthood would be represented by the twenty-four heads who are named in *1 Chronicles 24*.

These drew near to the presence of the Lord, but yet not so near as the cherubim; and, if I err not, the key to the symbol of the twenty-four elders is to be found in this very thing. They answer to the whole Aaronic priesthood, whose part it was to burn incense upon the golden altar before the Lord. *Luke 1:9*. And accordingly it is declared that the elders had every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, or golden bowls full of incense. *Revelation 5:8*. This shows them to be priests, for none else might burn incense but the priests of the house of Aaron. And the addition of harps given to them shows them also to stand in the place of the singers, who, as has been said, were likewise divided into twenty four courses.

While by these signs we determine them to be that which in the temple was represented by the priesthood and by the singers, we have additions to the symbol, as the greenness in the case of the rainbow.

The first is, that they sit on thrones which are placed round about the throne; and the second is, that they have on their heads crowns of gold. These two signs clearly indicate that there belongs to them not only the priestly, but likewise the royal prerogative, which were separated under the former dispensation, but now are united in us believers, who are a royal priesthood. So the elders sing:

Revelation 5

¹⁰ You have made us kings and priests.

We are further confirmed in this interpretation by the white raiment in which they are clothed, for that was the raiment proper to a priest. We shall take it, therefore, as the best interpretation, both of the number and the preferment of these elders, that they signify the royal priesthood of God: and with this interpretation we shall endeavor to work our way, and see how it answers.

This interpretation is confirmed by the very name, “Elder,” which has been the name of the office of the chief ruler in God’s house from the time that it was constituted under Moses, the servant of God, until this day. It was an office for rule and for judgment, begun by God’s own commandment unto Moses, and by His own gift constituted; their number being seventy. *Numbers* 11:16.

And from this time forward it continued an ordinance in Israel, that the Sanhedrin, or the great council of the nation, should consist of seventy elders. And to this great council of state Christ so often refers in the Gospel, when He speaks of suffering at the hand of the elders. *Luke* 9:22. In every synagogue of the Jews there were also several elders, and one who was called the chief elder, or ruler of the synagogue.

And to the Christian Church a similar constitution was given. The Apostles ordained elders in every city, whom Paul charged as the overseers, bishops, or rulers of the whole Church. *Acts* 20. And over them there was always one appointed to preside, who again is addressed in the seven epistles as the angel of the Church. Peter calls himself a co-presbyter:

1 Peter 5

¹ ...who also am an elder.

And when the Apostles gathered a council concerning cir-

cumcision, the elders sat with them in solemn assembly.

Seeing, then, that the office of ruler in the house of God from first to last has been denominated by the name Elder, we are to believe that in the *Revelation*, which contradicts nothing, but harmonizes everything in all the other books of Scripture, this name will have a full accordance with what it has everywhere else, and that rule and power and judgment will be of the substance of the elder's office.

Accordingly, when we look to that best exposition of the personages in this book, the words which they are made to utter, we find that by this very character of "power" is the worship of the elders distinguished from that of the four living creatures, who ascribe glory, and honor, and *thanks* while the elders ascribe glory, and honor, and *power*, to Him that sits upon the throne. *Revelation* 4:9, 11.

We consider it therefore to be established, from many collateral yet distinct sources, that these elders combine the priestly and the royal character, and by their number denote the completeness of those who are permitted to fill that high preeminence.

I deem it of great importance to be exact in fixing the interpretation of every symbol; and as this of the twenty-four elders is one of the greatest importance, I shall call your attention to yet another observation, derived from the manner in which they are called into action, and the part which they perform in the great dramatic representation of events which this book contains.

In general, they act in concert with the four living creatures, yet after a manner peculiar to themselves. In this chapter, they...

Revelation 4

¹⁰ ...fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship...and cast their crowns before the throne.

This is the style and manner of potentates doing homage to the King of kings, from whom they hold their thrones, and crowns, and dominions. It is the manner of acknowledging derived power, and of holding a dependent and subordinate authority; and, no doubt, teaches a great lesson to all kings and judges of the earth of whom they hold their power, when even the thrones and principedoms of heaven thus render homage to the Great King.

And seeing that both the Church and the State were to be thus constituted in the way of governors and governed, I say not but that it is one of the great ends served by this portion of the heavenly constitution, to teach kings to bless the Son, and do Him perpetual reverence.

This observation I make by the way: and having ascertained that this their action indicates power, I proceed to the next instance, which is in *Revelation* 5:9, and upon which I have observed above, that it adds to the attribute of power those of priesthood and of praise—the functions of the priest and the singer; whereof both are in their essence subordinate to God;—a priest ever offering gifts, a singer ever offering praise, and both being servants to the Most High.

To the idea of power this therefore adds the idea of perpetual subordination to a superior, who is also the object of worship; or, in other words, that they hold of Him who is at once their King and their God; that is, of Christ, at once God and the King of the creatures, at once the worshiped and the Head of the worshipers.

The third time the elders are introduced is in the consummation of the act of seals; where (*Revelation* 7:13) one of them confers with the seer concerning the white-robed ones who, with triumphal palms, sung the song of salvation, and who are in truth the Church enjoying their blessedness after having accomplished their long probation of trials. And why should an elder confer with them? Because, as I judge, the el-

ders also are white-robed, are of the same character with the triumphant Church, are in truth the symbol of the Church brought into her kingdom and glory.

And to this also agrees the circumstance above referred to, of their number twenty-four being taken from the condition of the priesthood and the songsters not before, but after, the Church was constituted under her King David. This is very strikingly confirmed by the next and last instance which is recorded; a passage which so distinctly declares the office and function of the elders to be power, that it needs only to be quoted in order to confirm the substance of what has been said, that the Church invested with power is the true import of the symbol of the twenty-four elders:

Revelation 11

¹⁶ And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God,

¹⁷ Saying, We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which are, and was, and are to come; because You have taken to Yourself Your great power, and have reigned.

Still, however, the difficulty stands before us. What is the difference between these elders and the four living creatures? It must stand over for solution until we have all the elements of the question before us. Let us gather up, then, what we learn concerning these elders.

If any intelligent person, say Aidan, or any other of the Culdees or Presbyters of Scotland, walking, as they were wont, on errands of grace, true missionaries, missionaries after the apostolical school, through the kingdoms of the heptarchy here in England, had alighted some day upon a Saxon court held in the open air, where sat in single state one upon a throne, and twenty-four others in seats or thrones around him, while a vast multitude stood encircling them, would he not at once have known to whom to pay his reverence as the king, and to whom to pay his deference as the princes of the

kingdom?

So may no one doubt who looks upon this vision of heaven's court and council, that these enthroned crowned elders are those dignitaries of state whom above and over all the King of heaven delights to honor: and seeing these are men redeemed, we may not doubt that redeemed men are far advanced in power and dignity above the angels; that man is, by redemption, arrived at that dignity of lordship over the works of His hand for which he was originally designed by God, angels, and principalities, and powers being subject unto him.

It is only for a little that man is made lower than the angels, unto whom He has not put in subjection the world to come, which He has put in subjection to man. *Hebrews 2:5-9*. And now when the Son of Man is exalted to the throne of God, He fills the subordinate thrones of creation with His brethren.

Having thus accomplished the interpretation of the symbols of Him that sits upon the throne and of the twenty-four elders who are seated around Him, we come now, by the help of the Spirit, to interpret:

THE THRONE ITSELF

Revelation 4

⁴ And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

⁵ And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

⁶ And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

SUCH is the description of the throne of God; which we do now, with all gravity and wisdom, essay to interpret. Methinks I am better employed in occupying my faculties, and studying my Bible, and entreating my God for the understanding of these things, than are the multitude of those idle ministers who are reviling me for a wild speculator and erroneous divine.

I wish they would mind their flocks, and occupy their thoughts with the care of souls, instead of barking up and down at one of God's servants, who is toiling night and day for the sake of the Church. If they will not work themselves, why will they not allow others to work? Or if they will do nothing but dole out a *caput-mortuum*⁹, the last dregs and refuse (as we say in Scotland, the *foisonless*¹⁰ *drammach*¹¹) of Calvin's system, why will they not let others feed themselves at the Word of the living God, where Calvin himself got everything which is precious in Calvin?

9 A Latin term whose literal meaning is "dead head" or "worthless remains".

10 Scottish dialect meaning "without strength", "weak".

11 Or *drammock*: "an uncooked mixture of meal, usually oatmeal, and cold water."

They may rage as they please; but they will not prevent God's people from studying and understanding God's Word. There will always be some found, like Jannes and Jambres, to resist the message of truth which God is sending to His Church, and who will perish in their gainsaying, like Core and his company; from which perdition every one by faith and diligence may save himself, but no one can save his brother.

And, first, with respect to the place of His throne. It is thus written upon the consummation of God's dealings with this rebellious earth in the seventh vial:

Revelation 16

¹⁷ And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

¹⁸ And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings;

And in another passage of this book (*Revelation 8:5*), where the scenery is altogether taken from the temple, the same accompaniment of voices, and thunderings, and lightnings occurs, proving, as well as the other, that the place of the throne of God is the temple in heaven; as indeed the cherubim within its circumference and the twenty-four elders waiting upon it from a distance do testify.

- That is the throne of God whence His voice proceeds, and this always came forth from the cloud of glory which rested between the cherubim.
- That is the throne of God, where is the hiding of His power.
- That is the throne of God, which we approach unto when we would stand in His holy presence.

In one word, the throne of God was in the most holy place of His temple while it stood, and shall be there again when the temple is rebuilt.

I am not speaking of the invisible and incomprehensible

Godhead, who has nothing to do with place; but of that place of His dominions which all other places shall have to look up unto, and honor, and seek as the special abode of His manifest presence, where to see Him, where to hear Him; for to this end has He become manifest in manhood, that He might be both seen and felt.

This shrinking and shuddering to conceive of God as abiding in any place of the world is no better than a misgiving as to the reality of the Son of God being come in flesh, and forever abiding in the spiritual body. It is a strong mixture of ignorance and error, of which they maintain the sway by neglecting nine-tenths of the Old Testament, and misrepresenting the other tenth; and many of them by expressly, as well as virtually, denying the use of it altogether.

They will not believe me, but I tell them that the Papists never treated the Scriptures in the way in which we have come to do. God has a day of reckoning at hand with them, for all their hard speeches against the prophetic word.

To refer to an instance: *Psalm 24*, which is the most glorious exposition of this truth, that the temple is the place of God's throne, the palace of the Great King, and Mount Zion, which bears it, the citadel of the world, is generally applied in a mystical or allegorical sense to the human heart, with its barred gates of sin.

And when we address ourselves to the task of taking it out of their injurious hands, and restoring its sublime import, they accuse us of a lack of spirituality: as if to assert that Christ is in a spiritual body is not spiritual; and to assert that our coming with Him in spiritual bodies is not spiritual; and that we shall dwell together in the New Jerusalem incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, is not spiritual. Whereas, in very truth, these are the only spiritual things which Scripture speaks of. And the present work of the Spirit in a man is part and parcel thereof, an earnest, a firstfruits, of

that glorious possession and superabundant harvest.

If the first-fruits, O men, be spiritual, so is the full harvest; if the earnest-penny be spiritual, O men, so is the full wages, the reward and recompense which our Master is to bring along with Him. *Isaiah* 62:11.

Now this 24th *Psalms*, which by allegorizing they unspiritualize, is the true exposition of the truth we are now pointing out, that the throne of God is in His temple. It claims for Jehovah the habitable world in right of creation:

Psalms 24

¹ The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

² For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

Then it makes proclamation for a man fit to ascend into the hill of Jehovah, or to stand in His holy place:

³ Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place?

Now here I pause, and ask, what means this proclamation about the temple of Mount Zion, after having put in a claim for the whole world, if so be that Mount Zion is not the citadel, and God's holy place the throne of the world? But it is the direct testimony of Scripture:

Isaiah 24

²³ Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.

This being understood, the *Psalms* is most sublime which proceeds to define as the one condition of inheriting and possessing that throne, that he should be perfectly holy and blameless:

⁴ He that has clean hands, and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

And to such a one comes the blessing and righteousness; that is, righteousness of the Holy Ghost to bestow upon a generation who seek His face:

⁵ He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

⁶ This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Your face, O Jacob. Selah.

Then He comes as the Lord of the hosts of these righteous ones, and summons the citadel of God, and entering within the temple gate possesses the dominion of the world.

Psalm 24

⁷ Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

⁸ Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

⁹ Lift up your heads, O you gates; even lift them up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

¹⁰ Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.

The same truth is taught in *Psalm 47* and *48*, that the throne of God is in His temple:

Psalm 47

¹ O clap your hands, all you people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

² For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.

³ He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.

⁴ He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

⁵ God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.

⁶ Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.

⁷ For God is the King of all the earth: sing praises with understanding.

⁸ God reigns over the heathen: God sits upon the throne of His holiness.

⁹ The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: He is greatly exalted.

Psalm 48

¹ Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness.

² Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

³ God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

⁴ For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together.

⁵ They saw it, and so they marveled; they were troubled, and hasted away.

⁶ Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail.

⁷ You break the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.

⁸ As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah.

⁹ We have thought of Your lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of Your temple.

¹⁰ According to Your name, O God, so is Your praise unto the ends of the earth: Your right hand is full of righteousness.

¹¹ Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of Your judgments.

¹² Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.

¹³ Mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that you may tell it to the generation following.

¹⁴ For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.

Now, concerning the tabernacle or temple (for the tabernacle is the temple movable, and the temple is the tabernacle fixed), it is necessary that I should explain that from the time God began to reveal His glory to Moses unto this day, and till the day of His coming, a house has been, and is, and shall ever be as essential a part of the representation as is a person.

It was not so in the days of the Patriarchs, who, as has been said, were not the proper depositories of His glory, but of His humility, as the seed of Abraham, not as the Son of God; as the God of Abraham, not as the Jehovah of hosts. They worshiped in groves under the canopy of heaven, as did our Druids, who do in nothing testify their high antiquity so much as in this. And we, who are witnesses of the humility of Christ and only waiters for the glory, are, like Abraham, free from the condition of place, and ought in our worship to be wholly independent of that association.

But this is not the perfection: as Abraham looked for a city with foundations, so do we; and by looking for it we declare our incompleteness without it. Moses brought the completeness in a type; and now God took up the cause of His house against the groves. From this time God's house, or abode, has as constantly been a part of His revelation as His human form. And it is curious to observe how, in speaking of the temple, the prophets speak of it as having a perpetuity of existence.

Haggai, who is peculiarly the prophet of the house, speaks of it as always one and the same in these words:

Haggai 2

³ Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes, in comparison of it, as nothing?

As if the house of Zerubbabel's building were but the house of Solomon's building in a new garb; and in verse 7 he speaks of the house which is yet to be filled with the glory of Christ, or the temple in its third state, as if it were the same house which then existed:

⁷ And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts.

Of this latter house the man whose name is the Branch is to be the builder (*Zechariah* 3:8), as was promised indeed at the very time of its first conception by King David:

2 Samuel 7

¹² And when your days be fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, which shall proceed out of your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

The mystery of the temple therefore is, that since the days of Moses it has been a constant accompaniment of the presence of the glory of the Great King. And what is become of it now? It is there where His glory is, in heaven; and therefore in this book, so soon as we are entered upon the delineation of His glory, we have His throne declared to be in the temple of heaven. The temple is there where His glory is.

And when His glory descends, His temple, the New Jerusalem, descends along with Him. That the New Jerusalem is His temple is manifest from its being called His tabernacle (*Revelation* 21:3); from there being no temple in it (*Revelation* 21:22); from its being the bride of the Lamb, or the accomplished number of the elect, who are called the living stones of His spiritual temple (*1 Peter* 2:4).

The book of *Ezekiel*, which is the Apocalypse of the Jew, concludes with the description of the natural temple, which the natural seed of Abraham shall possess. The *Apocalypse* concludes with the description of the spiritual temple, which the spiritual seed of Abraham shall possess. In the one of which Christ shall be seen as the natural eye can behold Him; in the other of which He shall be seen as He is.

This city, inheritance, temple, or by whatever name it is called, is now above in the heavens, and is the thing signified by the “heavenly places” and “heavenly things,” but literally the “heavenlies” (*Hebrews* 8 and 9). Of these “heavenlies” the

tabernacle was an exact pattern, as it is written:

Hebrews 9

²³ It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

²⁴ For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

The tabernacle was purified with typical blood of Christ, but the “heavenlies” with His very blood. That is to say, every living stone which is built into the New Jerusalem is a spiritual stone, which receives its spiritual form from this one thing, even the holy death of Christ, His spotless blood, which obtained for Him His spiritual body, in and by which He becomes the head of a spiritual generation, out of whom He whose name is the all-fruitful Branch builds the spiritual temple of the Lord, the New Jerusalem, the city of my God, the bride of the Lamb, the tabernacle of God.

It is not now the time to open these things in order. These are only the hints of high discourse, necessary to possess us with information concerning the place of God’s throne. Out of the throne, it is said:

Revelation 4

⁵ And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunders and voices...

These proceeded not from Him that sat upon the throne. But out of the throne itself proceed those emblems of power and intelligence, the origin of which is found in those who occupied the throne,—namely, the four living creatures.

The throne is instinct with life, which manifests itself in acts and words of power. Of this awful throne of God the first exhibition was given upon the top of Sinai, after the children of Israel had been sanctified for two whole days; and the appearance of it is thus described:

Exodus 19

¹⁶ And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

And that this is a similitude of what shall be on Mount Zion forever is declared:

Psalm 68

¹⁶ Why leap you, you high hills? this is the hill which God desires to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it forever.

¹⁷ The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place.

Whereby I understand it to be declared, that the manifestation made to the people on the top of Sinai is the same in substance, is the manifestation of the same glory of God as shall hereafter abide on Zion forever.

But how far different in character is declared by the Apostle in that sublime passage from *Hebrews 12*, which represents the invisible things within the cloud as shown to the Israelites from Sinai to be in perfect opposition with those which are now shown to the Christian Church:

Hebrews 12

¹⁸ For you are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

¹⁹ And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

²⁰ (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

²¹ And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

²² But you are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumer-

able company of angels,

²³ To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

²⁴ And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel.

LIGHTNINGS AND THUNDERINGS

It may then be asked:

“And if so, why is the throne, as seen by the Christian seer, still emitting lightnings and thunderings?”

The answer is, that he saw the throne of the Governor and Judge of the world, who rules the nations with a rod of iron, not the throne merely of the Head of the Church.

This is the throne from which go forth the lightnings, and thunderings, and earthquake, and great hail, by which the thrones and dominions of the world are subverted. From this throne proceed all the acts of the seals, and trumpets, and vials. And therefore it must be represented with lightnings and thunderings, which are in all Scripture the symbols of God’s hot and fiery indignation.

The throne blazes out and bellows forth destruction upon all the enemies of God and of His Church, who therefore are found under the sixth seal exclaiming in horror:

Revelation 6

¹⁵ And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

¹⁶ And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

And not only at that time, but ever since Christ's resurrection we are given to understand that everything calamitous which the earth has experienced is derived from the holiness of this throne, which is all instinct with wrath against iniquity.

It is hardly necessary to explain why thunderings and lightnings should be the symbols of Divine wrath in action. They are the most powerful agents in nature; they are invisible: they have their apparent place in the heavens; and, thence issuing, they shake and overthrow and scatter the most proud and mighty of the works of man.

In all ages the thunderbolt has been looked upon as the arms of an offended God; and that the lightnings shall be one of the fierce accompaniments and swift avengers of the Son of Man, in the day of His coming to judge the quick, is in all the Scriptures declared, and nowhere more sublimely than in the 18th *Psalm*, where the Church, being brought into the last extremities, cries aloud to her Redeemer, who answers her supplication by His own appearance:

Psalm 18

⁶ In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears.

⁷ Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was wroth.

⁸ There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

⁹ He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under His feet.

¹⁰ And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.

¹¹ He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.

¹² At the brightness that was before Him His thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire.

¹³ The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest

gave His voice; hailstones and coals of fire.

¹⁴ Yea, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.

¹⁵ Then the channels of water were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at Your rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.

¹⁶ He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters.

This is the redemption of His Church out of her last and most direful calamity: it is the triumph of her victory over her enemies; the joyful translation of her people to her King and Lord coming in the glorious cloud; and her action with Him from thence to rule the world with a rod of iron, and break it in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Now, this catastrophe of the world and perdition of all the ungodly upon the earth, together with all the lesser inflictions of chastisement which have been administered since His ascension into glory, with the view of preventing such grievous destruction, must be seen to reside in this throne of the heavens, and to be inflicted by the most merciful and gracious Son of Man, who sits thereon, to whom all judgment has been committed, because He is the Son of Man.

These thunderings and lightnings are represented as proceeding from that throne, and thereby it is shown to be a throne not of mercy and salvation merely, nor yet merely of universal power and dominion, but likewise of severity and judgment, of wrath and indignation; in one word, of holiness as well as of grace.

VOICES

And, next, by the voices which proceeded thence we are not to understand indistinct mutterings or inarticulate sounds, but mighty and powerful and most instructive words and sentences, which speak and it is done, which command and all things stand fast.

For example, the voice which uttered the grand finale of the world's judgment, saying, "It is done," proceeds from the temple of heaven, from the throne. *Revelation 16:17.*

And, again, that invocation of all the servants of God to praise Him for destroying Babylon proceeds from the throne. *Revelation 19:5.*

But the voice which says, "Behold I make all things new," proceeds from Him that sat upon the throne. *Revelation 21:5.* I know not wherein this distinction may stand.

If, as we shall show in the sequel, the four living creatures ever dwell within the circuit of the throne, and never come out thence, we must infer that these voices from the throne are uttered by them as the organic body of the Church, through whom He that sits upon the throne, who is the Church's glorified Head, expresses His mind.

But when He would speak, not in the character of the Head of the redeemed creation, but of the Representative of the invisible Godhead, giving forth the Father's will for the obedience of all creatures, then He speaks in His own personality. This is the best account I can give of the distinction between a voice from the throne and a voice from Him that sits on it.

If I err not, all the voices in this book which are said to come out of the temple, as that mentioned. *Revelation 16:1.* And those which are not expressly given to any speakers, are to be ascribed to the throne as their origin; which occupies the same place in the heavenly temple that the oracle, or Word, between the cherubim, which spoke to Moses and to Samuel, did occupy in the tabernacle.

In confirmation of the idea, that these voices belong to the four living creatures who alone inhabit the throne, we observe that the dignity of leading the worship is expressly given to them above the elders, and the angels, and every creature in heaven or earth. *Revelation 4:9-10.*

Now in that grand chorus sung over Babylon's downfall, the voice of the *choregus*, or leader of the choir, is made to proceed from the throne. *Revelation* 19:5. Put these two things together and we have, I think, the conclusion, that the voices from the throne are uttered by the four living creatures, and no others. And this is all which we can say at present; for the time is not yet come for searching into the mystery of these creatures.

To conclude our observations upon that which the throne emitted to sight and to hearing, we refer to a passage in the vision of Ezekiel (*Ezekiel* 1:14), where it is said that the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning; and to another passage in this book, where the voice of one of the living creatures is described to be, as it were, the voice of thunder. *Revelation* 6:1.

These two passages incline me to believe, that every form of action, whether to sense of sight or sense of hearing, which comes out of the throne, is the action of the cherubim, the supporters and the only inhabitants of the throne of God. That is to say, He that sits on the throne serves Himself with His Church, to inflict, through their means, the strokes of His indignation, as well as to declare the words of His command.

And that this is one of the high prerogatives of the saints has been declared in all Scripture since Enoch began to preach the Lord coming to vengeance, with ten thousand of His saints (*Jude* 14), until the time that they are seen issuing forth along with Him from heaven to rid the earth of the oppressors. *Revelation* 19. Indeed this, and this only, is given as the destination of the man child, or complete seed of Christ, which the Church bears, that He...

Revelation 12

⁵ ...shall rule all nations with a rod of iron.

If, then, the four cherubim within the throne denote the

Church of the redeemed, as we have already seen good reason for believing, it ought to be so represented as it is in the text, that from them and by them the lightnings and thunderings and furious storms should go forth.

Now, as I conceive, the sign of the Son of Man, which is to appear before His personal manifestation, is this very throne within the veil of the cloud, and that we His people shall be gathered from the dead and from the living within the circuit thereof; upon which it shall begin to act offensively against His enemies with thunderings and lightnings and hailstones and furious storms:

Psalm 11

⁴ The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men.

⁵ The Lord tries the righteous: but the wicked and him that loves violence, His soul hates.

⁶ Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.

⁷ For the righteous Lord loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright.

If that is so, this exhibition now made to John will then be made in the sight of a terror-stricken world, and all the honor which is written for His saints, "of executing judgment upon the heathen," &c. (*Psalm 149*), will be literally accomplished, and the promise of our Lord to every one that overcomes (*Revelation 2:27*), together with a hundred other testimonies of Scripture, will be exactly fulfilled.

SEVEN LAMPS OF FIRE

Next in the description of the throne of God it is written:

Revelation 4

⁵ ...and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Without repeating anything which was advanced in our

second Lecture when treating of “the seven Spirits which are before the throne of God,” the style by which the seer designates the Holy Ghost¹², we are called upon to explain, why the seven Spirits, that is, the person of the Holy Ghost in the condition of dispersion over the seven churches, forming them into one catholic church and communion of saints, should be set forth by seven lamps of fire, and wherefore these should be placed before the throne of God?

Fire was appointed under the law as the great means of purification:

Numbers 31

²¹ ...This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord commanded Moses;

²² Only the gold, and the silver, the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead,

²³ Every thing that may abide the fire, you shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation; and all that abides not the fire, you shall make go through the water.

If I err not, this was the true meaning of all burnt sacrifices also which were offered upon the great altar, that nothing was fit to pass into the presence of God until it had undergone the proof of the fire.

To this the Apostle alludes in *1 Corinthians*, where speaking of the insufficient and untried stones which men may build upon the right foundation,—the false professors which ministers may introduce into the Church, through their imperfect doctrine or their loose discipline,—he signifies that the whole building of the Church and every stone of it, should have to be proved by fire before it should come into the presence of God, saying,

12 See *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 2 “Christ Revealed by Names”, Chapter: “The Name of the Holy Ghost”, p. 15-20.

1 Corinthians 3

¹³ Every man's work shall be made manifest. For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is.

¹⁴ If any man's work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

¹⁵ If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Fire is the symbol of God's holiness in all parts of the Old Testament; for in fire He always came down to the overthrow of His enemies: and so it shall be to the end. *Revelation 20:9*. And both by Moses (*Deuteronomy 4:24*) and by Paul (*Hebrews 12:29*), He is in so many words declared to be "a consuming fire."

The lamps of fire therefore seem to me to convey the same meaning in symbolical language which the word *Holy* commonly prefixed to the Spirit does in common language. It is the same as if we were to say that the Spirit is God the Purifier.

And next, with respect to their being in lamps, I know not well by what other contrivance the number seven, so necessary to the mystery of the universality and oneness of the Spirit, could have been given. To number them required that the fire should be confined; and what is so fit to denote a limited and confined fire as a lamp of fire?

If I err not, the whole of the mystery of the Holy Ghost, as the Purifier of whatever approaches unto God, was shown to Abraham, the father of the faithful, in that mystical sacrifice over which God ratified the covenant with him; between the pieces of which there passed a smoky furnace and a lamp of fire. *Genesis 15:17*. It was on the very day of the year on which the passover was afterward instituted, exactly four hundred years thereafter (*Exodus 12:41*); and therefore we may well believe that it represents the same sacrifice of Christ which was signified in the passover.

Moreover, the horror of thick darkness which then over-spread the natural head of the Church, denotes the horror of thick darkness which came over Christ, on that same night of the passover, in the garden of Gethsemane, and afterward on the cross.

The smoking furnace, which went first between these two pieces, aptly represents not only the affliction of Egypt, there foretold, but Christ's affliction unto the death, to give His life a sacrifice for our redemption.

And the burning lamp, or lamp of fire, which followed and consumed the pieces, denotes the Holy Ghost the Purifier, who came upon Christ's flesh offered as a sacrifice upon the cross, and deposited in the tomb, and consumed out of it that mortality which hinders flesh and blood from inheriting the kingdom of heaven. For if Christ's body was flesh and blood, some change must pass upon it before it is fit to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Having worn the image of the earthly Adam, it must take on the image of the heavenly: for...

1 Corinthians 15

⁵⁰ ...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven, neither can corruption inherit incorruption.

This is the change which passed upon Christ's body in the tomb: that principle of sin which inherits in flesh, and makes it mortal and corruptible, which he had successfully resisted during all His life long, was eradicated out of it by the purifying Spirit; and it lived in an immortal incorruptible state, the hope of every mortal creature which exists.

This same change must pass upon every person before he can be presented unto God, into whose presence a sinful thing cannot enter. Baptism with water is indeed a purification necessary to the enjoyment of the privileges of the Church on earth: baptism with fire is necessary to the enjoyment of the privileges of the Church in glory.

Christ now baptizes with the Holy Ghost under the symbol of water; but He shall yet baptize with the Holy Ghost under the symbol of fire. The one is unto the end of purifying our soul or conscience, the inward man of the heart, and enabling him to act effectively under a sinful nature; the other is the purification of that very nature itself, so that it shall be prone to do God's will and able to fulfill all His pleasure.

These observations lead to the further clearing of that passage of *2 Peter* 3, where fire is set forth as the second baptism of the elements, which heretofore were changed and renovated in the water of the deluge: so then shall they be all changed and renovated in the fire in which the Lord shall be manifested. And like as the waters of the deluge had a double effect, the one to destroy the wicked, the other to save the righteous from destruction, as is declared *1 Peter* 3:20, so shall the fire with which our Lord shall baptize the world work the double effect of destroying all wickedness, sweeping it away into the lake of fire forever, while it purifies and eternally saves the righteous, and presents the world in its holy and faultless form, that God may dwell thereon.

Therefore also it is that in Malachi, the Angel of the Covenant, even Jehovah, is represented as coming as a refiner:

Malachi 3

² But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appears? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:

³ And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

To the question, Who shall stand that day of separation and discernment? the answer is given in the same chapter:

Malachi 3

¹⁶ Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another:

and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.

¹⁷ And they shall be my, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him.

¹⁸ Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves Him not.

Therefore these lamps of fire are placed before the throne, to signify that no one can approach the throne who has not passed their scrutiny; even as a king places before his throne, to keep the way thereof, his chief and most trustworthy princes.

But this is not a similitude merely; it contains a great truth of doctrine, the doctrine of the Church's presentation unto her Husband, by the purification of all sin from her, according as it is written:

Ephesians 5

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it;

²⁶ That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word:

²⁷ That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

And again:

1 Thessalonians 3

¹³ To the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

And so in many other passages of Scripture. As Esther had to undergo purification before she might enter to the presence or throne of Ahasuerus, so has the Church to be purified from the corruption of the grave with the baptism of fire before she

shall enter into the presence of her Lord and Husband.

And the same of every created thing which has fallen into sin; God cannot come unto it until it is purified, nor can it come near unto God: and therefore before the kingdom can be presented to the Father it must be purged from the rule and authority of every wicked and rebellious thing, as is written:

1 Corinthians 15

²⁴ Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

As the altar which consumed the sacrifice of Abraham was a lamp of fire, so deem I that the altar of God upon which fire was continually kept, and which stood before the tabernacle or temple of God, where His presence dwelt, was the sign of this very thing which is expressed in our text sevenfold.

The seven lamps are as it were seven burning altars, upon which everything dedicated to God must first be cleansed by burning. For as fire consumes the coarse and earthy matters of the sacrifice, or rather changes them into aerial forms of matter; so shall the baptism of fire to which we must be subjected change our vile bodies into the form of His glorious body, by that powerful working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.

The high priest, when he went into the presence of God, had to carry with him both blood shed and incense in a censer containing live coals taken from the altar. The blood is the natural life of Christ offered for us; the incense changing its form under the action of the fire of the altar signifies Christ's precious body by the fire-baptism of the Holy Ghost changed into the resurrection form. And the high priest's presenting himself with these two teaches us, that both the holy death of Christ and the glorious resurrection are to be held forth by us in our faith, in order to our finding acceptance in His presence.

The Jewish Church was set for the witness of God's unity; and therefore, as it had but one candlestick, so has it but one lamp of fire or altar of burnt offerings: but the Christian Church, being set for the witness of a Trinity in unity, has seven, the symbol of the Holy Ghost in procession from the Father and the Son.

THE SEA OF GLASS

Revelation 4

⁶ And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal...

When Moses received the Old Testament from God on the mount, and was about to descend unto the people, he was commanded on this wise:

Exodus 24

¹ And He said unto Moses, Come up unto the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and worship afar off.

This also he did obey after that he had sanctified the people with the blood of the testament, and engaged them to be the Lord's. And what they saw upon the mount is thus described:

Exodus 24

¹⁰ And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.

¹¹ And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

This pavement under His feet is what I quote this passage for, as throwing some light upon the text. Jehovah appeared unto them as a man; nor do I believe that He ever otherwise appeared: but in the glorified form of man He now appears, or else why such a glorious pavement under His feet?

When He appeared unto Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, He trod the dusty ground, and took the comfort of water from the

patriarch to wash His feet; but now that He is clothing Himself in the glory of the resurrection man, He has not the dusty ground, but another form of matter, under His hallowed feet; which is described as a paved work: giving us to understand that it was nothing else but a ground for His feet to walk on; as truly the appearance of a ground to stand and walk upon, as His body was the appearance of a man.

The mention of “feet” identifies His form; the mention of a “paved work” identifies “a floor, a basement,” to bear Him up. He is not suspended in the air; but a very man standing upon a ground of glorious appearance. That appearance is of a sapphire stone, which is of a fine blue color, second only to the diamond in luster. It is for its luster, I think, rather than its color, that it is chosen, because it is added, “and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness;” that is to say, “the body of heaven when it is serene.”

This now gives us the color, and therefore I think the sapphire gives us the luster; as in the passage referred to above, concerning the Nazarites, “their polishing was of sapphire.” That therefore which upbears Jehovah in the glorified manhood, that which His foot rests and walks on, has its fittest emblem in the appearance of the serene and majestic heavens.

We are not told, whether in the transfiguration the mount itself, where Moses and Elias conversed with Him in glory, had any such appearance. For my own part, I am rather disposed to believe that it had; and that Peter, in the recollection of this, calls it “the holy mount.” However this may be, we are not to suppose that Jehovah, as shown unto Moses, was suspended in the sky. Else why come up to the mount to see Him? He was in the mount, and on the mount, and the glory which He assumed made the mount beneath His feet thus glorious to appear.

The next passage which yields us light upon this subject is in the vision of Ezekiel so often referred to, where it is thus

written:

Ezekiel 1

²² And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creatures was as the color of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

This is the description of the appearance of the substance on which the throne of God rested; as in our text it was to look upon as crystal, but it had a terrific aspect, which I know not well how to account for, unless by understanding that of columnar masses, as the law of crystal is to form itself, the firmament was composed, which from their height and splendor were terrible to look upon.

Such a thing is actually to be seen on the ascent of Mount Blanc from the valley of Chamouny as a crystallized level space of frozen ice, which, from the appearance of it, actually goes by the name, *mere de glace*, or *sea of glass*, as in the text.

There is a very mysterious and almost unintelligible passage in the book of *Job*, which I incline to think refers to the same thing:

Job 37

²² Fair weather [margin: *gold*] comes out of the north: with God is terrible majesty [literally: *light*].

Now in *Revelation* 21:21, pure gold is said to be as transparent glass, and in our text a sea of glass is said to be like unto crystal. These being put together and applied to the passage in *Job* would give this interpretation of it, that:

“The terrible light which is with God is like the golden glaciers, with which the region of the north abounds.”

This again would bring us back to Ezekiel’s terrible crystal; for that frozen ice and crystal are of one and the same appearance is manifest from the formation of the word *crystal*, which is two words in Greek, the one signifying *ice*, and the other *standing* or *fixed*; that is, *permanent ice*, ice which will

not melt.

The *terrible light* of *Job* I regard, therefore, as the same with the terrible crystal of *Ezekiel*; and the expression which precedes it, “gold comes out of the north,” I know not how to connect with this great truth, than by the golden splendor with which the region of the north is invested.

Whether or not this be a genuine interpretation of the passage in *Job*, it has given us the means of explaining Ezekiel’s terrible crystal by the appearance of the arctic region, or of the mountains which lie within the line of perpetual frost, when the sun is shining brightly upon them.

I forgot to mention, in the illustration derived from *Exodus*, that the sapphire also, as described by the ancients (who are the only authorities as to the substance signified by these names), has in it “bright golden spots which glittered” and this we know, by looking at icicles hanging from a house-roof, is the exact appearance which a sea of crystal would assume—a serene blueness with golden gleams and points everywhere interspersed.

Now, then, we return to John’s description of what he saw under the throne of the Eternal—a sea of glass; literally, sea glassy like to crystal. The word “sea” gives us the notion of its levelness, and also perhaps its inequality of surface, like a sea concreted in the midst of its working. The word “glassy” adds the notion of its transparency, its fullness of purity and light; and the addition, “like unto crystal,” teaches us that it was fixed in its beauty, and splendor, and majesty. Such was the basement upon which the throne of God, and, as I figure it to myself, the thrones of the elders and the whole celestial assembly rested.

In Ezekiel’s vision it was upborn upon the heads and wings of the living creatures: but here it upbears them; for they are in the midst of the throne. In both cases it is the firmament or basement which supports all, as it is also in the vision which

the four priests: Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, with the seventy elders, did see. And no doubt it is intended to set forth, by the best emblem which can be given, that form in which the matter of the ground is where Christ and His glorified Church shall abide. It is the basement upon which they are supported; and it can signify nothing else than that form which the dull ground shall assume, when it shall have partaken of the purification by fire; when all the dross, and darkness, and corruption shall be purged out of it; and it shall be as one great mirror for reflecting the glory and the power of its Creator.

It is matter purified from the taint of sin, clarified from the corruption of death—a fit resting-place and habitation for the glorified bodies of the saints. It is said (*Hebrews 9*) that the heavenly things are purified by the blood of Christ; here they are exhibited in their purity. It is said (*Romans 8*) that the creation also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption; here it is exhibited as it then shall be.

- Crystal cannot be dissolved by acids, and so it is one of the best representations of indestructibility;
- It is a pure and unmixed substance, and is therefore one of the best representations of purity;
- It is full of light, and therefore one of the best representations of holiness;
- It forms itself into pyramids, which are regarded as an emblem of the Trinity.

And, take it for all in all, it is one of the fittest emblems which matter affords to represent what matter is yet destined to become. We give it therefore as the interpretation of this sea of glass like unto crystal, that it is the symbol of the all-supporting matter of the earth in that unchangeable form to which it will arrive when all wickedness has been purged out of it, at the end of the Millennium, as I believe.

Not that the earth shall have to wait so long for the mani-

festation of its glorious form which is now in the heavens,

1 Peter 1

⁴ An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away [*amaranthine*: imperishable].

It shall come down, according to the promise of Peter, in the last times of the present dispensation; till which it is reserved, or kept in store.

And accordingly when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, the matter of it is described by the same similitude of crystal and of gold like transparent glass. The New Jerusalem, considered in its inhabitants, is the bride of the Lamb; considered in its substance, is their city with foundation, which the faithful have looked unto ever since the days of Abraham (*Hebrews 11*). And this city, which is matter in its eternal form, when it is set forth by one similitude, that similitude is the same as that in our text:

Revelation 21

¹⁰ And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

¹¹ Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

Again, when describing the unadorned street, and the substance of the ground, it is:

Revelation 21

²¹ The street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

And to represent the beautified and adorned part of it, all the purest and most brilliant precious stones in nature are brought together.

Another proof that our interpretation of this symbol is correct we derive from the description given of the matter of the garden of Eden before the Fall. Sin has taken the beauty, the

purity, and the pleasantness out of the inferior forms of matter. There can be no more doubt, than that it has so operated upon matter's noblest form, the body of man. The description of Eden, in its unfallen state is so exactly like the symbolical description of Jerusalem, that the one seems to be the original of the other. And no doubt it is, for we have already seen¹³ that the one is the type of the other. This description is found in *Ezekiel*, in the description of the prince of Tyrus:

Ezekiel 28

¹³You have been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of your tabrets and of your pipes was prepared in you in the day that you were created.

Some have inclined to think that “the sea of glass like unto crystal,” which we have explained as the symbol of matter in its purified form, has a reference of some kind or other to the brazen or molten sea which was in the temple of Solomon. But against this view several things militate:

1. There is no allusion to brass in the description of it.
2. The brazen sea contained water; but this contains no element of water whatever.
3. Though we have had occasion to refer to the ordinances of the temple more than once, in order to explain, or rather to illustrate some of the things of this vision, we are far from thinking that it has any express respect to the scenery of the temple, like the vision of *Revelation* 8 or chapter 11 or chapter 14.

But it is that great original of which the tabernacle was but

13 See *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 4 “Epistle to the Church in Ephesus”, Chapter: “His First Promise”, Section: “To Eat of the Tree”, p. 97-99.

a copy. Or rather, perhaps, to speak more correctly, of which the holy of holies was a copy.

It is the representation of the heavenly throne, and the order in which all things are subordinated under it; all which now has existence in the invisible, and shall hereafter be brought out into the visible.

It is, if I err not, the representation of the New Jerusalem above, and which shall in due time be let down unto the earth, whereof it shall be the blessedness and the glory. To the presence of this better Sun, the earth shall acknowledge all the pure and perfect blessedness which she shall enjoy through the millennial ages; into which kings shall bring the glory of their riches and their power, and from which shall flow forth the river of God's goodness to make the nations glad.

I am well aware that our allegorizers (for I refuse them the name of spiritualizers, seeing they deny the perfect work of the Spirit in matter, concerning which I discourse) will look upon all this as very crude and material. I tell them once for all, that I believe in matter, that it is an essential part of man's person; yea, and of Christ's person also as Christ. And I believe it shall abide a part, and a most important part, of God's creation, so long as Christ remains body of man as well as soul of man, and Son of God, which is forever.

And so believing, being no Berkleyan, to believe matter a fiction, but being a Christian, to believe it a created, fallen, and redeemed substance, I am going forward on my path and showing forth the glorious things which God intends towards it, in that day when the devil shall be cast out of it into the bottomless pit, and its most glorious Citadel and temple shall come down from heaven.

Every step I take is upon the neck of their false views of God's purpose, which they loosely speak and think of, as if it were the annihilation of matter; whereas it is the spiritualizing of it; that is, not the making of it into spirit, but the mak-

ing of it under the hands of the Spirit, to become a most glorious monument of the power of God, putting Himself forth in the person of His Son as the Redeemer, whose office it is as Redeemer to deliver God's fallen creation from the bondage of sin, and present it to Him in eternal righteousness and glory.

Theirs is a wretched system of abstractions, which can only stand in the ignorance or misinterpretation of the Scriptures; ours is a system of realities, which comes out of the Scriptures, believed and explained in the simple meaning of their terms. Theirs is a system of mystification, ours is a system of explanation. And I say it again, theirs is a system of intellectual abstractions, ours is a system of spiritual realities.

Such is the picture of the celestial throne, and such are the things of which its various parts are symbolical. It presents us with God manifest unto, operative upon, and ruling all things in and by the risen Christ, who is one with God as to His Divine nature, and one with man, the prince of the creatures, as to His manhood. As God knowing God, as man governing all things, and as God-man communicating the knowledge of God to every subject creature.

The glory with which His throne is encircled is the glory of the redeemed earth, the rainbow glory of the earth forever guaranteed against destruction.

The peers of His kingdom, His subordinate kings, the thrones unto whom He delegates His power, are the redeemed sons of men, who exercise their rule with, and under Him, over all creatures, angels, archangels, and beings of every name.

The basis upon which the throne of the Eternal rests is matter in its renewed and resplendent and glorified form. These things we have attained unto; and now there stands before us one other thing of deepest signification.

THE FOUR BEASTS, OR LIVING CREATURES

THE seer beheld them in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne.

Revelation 4

⁶ ...and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

Now what is the condition of place intended by this description? I observe that similar language in the 6th verse of the next chapter is used of the Lamb:

Revelation 5

⁶ And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain...

What notion do these words convey? To my mind both of these descriptions were utterly unintelligible until, in studying the same mystery in the 1st chapter of Ezekiel, I seemed to myself to obtain some light from these words:

Ezekiel 1

¹³ As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures, and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth light. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

This suggested to my mind, that the living creatures, as seen by John, were not stationary, but kept in continual motion, like those of Ezekiel. Their motion, however, was limited within the circuit of the throne, the midst of the throne, and round about the throne.

And as Ezekiel saw burning coals of fire, like the appearance of lamps, going up and down among the living creatures, so do I reckon that the Lamb slain is seen everywhere in the

midst of the throne, and the four living creatures and likewise in the midst of the elders.

And the mystery of the whole is, as it seems to me, the mystery of life: Christ is the life of the Church. The four living creatures and the four and twenty elders are the Church; and He who became the life of many by dying Himself (“unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground, it abides alone,” *John* 12:24) is represented as having an omnipresence in the body of His Church, both of the living creatures and the elders.

As life has an omnipresence in the body, so that if it could be represented to the sight, it would be represented everywhere, and wholly in every place; so Christ in virtue of His being slain, being the life of the body, which is the Church, the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, is represented as everywhere in the body, and all in every place.

In Ezekiel it was fire not diffused abroad, but a lamp of fire, having entireness and unity, yet everywhere present by rapidity of motion: this was proper to denote the life of Christ in the Church to a seer in the former dispensation, because fire is the symbol of the Holy Ghost, and under the law did the work of giving new form to the sacrifice, transmuting it from the earthy form of the creature into its aerial or spiritual form.

But to a seer under the New Testament, when the sacrifice had appeared as the Lamb of God, and by life out of death had given life, it became proper to represent the life of the Church, not by fire, but by a Lamb slain, yet living still, flitting in His unity from place to place, and having in the sight of the beholder an omnipresent unity; so that as the definition of God is, all in every place, a circle all center, without any circumference, the definition of Christ as Head of the Church is, all life, or complete life, in all His members.

This again has its similitude in the system of the body, wherein the head, which is the region of sensation, and from which if any member be cut off, it is senseless, has yet a ubiq-

uity or omnipresence over the whole body by the communication of the nerves; so that the feeling seems to be in the hand, in the feet, and over every part.

This, which I believe to be the true condition of place conveyed by the words, “a Lamb as it had been slain in midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in midst of the elders,” gives us that which is meant to be conveyed of the four living creatures, by saying that they were in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, or, literally, in midst of the throne, and circle of the throne. That is, they were everywhere, from center to circumference: not by diffusion, but by ubiquity; wherever you looked you saw them.

Ezekiel 1

¹⁴ They ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

This is to teach us that the throne of God is the living Church; that as the throne which sustains the King is the most honorable place, the most honored implement of His kingdom, wherefore it is adorned with such splendor, so the bound of the redeemed Church is the seat, the honored seat, of God, the throne of the Eternal, where He dwells, where He sits, and reigns in glory and in power.

As the Shekinah rested in the arms of the cherubim of gold which stood upon the mercy-seat of God, so the true Shekinah, which is the glorified body of Christ, which is the presence of the Eternal King, rests upon the Church, upon the living creatures, all instinct with life, and that life the life of the Lamb which had been slain.

Before leaving this glorious symbol of the Church as the living throne of God, I have to observe how exactly coincident herewith is the New Jerusalem; which, while it is called “the Lamb’s wife”, one with Him, and He one with it, as the four living creatures are one in place with the Lamb, and the Lamb one in place with them, is likewise called “the tabernacle of

God”, whose temple the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are; whose sun and moon the glory of God and the light of the Lamb are; where is the throne of God and of the Lamb (*Revelation* 20); and by Jeremiah expressly called the throne of God. *Jeremiah* 3:17.

Like the temple of Peter, a temple composed of living stones and inhabited by God, is the New Jerusalem, at once the living wife of Christ, His elect Church, His body, and a place, a city, a habitation of risen saints in their risen bodies, a tabernacle of God Most High.

THEIR APPEARANCE

Now, for the appearance of these four living creatures, they were full of eyes:

Revelation 4

⁶ ...full of eyes before and behind.

⁸ ...full of eyes within...

So was it with the wheels of Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 1

¹⁸ ...and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.

Ezekiel 10

¹² And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had.

The eyes fill the wheels and cherubim combined, for in both there was but one spirit.

The Lamb also has seven eyes, denoting totality and completeness of knowledge. And these, as well as the seven horns in His head, are declared to be the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. Totality of power, totality of observation, are assigned to the Lamb, and the earth is given as the region over which His observation and His power were extended.

But to the living creatures is given only much observation and insight: eyes before and behind, to denote observation of what is without; eyes within, to denote insight into the causes and mystery of all things which are seen. To them are not given seven eyes, but far more than seven, fullness of eyes; yet, with all that fullness and with all that number, so much is not expressed as is expressed by the number seven, which were in the head of the Lamb.

And this is the beauty and power of the symbolical number seven, signifying self-containedness. All observation whatsoever is in Christ, by virtue of the number seven. But only a very great quantity is in the living creatures, by virtue of the multitude of their eyes, as much as they are capable of containing. The one has all knowledge, comprehension, inspection, in Himself complete. The other has as much as He is pleased to bestow upon them; a great deal indeed, very, very much, but dependent upon Him, measured out from Him, derived from His fullness.

Now, I further observe, that the perfect, and complete, and self-contained power, total and universal, which is in the horns of the Lamb, the four living creatures have nothing of at all, but only the four and twenty elders, whose song, as has been observed, contains power (*Revelation* 4:11); instead of which the song of the four living creatures contains thanks. This being confirmed also by the symbol of thrones and crowns adjoined to the elders, strengthens the idea represented above, that it is the fullness which is in the Church set forth by two symbols.

I say not at present two parts of the Church, but two aspects of the Church:

- the one the aspect of power, the other the aspect of knowledge and comprehension;
- the one the aspect of seated dignity, the other the aspect of unresting praise and worship.

For the living creatures rest not day and night,—literally:

Revelation 4

⁸ ...and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

But the elders have rest. They sit in throned state, priests upon their thrones, and their action is to be ever falling down prostrate before the throne of God, and to be ever casting their crowns before it. This is an act, as I understand, of continual and perpetual acknowledgment of their dignities derived from Christ, and held from Him in continual homage.

While all these things are beyond a doubt contained in the symbol of the four living creatures, I think there is a deeper mystery still, which, if I err not, is the mystery of spirit. It is manifest that nothing could be undertaken so difficult as to set out spirit by a visible symbol, which I think has been accomplished by Ezekiel and John's description of the living creatures.

The eye is a symbol of a spiritual power, as contra-distinguished from a worldly or temporal power, which is symbolized by the horn. And that little horn of *Daniel*, wherein were eyes, is therefore an antichrist; because it takes upon itself this double prerogative of horns and eyes, which belongs to the Lamb, and to Him only. *Revelation 5:6*.

So in *Zechariah* the seven eyes upon the one foundation stone are declared to be:

Zechariah 4

¹⁰ ...the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

This rapidity of motion is proper only to a spirit: but this is not left to inference, but is expressly so declared:

Revelation 5

⁶ And seven eyes, which [*eyes*, not *horns*] are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.

And indeed nothing is more common than to see an eye painted in pictures to represent the spiritual omnipresence of God. Furthermore, we have seen that the seven lamps of fire are appropriated (*Revelation* 4:5) to signify the Holy Ghost; and the same emblem we do find in *Ezekiel* used for the living creatures.

The whole passage is worthy of careful attention, as revealing a wonderful effort of descriptive power to represent a spiritual reality by visible objects.

Ezekiel 1

¹³ As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures, and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

¹⁴ And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

But perhaps beyond all other expedients is that in the text, of representing them as full of eyes, both outwardly and inwardly; that is, altogether spirits, and I would say disembodied spirits, the lightnings and thunderings proceeding from the throne likewise convey the same idea:

Hebrews 1

⁷ Which makes His angels spirits [winds], and His ministers a flame of fire.

Their never resting carries with it the same impression. And the idea of life set forth above, which I was led to from their being seen everywhere within the throne, gives strength to the same notion, that spirit is the radical power of the symbol of the four living creatures.

Now from all these considerations it has been often pressed upon my mind while meditating this great subject, that the four living creatures do represent the Church baptized with the Holy Ghost; that is, all who since the days of Pentecost have been added to the number of the heavenly host; while

the elders represent the saints of the former dispensation, who were trained under the promise of being kings and priests, which was God's first overture to the Jews by Moses (*Exodus 19:6*), but were not baptized with the Holy Ghost. The one the saints gathered before, the other the saints gathered after, the day of Pentecost.

For, let men quibble as they please, I assert it to be a great point of scriptural doctrine, that baptism with the Holy Ghost began upon Christ, when the dove descended on Him, and came not to another person till the day of Pentecost; and any other view makes void the grand distinction between the Old and the New Testament dispensation. The reasons of this great distinction are these:

1. The express declarations of Scripture, fixing the coming of the Holy Ghost upon men to the time posterior to the glory of Christ. *John 7:39; Acts 19:2.*
2. The coming of the Holy Ghost upon all flesh was a great promise of the Father, which Christ is declared to have received when He ascended up on high, and to have sent down on the day of Pentecost. *Joel 2:28; Acts 2:16.*
3. It is an express prerogative of Christ as man to baptize with the Holy Ghost. *Matthew 3:11.*
4. Redemption from the law is necessary previous to the receiving of the Spirit. *Galatians 4:5-6; 3:13-14.*
5. The power to become a son of God, which is by regeneration of the Holy Ghost, was derived from Christ to those who believed on Him, Jews as well as Gentiles. *John 1:12-13.*

These and many other reasons, which we cannot go into at present, leave no doubt on our mind that it is no better theology to say that Christ was incarnate before He was generated of the Virgin, as to say that the Holy Ghost was given before the day of Pentecost; and as the Old Testament saints were saved by looking forward to the one, so also by looking for-

ward to the other.

I believe it to be the characteristic of the Christian Church to be spiritual and of the Jewish Church to be carnal (*Galatians* 3:2-6; *Hebrews* 7:6; 9:10), saved by faith of things to come. By carnal I do not mean unholy, but “babes in Christ,” under tutors and schoolmasters. *1 Corinthians* 3:1.

We have that thing without which they could not be perfected: wherefore it is written:

Hebrews 11

³⁹ And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

⁴⁰ God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

And in the enumeration of the heavenly company in the following chapter of *Hebrews* we have two companies. One:

Hebrews 12

²³ ...the spirits of just men made perfect.

These I regard as those ancient saints perfected at the resurrection of Christ, by being raised along with Him. The other:

Hebrews 12

²³ The general assembly and Church of the firstborn...

These I regard as the New Testament Church, those to whom He gives power to become sons of God, those who are begotten of Him as the second Adam by regeneration of the Holy Spirit, the firstborn sons of Him who is the High Priest.

This train of reasoning and reflection, I say, has sometimes, yea often, led me to think that there is something more in the distinction of the Church into elder and living creatures than merely to set forth by a double symbol more fully the offices of the Church in glory.

It contains the twofold condition of the redeemed:

1. the elders, or the Old Testament saints, in their bodies,

raised for government in the form which Christ had from His resurrection to His ascension;

2. the four living creatures, or the New Testament Church, spiritual, yet clothed upon with their bodies, as Christ's was on the holy mount.

But I am far from being convinced of this; and I throw it out rather as a conjecture, for which much may be advanced, than as a judgment or conclusion to which I have come. The great point, however, that spirituality is the characteristic of the symbol of the four living creatures, stands unaffected whether this conjecture be valid or not. But more of this hereafter.

THE FOURFOLD FORM

Revelation 4

⁷ And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

It has been supposed by many interpreters that the fourfold form of the lion, the calf, the man, and the eagle has respect to the four standards under which the 12 tribes of Israel marched through the wilderness. For of the Jewish writers it is asserted, that while the standard of each tribe was in color according to the stone representing it in the high priest's breast-plate, there was wrought:

1. upon that of Judah the figure of the lion;
2. upon that of Ephraim, the figure of the ox or calf;
3. upon that of Reuben, the firstborn, the figure of a man;
4. upon that of Dan, the figure of an eagle.

Now it was commanded by the Lord (*Numbers 2*) that under these four head tribes the rest should marshal themselves:

1. Judah on the east, with Issachar and Zebulun;
2. Reuben on the south, with Simeon and Gad;
3. Ephraim on the west, with Manasseh and Benjamin;

4. Dan on the north, with Asher and Naphtali.

And in the center of this quadrangular encampment, which it is believed covered a little more than twelve square miles, there was the tabernacle of God, with four divisions of the Levites forming a small inner encampment around it. This was the manner of God's marching through the wilderness—encompassed and defended around by His chosen people, under their banners of the lion, the calf, the man, and the flying eagle.

To cover and to guard is thought by the learned to be the proper signification of cherub; and, in *Ezekiel*, the prince of Tyrus is called the cherub that covers. *Ezekiel* 28:14. In *Genesis* 3:24, they are said to be set to keep the way of the tree of life.

Now, by these four standards, together composing the Church, the place of God's presence was covered and defended. He did, as it were, march upborne upon their shoulders. He dwelt amongst them, and made them His habitation; nor did He remove from amongst them until the days of Ezekiel, and that with the assured promise of His returning again.

This was the condition of things during the whole progress of their journeying in the wilderness, until they obtained possession of their inheritance; a period which is by Paul (*Hebrews* 3 & 4), as well as in other parts of Scripture, declared to be the type of the Church from the time that the rock of Christ's body was rent, and the waters of the Spirit flowed out on the day of Pentecost, continuing with us till this day in the sacrament of baptism, and to continue till we shall pass Jordan, and those of us who, like Joshua and Caleb, are believing shall enter into the rest which remains for the people of God.

Of the spiritual Church, therefore, the Lord riding upon the cherub through the wilderness is the fittest symbol. See Him in His pillar of cloud and fire marching over the host above;

see the host beneath, under their fourfold banners of the lion, the ox, the man, and the eagle, marching under and within the circuit of His throne; see all without the camp unclean, and every unclean person put forth of it; and you have, I think, the origin of God enthroned upon the cherubim, and the cherubim restricted to the limits of His throne,—likewise of the New Jerusalem, the throne of the Lord (*Jeremiah* 3:17), into which nothing enters that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination or makes a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. *Revelation* 21:27.

Revelation 22

¹⁵ And without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.

I can give no better account of the origin of these forms than the tradition which the Jews have handed down to us, that they were engraven upon the four cardinal standards of the tribes. The lion of the tribe of Judah and the ox of Ephraim are certainly referred to in the blessings of these tribes. *Genesis* 49:9; *Deuteronomy* 33:17. Reuben's blessing, in both these places, also carries the same reference to the man. But wherefore Dan should have the eagle I know not, but rest contented with the agreement of the Jewish writers that it was so.

As to the silence which is maintained in the *Books of Moses* with respect to these standards, the same silence is maintained with respect to the form of the cherubim, which is not given until they were exhibited to Ezekiel on the eve of their departure.

Upon the whole, therefore, we give our judgment for this interpretation of the forms of the cherubim; and we remark how it confirms the conjecture we have thrown out, that they refer to the Church in the wilderness,—that is, the Church as it has been seen since the day of Pentecost. While the symbol of twenty-four elders, taken from the temple service in the

days of David, refers to the Church settled in the kingly, priestly state; that is, to the saints who lived under the former dispensation, wherein the kingdom was an essential part, being the firstfruits of the kingdom to come, even as to us the Spirit is the firstfruits of the spiritual Jerusalem to come.

But when all this has been said and admitted, it amounts to no more than the ascertaining of the type by which the Church was represented, and in the language of which it is symbolically described. And the deeper question still remains, Why is this type chosen? What truth of God's Church does it represent?

Each of these four creatures from whom the likenesses are taken is a ruler and sovereign in its kind.

1. Man is the sovereign of all God's works, visible and invisible. He was so created in Adam; and in Christ he is so in actual and eternal operation.
2. The lion is the lord of the unclean and untamed beasts.
3. The ox is the head of all the clean beasts which might be offered in sacrifice, and was required at the hand of a prince and a priest when atonement was made for them.
4. The eagle is the head of the feathered fowls of heaven.

Sovereignty or dominion, therefore, I think, is manifestly contained in the choice of each of these similitudes; and in the union of them all I think universal sovereignty to be clearly denoted. For combine them into one, and what have you?

1. Man the sovereign of the rational or the spiritual, of all life which looks up to God, and has any portion of His image;
2. The eagle the sovereign of all life which dwells in the airy firmament, of all that is brought forth by the waters;
3. The lion and the ox dividing between them the sovereignty of the clean and the unclean creatures

formed out of the dust of the ground.

This division into clean and unclean, which is the most ancient of Divine distinctions, expresses the eternal truth, as seems to me, of a portion of creation in a closer covenant with God than another portion. This was not a distinction made by the Law, but older than the Deluge. And though to us who are spiritual it be removed, there are positive declarations in all Scripture, especially in the last chapter of *Ezekiel*, of its being introduced again, when the dispensations of God shall revert to their natural from their present supernatural course. Against this time it is declared (*Ezekiel* 16:62) that the Jews shall be in a closer covenant with God than the other nations; and during the same period it is said of the New Jerusalem, that “without are dogs,” which are the unclean creatures.

This indicates to me an eternal truth of a distinction in creation between the holy and the unholy, between the redeemed and the unredeemed, between the saved and the lost. And perhaps it is for the purpose of including both these departments of creation that the lion and the ox are introduced.

But be this as it may, the conclusion seems to me to stand good, that another use of this fourfold form is to represent the dominion of all life as resident in these living creatures; the spiritual Church, which upbears the throne of God, and has its eternal dwelling-place in the New Jerusalem, where is the throne of Jehovah, answering exactly to that sovereignty which is given to Christ and His body, the Church, in the last verses of the 1st chapter of *Ephesians*: Christ, head over all, the Church the fullness of Him that fills all in all, all other things under their feet.

He that sits upon the throne and the throne itself are one; instinct with one life; speaking with one voice: it is a compound symbol, like the New Jerusalem, which is at once the wife and city of our God.

And thus to represent the throne of our God and His Christ by all the forms of nature over which they rule, by the life formed from the waters, by the twofold life, holy and unholy, in heaven and hell, formed from the earth by the life of the invisible and rational spirit, this seems to me both a reasonable and noble device.

How often have I seen Britannia enthroned upon the subject personifications of Asia, and Africa, and America! It is as if, to set it forth familiarly, our King's throne should be composed of a piece from every sort of tree which grows within His dominions. If I mistake not, this same method of representation will be found at the bottom of the supporters in heraldry.

The substance of this observation therefore is, that all creation shall be subject to the Church, both spirits, and things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; that the throne of God exercises sway over all invisible being, all being in the heavens, all being on the earth, and all being under the earth, in the unholy places.

There is another observation which I have to make upon the fourfold form of the living creatures, and which I value the more as being derived from this book itself; for, of all things, I love to be guided and directed in my interpretations by the Word of God. Each of them takes a part in one of the first four seals; and in their order of first, second, third, and fourth.

Now from the character of those seals we may obtain some insight into the character of the four living creatures. Without advancing any theory of the seals, it is manifest that:

1. the first, with which the lion has to do, is mighty, large, and triumphant conquest;
2. the second, with which the calf has to do, is bloodshed and slaughter;

3. the third, with which the man has to do, sad and sore famine; and
4. the fourth, with which the eagle has to do, is general destruction by plague, war, famine, and the wild beasts of the earth.

To understand what part the four living creatures have in this, it must be known that the action of the seals is to rid the earth of its oppressors, and to take possession of it for the Lamb, whose right it is. He opens the seals of successive judgment upon the oppressors of the earth, and each of the living creatures sympathizing therewith, and no doubt having a hand therein within the veil, calls the attention of the seer to what is effected.

The lion-like cherub, according to this scheme, expresses the roaring of Christ against His enemies, His scattering and discomfiting them (*Isaiah* 31:4)—this answers well to the lion of Judah, as described. *Genesis* 49:9.

The ox-cherub expresses that which is proper to the ox, to tread out with violence, to thrash the nations; and this again answers well to Ephraim (*Hosea* 10:11), and it also answers well to Ephraim's destiny. *Deuteronomy* 33:17.

The connection of the man cherub with the third seal is more difficult to understand: and at present I can only say that, if it be famine which is signified in the seal, it shows the general affliction and woe which it spreads over mankind; if it be spiritual famine, then it signifies the faintness and misery into which the reasonable creation of God is brought.

And how the general carnage which attends the fourth seal is connected with the eagle-faced cherub is well explained, referring to *Revelation* 19:17, where unto such a carnage all the fowls of heaven are summoned.

But I confess that the result of this observation does not satisfy me. If there be a specific appropriateness of each

cherub to each seal, then it is, I take it, something deeper and fuller than I have expressed above. Perhaps there is no such appropriateness. But this is not the place for further research.

There is yet another method of sounding the great depth of truth which is contained in the symbol of the four living creatures; which is, by studying the points of agreement and disagreement between *Ezekiel* and *John*, and trying what can be made out from this. I have studied much, and been sore distressed, to come at the reason why those four wheels which are attached to the four cherubim of *Ezekiel*, and have one spirit with them, and are full of eyes like they, and instinct with the same motion and will, should be lacking in the vision of our text.

My notion of what Ezekiel saw is, that these four cherubim and these four wheels did upbear together, as it were, on four sides the basement of the throne of God, which is described by Daniel as having wheels like burning fire. *Daniel* 7:9. These wheels revolve not, which would give them a motion of their own: whereas the object of the Holy Spirit is to make us to understand, that the whole complex body of cherubim and wheels was instinct with one life, was one living thing, whose complication of appearance is merely to increase the expressiveness of it as a device of God for conveying much truth unto His Church.

Why, then, are these wheels lacking in John's vision? The natural answer is, Because the throne is now come to a state of rest; whereas formerly it was in a state of motion, and did wheel itself from place to place, and finally mounted up from the earth and disappeared by the way of the east (*Ezekiel* 10); and will not return again till the Jews are restored. *Ezekiel* 43.

And why, it may be asked, is that cherubic throne come to rest? The answer is found in these verses:

Psalm 110

¹ Sit at my right hand, until I make all Your enemies Your

footstool;

Hebrews 4

¹⁰ For he that is entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from His.

Therefore it is, I think, that the throne is without its wheels. What these wheels attached to the cherubim may signify is another question, which belongs rather to the interpretation of *Ezekiel* than of *John*. I know no better account of it than that the Church is the cause of all the motion, and change, and revolution in the providence of God; that there is one spirit in providence and grace; that the Church is the ultimate end of every work of God upon the earth.

It has also been a subject of much meditation with me, why the cherubim of *Ezekiel* should be under the firmament of the throne, and the cherubim of *John* above, upon it. And of this I can give no account, save upon the principle suggested above, that these living creatures denote the spiritual form of the Church which has come into being since the day of Pentecost, and not the saints before that, who, I think, are represented in the elders: as indeed they are expressly named by St. Paul:

Hebrews 11

² For by it the elders obtained a good report.

Which are referred to by *Isaiah*, under the name ancients:

Isaiah 24

²³ Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.

According to this idea, the cherubim in *Ezekiel* are properly represented as under the firmament of the throne of God, not manifested, not yet in being, otherwise than as a purpose; but in the time of *John* they were in real being, and therefore properly represented as above the firmament.

Whatever this change denotes, it certainly is no insignifi-

cant thing; and I confess myself utterly unable to say what it is, save upon the supposition given above.

This also accounts for the elders coming in as a new element in the celestial vision. Till Christ came they were not perfected; they waited for their perfection, and could not receive it until that better thing provided for us had come. *Hebrews* 11:40. As the spirits of just men made perfect they take their place in the celestial assembly. *Hebrews* 12:23.

These are deep things, and I treat them with cautious reverence; knocking at the door, that God in His own good time may open it unto me.

There is another characteristic difference between Ezekiel and John's visions; which is, that in the former the four faces inhere in the same form, but in the latter each form has only one face. Ezekiel's cherubim have each all the four faces; John's have only one each. This is very deep: I cannot attain unto it.

I quote the following account of this matter from a passage in the 3rd Number of the *Morning Watch*, by my learned friend Mr. Tudor:

In *Ezekiel* the four faces are united in each of the cherubim, because all the several aspects of the Church were exhibited in the same body of people, the nation of Israel: in the *Apocalypse* they have four separate forms, showing, that there the several aspects of the Church would be exhibited in different bodies of people and different nations.¹⁴

My view, therefore, of the four living creatures which John saw within the limits of the throne is, that they represent the peculiar honor and privilege and nearness to Christ, and intimate communion with His person, which is reserved in the age to come for the least in the kingdom of heaven, greater in degree than John the Baptist, one of the most advanced, if not

14 *Morning Watch*, No. III. p. 311.

the most advanced, of the Old Testament saints.

- To us who are baptized out of the carnal altogether, in the bondage of which the Jews were fast bound;
- To us who are spiritual through the baptism of the Holy Ghost;
- To us who are baptized into the fellowship of Christ's suffering weakness;
- To us who are members of His body by regeneration,

...is the honor received:

- of entering by the gates into that city which is the throne of God,
- of sitting with Him on that throne which He shall set up on the earth,
- of being in the liberty and activity and power and glory of the spiritual being, and
- of indwelling in that city which is the holy of holies of creation, the heavenly things purified with Christ's blood, the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and imperishable, about to be revealed.

While to the elders who were trained under the carnal ordinances, and enabled to resist and overcome natural wickedness through faith, to deny themselves to things seen and temporal in the foreview of a better inheritance, who were trained under ordinance of law and kingdom,—to these elders it is reserved to exercise the government and occupy the thrones, and minister at the altars, and fulfill all the royal priestly offices over the nations in existence during the Millennium, thus receiving that heirship of the world, and that power to bless all nations, in the faith, in the hope, of which they were contented to endure all things. While they look forward in the fullness of time to be translated into that spiritual state into which we are now baptized, of which we are now in expectancy, and which we shall then certainly enjoy.

This is an idea of so much importance and so liable to misrepresentation, that I ask my reader's patience while I open it a little, and show its harmoniousness with all the purposes and revelations of God.

When God permitted mankind to come under the power and dominion of Satan by the Fall, He showed forth from the beginning the glory of His power in enabling a chosen people to withstand, in fallen sinful nature, the power of fallen sinful nature, through faith in His word; men who preferred a word of God to all things visible and sensible; who forsook home and inheritance and everything at His call.

The words which He uttered to these men were promises of a better flesh than that which they now crucified, of a better world than that which they now forsook; of being the heirs, the inheritors, the kings and the priests, of the world in the fullness of the times of God. When these men believed God, they were enabled and they were called on to endure all things, as is set forth at large in the 11th chapter of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*.

But there was no mention made to them of regeneration, nor of union with Christ, nor of the membership of His body, nor of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, nor of being risen with Christ, nor of being seated with Him in the heavenly places, nor of any other of the spiritual mysteries of the Christian faith.

They had an ordinance which signified the cutting off of the filth of the flesh; and they had a law, an old commandment, as old as Cain and Abel, which is, to love one another. But they had not the ordinance signifying the resurrection in the spiritual body, nor the new commandment, which is only true in Christ and in us, because:

1 John 2

⁸ ...the darkness is past, and the true light now shines.

This new commandment is to love one another as Christ has loved us. *John* 13:34. It was a dispensation of a lower kind than that into which Christ introduced us by the gift of the Spirit: both from the same one Disposer, but in the proportion which seemed good to Him; both communicated by word of promise and sealing sacraments; and both made ours by faith, but that faith having in the one case a fuller object than in the other.

Now each of these degrees of promise will be fulfilled to the believer, not failing a jot or a tittle and therefore, as there have been two different stages or modes of faith, so must there be two different stages or modes of fulfillment.

One of these, I think, is the condition represented by the crowned enthroned elders around the throne; the other is the condition represented by the four living creatures within the throne;—the one raised to the rule and government of all without the city, as it were in the holy place; the other dwelling with Christ within the most holy place, and sharing the spiritual rule and government along with Him.

But I pause again, and I do not press this. I see there is a diversity: but whether it be a twofold office to which each of us shall be called, or some to one, and some to another; whether we shall all be raised alike, and called both to sit as elders and to dwell within the throne as cherubim, or whether some shall be raised to the most honorable degree, and the others to a degree still more honorable, I do not dare positively to affirm. Sometimes my mind inclines the one way, and sometimes it sways the other: and many things I cannot express in such evil-thoughted times, to such a word-watching and word-wresting generation. And sometimes I am tempted to write no more, because my words are such a stumbling-block to many. God Himself direct me to what is wisest and best, and most for His glory, most for the good of His Church, and most for my own advancement in His kingdom.

THEIR WINGS

There remain but two other features of the living ones—their wings and their eyes; but these of the greatest importance, and well worthy to occupy the remainder of this Lecture, which is, as it were, but the first part of the exposition of this great vision.

Revelation 4

⁸ And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within...

This carries us as if by a direct quotation to the 6th chapter of the prophet *Isaiah*, which has the same relation to his after prophecies that the vision of *Ezekiel*, from which we are now called away, has to his. What else are we to understand by these sudden transitions from one prophet to another, than a solemn call of the Holy Ghost? As if He had said:

“Come and study them also, if you would know perfectly the mystery of the throne of God.”

And we ought to reply:

“Yea, O Spirit of truth, lead us into all truth!”

Isaiah’s vision is contained in these words:

Isaiah 6

¹ In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

² Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

³ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.

⁴ And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Isaiah, upon witnessing this glorious vision, expresses in these words both his knowledge of what he had seen and his

fears on account of it. These fears were nurtured in the breast of a Jew by the impossibility of any man's seeing the glory of God but the high priest, and that only once a year, and not without blood.

Isaiah 6

⁵ Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

To this vision, which Isaiah calls the vision of the King, Jehovah of hosts, the Evangelist John referring, calls it a vision of the glory of Jesus:

John 12

⁴¹ These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spoke of Him.

Which proves that Jehovah, under the Old Testament, is only Jesus in His predestinative form of risen man, which He took unto Himself before the world was, and which He realized in creature-form at His resurrection, when the body was prepared for Him, in the appearance of which He had so oft shown Himself to the fathers.

This confirms, yea sanctions with Divine authority, our conclusion, that the Person presented to us upon the throne in the heavens is no other than Jesus in His glorified flesh: for this vision is identified with Isaiah's, and Isaiah's is declared by John the Evangelist to be a vision, or foreshowing, of the glory of Jesus. Let us then give ourselves to study it in subordination to, and illustration of, the subject of our present Lecture.

Jehovah—that is, Jesus glorified—is represented sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train [margin: *the skirts thereof*] filled the temple. In the temple there might be none but priests, and His train therefore consisted of those who were priests, answering to the elders who present bowls full

of incense: the number twenty-four being, as we showed, the complete complement of the priesthood in David's time, twenty-four courses.

But the seraphim, he said, stood above it; that is, not around the skirts of the throne, but above, upon the throne itself, in the midst of it and within the circumference of it; having a more exalted and honorable place than the rest. Then comes the description of their persons and their ascription of holiness. This identifies it with the vision of our text, which borrows from *Isaiah* the feature of their six wings—for *Ezekiel's* had only four—and likewise the word of worship, which is the same, with a small variation:

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of Your glory.”

This is what they say in *Isaiah*; but in the *Apocalypse* it is:

“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

Upon the omission of the word, “the whole earth is full of Your glory,” taken in connection with the word which follows, “and the house was filled with smoke,” I have this to observe. The presence of these words in *Isaiah* declares his vision to be of a glory yet future. This is shown in what is foreseen as just coming to pass in chapter 15 of this book, where words of similar import with the first omitted clause are found in verse 4; and the very same words with the second omitted clause are found in verse 8. Their presence in *Isaiah* proves his vision to be of a time posterior to the last seven vials of wrath, when the earth is full of glory.

The omission of them in the vision before us goes far, I think, to prove, at least greatly confirms, our conclusion, established on other grounds, that the vision of *Revelation* 4 and 5 do not represent any state of things in time, but is the delineation of those unseen powers through whose will and

agency all things visible contained in the book do proceed.

It is not the condition of things in their perfected state, for that is contained in *Revelation* 20, 21, and 22. But it is that same state of things in idea. It is the form of that power which is realizing them. It is their idea evolving itself in a continual law, and eventually realizing itself in that effect.

Now, observe further in general upon Isaiah's throne of glory, what a mighty difference there is between that train which is described as the skirts of the throne filling the whole temple, and those seraphim who are one with our cherubim. They alone open their lips in praise: so also our living creatures lead the choir, and the elders at certain places in the song do homage and swell the chorus.

When Isaiah was stunned with terror of what he had seen, it is one of the seraphim who goes forth and takes the live coal, emblem, as we have seen, of the Holy Ghost, and lays it on his lips, that he might be anointed for his work of denouncing wrath and judgment. So one of the cherubim of Ezekiel gives forth the handful of live coals to the man clothed in linen, with which to consume the city. *Ezekiel* 10:7.

And so also one of the four living creatures puts (*Revelation* 15) the vials of wrath which consume the mystical Babylon into the hands of the seven angels clothed in white and girt with gold girdles.

These things the cherubim do; but nothing of all this kind does any of the train of Jehovah or any one of the twenty-four elders. There is a great distinction here, and this is what I am seeking among other things to evolve.

Also it is from this person upon the throne, that is, from the Son of God in His predestinative existence as the God-man ruler, as Jesus glorified, that Isaiah receives His commission; and so Ezekiel; and so John.

Should not this teach us what an importance there is in

those visions of the Lord's glory, that He should assume them for such high ends? And should it not teach us to study this with the greatest diligence, even as we are now doing? Let us then return to the passage which called us to this observation of Isaiah's vision of the glory.

Revelation 4

⁸ And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him.

To which *Isaiah* adds:

Isaiah 6

² ...with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

With twain he covered his face, because:

Psalms 89

⁷ God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.

So did the instinct of reverence and godly fear move Moses to do, when God revealed Himself to him, and spoke to him out of the bush:

Exodus 3

⁶ I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

And so also did Elijah, in the cliffs of Mount Horeb, wrap his face in his mantle, when the Lord came unto him in the still small voice:

1 Kings 19

¹³ And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.

And thus everyone who in prayer has had near approaches to Jehovah feels that it is natural for man to do; to hang his head like a bulrush, and cover his face with his hands, from the overpowering presence of the Lord.

And in sign of the same abashed reverence, I believe it is that these seraphim do veil their faces with their wings; betokening such a glory to be present in God as they are unworthy to look upon, and in themselves such an inferiority as is not worthy to be looked upon by Him.

Oh, how this ought to shame us worshipers upon the earth, who are sinful dust and ashes, and yet are not covered with shame in the worship of the living God! I admire the long-suffering of God, which bears with our congregations, in which, alas, there is more of listless indifference and staring irreverence than of profound humility and holy abasement in the presence of the most holy God. Oh, when this I think upon, my soul cries out:

“How merciful is God; for His mercy endures forever.”

“With twain they did cover their feet.” In *Ezekiel* it is, “and two covered their bodies;” to signify, as I take it, their innate modesty and sense of unseemliness before Him in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and who charges His angels with folly.

This is not the act of conscious unholiness, like that of our first parents, who covered themselves after that by sinning they knew that they were naked, but yet, it seems to me, the act of those who have the remembrance of their unworthiness, perhaps also the consciousness of their former sinfulness, continually before them. Perhaps it is one of the lessons of redemption, to teach the creation this meek and humble and self-abased carriage in the presence of its God; a lesson for want of which both men and angels fell.

Certainly it is the hiding of their own comeliness and glory, whatever it is, as if unworthy to be looked upon in the Divine presence. It is the denial of all self-esteem and vain-glory to be in them any more. They desire not to think of themselves, nor yet to be thought upon; they hide themselves, that God

only may be discovered.

I think this is the meaning of their having two wings to cover their bodies, that the Church in glory is endowed with the faculty, and blessed with the disposition, of self-concealment, that God only may be seen in them, that He may be all in all; that wherever they are, and on whatever errands engaged, He, and not themselves, may be known and felt to be the beauty and the blessedness, the power and the might, the glory and the goodness, of that which is done.

It is added of the other two wings, “with twain did they fly.” Their proper home is the throne of God; their station is to stand beside Him, to cover the approach unto Him, and to bear Him up, as it is written:

Psalm 18

¹⁰ And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.

And the manner of their upbearing and removing the throne of God is set forth at length in the 10th chapter of *Ezekiel*. This no doubt is the symbol of their readiness and speed to perform the will of God. Of all animal motions the flight of the winged fowl is at once the swiftest and the longest of endurance. And therefore it is that the wing of the bird is chosen for these ministers of the King, who being instinct with His own life are ever ready and able to bear His will abroad, and carry it into effect over the wide universe.

There is surely a very great mystery about these cherubim. Their place and their preferment is very high, and manifold is their office. More and more am I impressed with the conviction, that they indicate the Church spiritually embodied, and in the very presence of Jehovah abiding; while the elders indicate the same Church serving their Lord in another capacity, high and exalted indeed, but at a greater distance, and, as it seems to me, in a different form.

For there can be no doubt that both of them are the Church of the redeemed. My opinion, as I have said, is, that the one expresses the risen Church within the celestial city; the other, the risen Church bearing rule over the nations without: and I am inclined to believe, that the former is the condition of the baptized, the latter of the circumcised, Church; but all in the end and termination to come into the same degree and occupation. But upon this I insist not; nor do I press it further than it is pressed upon my own mind by the considerations which are set forth above.

This office of executing God's behests, which belongs to the four living creatures, is beautifully expressed in the 103rd *Psalms*, which contains a description of the heavenly throne:

Psalm 103

¹⁹ The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all.

²⁰ Bless the Lord, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.

²¹ Bless the Lord, all His hosts; you ministers of His, that do His pleasure.

²² Bless the Lord, all His works in all places of His dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul.

Thus then, of the six wings which belong to these living creatures, who ever stand beside and around and within the throne of God:

- the two with which they cover their face do signify honor and majesty in another upon whom we deem not ourselves worthy even to look;
- the two which cover the feet do signify modesty in ourselves, and an unwillingness to draw the observation of others, directing them to Him whom we with veiled face do reverence and worship;
- while the two with which they fly do signify readiest, promptest service, winged messengers of the will of

God.

And when we take into consideration the superlative dignity and honor, function and office, of these four living ones, wonder not that these six wings should be given to them for teaching us, that in heaven the highest dignity is to worship and to serve God, and to have no glory in oneself:—a lesson which I could wish that the Church on earth did learn and practice, that every member of the Church did well study and faithfully observe.

So much insight into the mystery of these wings do we derive from the Prophet Isaiah. Now we revert to the Prophet Ezekiel, who touches a thing of deeper import in these words:

Ezekiel 1

²⁴ And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech as the noise of a host: when they stood, they let down their wings.

These similitudes, as we have set forth in our third Book¹⁵, are the very same by which the voice of the Church in heaven and of Christ Himself are expressed in the *Revelation*; and they prove, beyond a question, that the four living creatures are one with Christ in their intelligence and utterance.

This characteristic of the wings is neither given by Isaiah nor by John; for the reason, as I judge, that in both of them the cherubim are made to utter words with their mouths; whereas, in Ezekiel, they are mute, and the only speaker is the Enthroned One above them.

Ezekiel saw things as they actually were; Isaiah saw them as they shall be when “the earth is full of the glory of God.” *Isaiah* 6:3. Ezekiel’s cherubim were still under ground, expressing a purpose prospective and sure, and not a thing

15 See *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Book 3 “Christ the Universal Head and Bishop of the Church, Chapter: “The Vision”, Section: “His Voice”, p. 76-86.

present and real; that is to say, if I be right in interpreting the cherubim of the body of Christ, expressing the Church reunited to Him by the Holy Spirit.

But though this might be received as a sufficient reason for the voice of these spirits being made to reside in the motion of their wings, it still remains to explain why these similitudes should be chosen at all. I know not, if it be not to signify that these cherubim are but the symbolical grouping of a very great multitude; that they are not one in person, but multitudinous, though represented under one form, “as the noise of waters, as the noise of a host;” the similitude, “as the voice of speech” bears, that the multitude thus grouped together were of the human family. *Ezekiel* 1:24.

And the remaining one, “as the voice of the Almighty,” seems to imply, that they are one with Him in some way or other: and this again favors our interpretation of their being the Church, the body of Christ, which is His fullness, the fullness of Him that fills all in all (*Ephesians* 1:23); and being so, must speak with a voice full and mighty as His own.

Moreover, I am inclined to think that, by the use of these similitudes, those words and acts which are set down in Scripture, as proceeding from the voice of God, are laid hold of for the Church; and it is signified, that not without the Church shall they be done. I mean, that these similitudes bring up the Church into the fellowship of whatever has been in the Scripture written for the voice of God. For example, what is said in *Psalms* 18:13, and *Psalms* 29:3-10, and various other parts of Scripture; by which means the unity of the cherubim with Christ is in a most wonderful way manifested.

Out of this oneness of Christ and His Church, represented in the four living creatures, it is that the Hutchinsonians have been led astray to believe that the persons of the Trinity, uniting to form the man, are set forth in the figure of the cherubim. But I confess that, though I have given good heed to this

notion, I have never been able to see any truth in it, though I clearly see the principle of that oneness between the cherubim and Christ, out of which the notion has arisen. But the oneness is the oneness of the Head and the body, not of the Trinity informing and sustaining, and dwelling bodily in Christ.

And yet, with all my endeavors, I doubt much whether I have got to the bottom of the mystery of these wings. That the Lord would leave nothing unopened to me in this blessed book, I fervently pray; not out of vain curiosity, but out of a true heartfelt desire of knowing Him, and of declaring Him, and of honoring this His most precious revelation of His Son; which, alas! we have lived to see practically rejected from the personal study and delight even of those who take the highest seats in Christ's house. Oh! it is to me a very pleasant occupation thus to meditate my God's gift to His Son, my Lord's gift to me His servant. So may I have abundant profit, and bring comfort and edification to the Church.

FULL OF EYES

Revelation 4

⁸ ...and they were full of eyes within...

In the 6th verse it had been said, that they were "full of eyes before and behind." And in the Prophet Ezekiel the same character is given first of the wheels:

Ezekiel 1

¹⁸ As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful, and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.

And afterward, with wonderful particularity, it is given of the four living creatures themselves:

Ezekiel 10

¹² And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had.

In explanation of these passages, it is necessary that we ascertain first, what is the signification of an eye in the symbolical language, and then what is the end served by the number and the various places given to them.

We have already shown from the Prophets, particularly *Daniel 7:8*, *Zechariah 3:10*, *Revelation 5:6*, that the eye is in Scripture the symbol of something spiritual. When it is placed in the horn it symbolizes spiritual power; when placed in a stone it symbolizes a spiritual foundation; when placed elsewhere it means spiritual discernment. And very properly is it so selected, because it is the organ through which the objects without us come to be known and possessed by us.

The ear is the organ of communication between one intelligent being and another intelligent being: and in this it has a high excellency and honor, as I think, above any other sense:

Romans 10

¹⁴ ...how can they believe except they hear?

But the eye is that by which we become acquainted with things which are not of ourselves, in such a way as to be able to converse with one another concerning them. Of spiritual things no one is naturally in the knowledge or the possession; they are extrinsic to the natural man, they are spiritually discerned; as it is written:

1 Corinthians 2

¹⁴ But, the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Unto the discernment of spiritual things, so as to be able either to speak or to hear of them, there is first need of an eye to behold them. How much depends on this our Lord Himself teaches us in these words of His Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 6

²² The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be

single, your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness.

²³ If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Then indeed, when the light of spiritual truth has gained admission to a man, through the eye of spiritual discernment, he is able to speak and to hear and to understand spiritual things, to intend spiritual offices, and to offer spiritual sacrifices unto God, through Jesus Christ.

Taking this then to be the true interpretation of the eye as a prophetic symbol, we go on to explain wherefore they are placed according to the order of Ezekiel and John. They are placed in the rings or strakes of the wheels, to signify that these wheels are not an appendage of the four living creatures, but a part of the complex symbol, and as necessary to the understanding of it as the faces, or the wings, or anything else.

And because in the eye stands the spirituality of the symbol, it is proved that these wheels are as truly spiritual, and to be spiritually interpreted, as are the living creatures themselves; as indeed it is expressly declared:

Ezekiel 1

²⁰ Wherever the Spirit was to go, they went, there was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

We have already shown reason for believing that these wheels do signify the revolutions by which the enthroned King, with His body the Church, should come to their final rest; and that because Christ is exhibited in the vision before us arrived at His rest, the wheels are not there introduced.

But when the Father, or the Ancient of Days, comes to effect the last great revolution, by destroying the fourth beast (*Daniel 7:9*), they are introduced, because, since the session of Christ at the Father's right hand, it is of the Father's office to

take the active part in putting all things under His feet.

Now by giving to these revolutions of the wheels of providence eyes of the spiritual living creatures, what else can be signified but that they are of the Church and for the Church, and I think also by the Church brought to pass? I say, by the Church brought to pass, in the same sense in which the destruction of Jerusalem was brought to pass by Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 43

³ And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city...

And the overwhelming of Egypt also:

Ezekiel 32

¹⁸ Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit.

And in the same sense in which Jeremiah was to pull down kingdoms:

Jeremiah 1

¹⁰ See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

And in the same sense in which the two witnesses of God can smite the earth with plagues:

Revelation 11

⁶ These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

And in what sense is that? a real or a figurative sense? Verily, a real sense, a sense most real. God is too jealous for the honor of His Church, who is the guardian of His word, to

suffer anything to come to pass without approving thereof beforehand, as it is written:

Amos 3

⁷ Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets.

And He is too pitiful and compassionate to the world not to give them notice of great and direful revolutions by the mouth of those His servants whom He has thus enlightened in His purposes: whereby He preserves the dignity and the reality of His Church as the watchman of the world,—yea, and as the savior of the world, if they would believe.

The whole dispensation of warning given and warning rejected answers to that word of our Lord, which, like every word of His, is not personal merely, but also proper to be uttered by the Church His body in all ages whatever:

Matthew 23

³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!

I believe so much with respect to the Church on earth: and the Church in heaven, or the Church disembodied, is not another Church from the Church embodied; but they are one virtually and essentially, one inseparably and immutably.

And what office, property, or dignity pertains to the one, pertains also to the other. By being taken within the veil, the saints do not lose anything, but gain much both in the ability to serve and to enjoy their King. But of this more hereafter, when we come to see those living creatures in action.

Only one thing of great consequence flows from this observation, that those who would confine the interpretation of these four living creatures to the Church on earth err only by defect of the truth: for whatever is proper to the Church in

glory, is proper to the Church on earth in respect of everything essential. They also are risen with Christ, and they also are seated with Christ in the heavenly places. *Ephesians 2:6*.

To the very outside of the rings, that is, to the very utmost verge of all providential dispensations, there is present an act and energy, an authority and guidance, of the spiritual Church, of the body of Christ, which is His fullness, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.

Next, why the living creatures should be described by Ezekiel as full of eyes, "their whole flesh, and their backs, and their hands" (*Ezekiel 10:12*), is explained by the same consideration of the omnipresence in the body of Christ, throughout all the various members thereof, of the one Spirit of Christ; to signify that there is nothing of the old man, but that it is wholly a new creature; that there is nothing inorganic, but all organized by the one regenerate life of the Spirit; that there is nothing which corruption can slough off, nothing which accident can break off, nothing which time can wear off; that it is instinct throughout with the living light of God, and with the informing life of His unchangeable Son.

For my own part, the further I proceed the more is it born in upon my mind, that nothing in the acts or revelation of God will give interpretation to this most wonderful symbol of the living creatures, but the Church, the temple of the Holy Spirit, composed all of living stones; the body of Christ, composed all of members in whom Christ is formed the hope of glory.

And I am more and more convinced that the symbol of elders sets forth the royal priestly office, which the ancient Church has yet to perform for God, in the millennial kingdom, before they arrive at that closeness of communion and nearness of place which is signified by the four living creatures.

I know that it is usual to make no distinction between the

saints before the giving of the Spirit and those since, but to consider them both under one general name of the Church; and the same also is wont to be done with respect to the angels. Inasmuch as this is intended to distinguish the saved of the creatures of God from the lost, it is true and profitable; but no further. The salvation of the angels is an entirely different mystery from the redemption of men; different, I mean, not in respect to election in Christ as the only cause, but different in respect to the manner and the end, and everything which concerns the manifestation of God.

And if I err not, there is a characteristic difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament saints, in this respect: the former were gathered under a dispensation of law, the latter under a dispensation of no law, but of the Spirit; and inasmuch as they honored the law by honoring Christ in the law through their faith, I have a strong impression that they shall be raised up to govern the world by that same moral law which is the transcript of God's image upon flesh and blood; to rule as kings the world by that law of righteousness which they, of all that were under it, were the only persons rightly to understand and properly to use.

And inasmuch as we are baptized out of the law altogether, yea, out of flesh and blood, with which alone the law has to do, I believe that we shall with Christ, in the spiritual Jerusalem, have the honor and prerogative of enjoying that spiritual rule and blessedness of which we have here the first-fruits.

So that really they who talk so much about the spiritual are altogether correct, if they only knew the meaning of the words which they are using. But because they will call frames and feelings and invisible states of the mind the only spiritual, and will not see the spiritual as standing in acts which, beginning with the invisible, shall be perfected in the visible, until the whole creation, dust and all, shall be spiritual; therefore it

is that they can understand nothing but the cant of experiences, and do dread facts, outward facts and realities, as a most unfit subject of religion, as highly nonspiritual.

This is a sore evil under the sun. It will bring the Church to perdition: she will become, I think she is become, in her principles fouler than the world. I believe, nay, I know, I feel, that things are done under the garb of religion, and applauded, which the honor of gentlemen, which the fair dealing of merchants, which common neighborly kindness, would not sanction.

The very meaning of those eyes behind and before, as well as within, is to express the spiritual discernment with which she is endowed in all directions whatever.

Eyes before, that she may look forward and discern the coming events, and tell of them with a prophetic voice. For that this is one, yea and the chief, prerogative of the Church, we see by her history in the time before Christ: and that she has lost anything by the coming of Christ, surely no one will maintain. I am not speaking of extraordinary gifts, although wherefore these have ceased I have never found a divine able to tell me; and that they are asserted for all the Reformers and Covenanters, and other most faithful members of the Church, I find in their biographers; which indeed this infidel age, with a sacrilegious hand, is beginning to purge of all these extraordinary actings of the Spirit, regarding them as superstitious.

But of these I do not so much speak, as of the standing and ordinary power and privilege of the Church to be able to look forward and discern what is about to come. This I as surely believe, as I believe that Christ promises it as a universal acting of the Holy Ghost in these words:

John 16

¹³ Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He

will show you things to come.

Who are these men that dare to stand up and say that it is not the office of the Spirit to show us things to come? It passes my understanding how men dare affront God's Word with such flat denials, in whose room I would not stand for any reward of a world's applause: for what says the Lord?

Matthew 5

¹⁹ Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

But they have come to deny not only that the Spirit of prophecy has ceased from the living Church, that the cherubim altogether lack the eyes before, but also that the capacity of revealing future events has ceased from the prophetic Scriptures; "which are not to be understood," they say, "till the event is fully come to pass."

I could tear my beard and my garments, and make myself bald, and sit in the ashes and be unclean until the evening, when I hear such things spoken of in the bosom of Christ's Church. The Papacy never came to this pitch of infidelity. Protestantism, and Scotland in the foremost rank, as having had the ten-talent portion, is destined to show to what a pitch of infidelity a professing Church may come.

But what really is the truth? Is it that the Church loves not prophesying? Is it that the gift of foresight and providence has ceased from mankind? Oh no! There never was so much prediction as in this day. That party, that schism, that Pharisaical sect in the Church, called the religious world, have been prophesying for the last thirty years in all ways, when money could be raised by it, that the world is to be converted in almost no time.

Our politicians, in every one of their organs, in all the great

periodical publications, whether Tory, Whig, or Republican, do regularly prophesy once every quarter of a year, and some of them oftener; and they also show forth the signs of the times. And the Church applauds, and the world applauds. There never was such a rage for looking out ahead. And why? Because the ship is striking every now and then, and breakers are boiling all around. Much need to look out in the foreships.

And wherefore this universal indignation and contempt towards us? Why might we not prophesy quietly in one corner, and look out according to our eyesight? Are we not men as well as you? With sagacity endowed as well as you? Oh, you self-sufficient men! Ay, what is the difference between our prophesying and yours, that the men of wisdom, and understanding, and sober minds, in and out of the Church, should be ashamed of us?

It is, oh! It is, you scorers, you infidel scorers, because we are the only persons who make use of God's Word in our prophesying. We submit our minds to His teaching, we give ourselves to study His method, we apply ourselves to His book of prophecies; we believe it, we study it; and we advance with God's chart to the work of looking out and showing the course of our hopes and desires.

Therefore you have us in derision, oh you unbelieving men, you neglecters of God's Word! that you may have license to indulge your own understandings. How can I be but indignant? You do and say things to bring heaven down upon our heads; and when those who fear Heaven's wrath are grieved, you say:

"Be calm; why does your zeal burn so hot?"

Ah me! Let me die the death, O Lord! Rather than stand by and hear Your word and Your Church so traduced without the liberty of uttering my indignation. The time may come when it shall be wiser to be as one dumb, and not opening the

mouth. But till then we will speak forth the indignation we have at seeing God's Word and Church so dishonored.

Eyes behind, to reflect and consider the doings of the Lord in the days of old; which surely is one of the most dutiful and profitable occupations of the Church, as a great many of the Psalms do show forth: for example, the 77th, where the Psalmist, oppressed and overwhelmed with the untowardness of things, and not able to discern God in the midst of them, recovers his faith by this act of reflection, saying,

Psalm 77

¹⁰ This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.

¹¹ I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember Your wonders of old.

To look back, as well as to look forward, is therefore a prerogative of the Church of the living God. To call to remembrance and set forth the doings of the Lord before the sight of men, that they may trust in Him, as well as to look forward and warn them of the coming evil, if they set light by the instruction and refuse to put their trust in the Rock of ages.

For the end both of verifying and of cultivating this faculty in the Church it is, I believe, that so much of the Scriptures consist of history; one part of history, and another part of prophecy: and this is the ground upon which learning is indispensable in the Church, and above all to the ministers of the Church; for how shall we be able to reflect, if we know not the thing which has taken place in the old time?

To this the knowledge of languages and of all other monuments of antiquity is indispensable; and therefore the study of the dead languages is ever to be required at the hands of the ministers of religion. These are the objects which the retrospective eyes regard. And if these objects be not distinctly exhibited, the Church is not able to derive any profit from her endowment.

In this service the Church of England has, perhaps more than any other member of the body, labored abundantly; and by their laborious researches into antiquity have taken the vain-glory out of the mouth of the Romanists, as if to them we owed the Christian faith; which I marvel much to see a liberal Doctor of the same Church giving again to Pope Gregory and the Monk Augustine.

Oh how sweet it is to look back upon the dealings of the Lord with His Church in the past times, especially in our native land! Much do I grieve that the Reformation should have cast the earlier history of the Church so much into the shade.

So far as the Church of Scotland is concerned, I believe that our historians have lost much in foreshortening, as they too frequently do, all anterior to that era. If I mistake not, the most glorious period of the Church of Scotland was from the time of the Culdees onward till the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when she began to be oppressed with Papal darkness; whether as respects learning, or missionary zeal in all parts of the world. If our Missionary Societies would learn how the Gospel is to be propagated, let them take a lesson from the Culdees of Scotland.

For lack of the use of her retrospective eyes the Church in these days is so lifted up with self-conceit, and so prone to fall into every heresy which any one may broach. For example, the Evangelicals are as ready at this moment to take up with the heresy, that Christ had a different body from the rest of men, as if it had not been condemned in almost a hundred forms. And so also with the comparatively modern error, that the death of Christ had respect only to the elect portion of mankind.

There is an unlearnedness in these times, which cannot be sufficiently blamed: some can go back to the Puritans, and some to the Reformers; but to the great body, both of the clergy and the laity, what went before is lost in the one dark

cloud of Papal error.

Church History is a high and noble study, to which every instructor of the people is bound to apply himself; not in the way of knowing the mere events and occurrences, but the spirit of the writings of the time, the spirit of the error, and the spirit of the truth; for if it be true, as we have said above, that the eyes in the wheels signify a spirituality in every revolution of the providence of God, we have not studied any revolution or event until we see the spiritual causes from which it proceeded, and the spiritual ends which it served.

They speak much of the philosophy of history, and pride themselves in having surpassed the ancients in this thing. I set little store by our attainments in this kind. Until I see God's hand in the events narrated, I see no wisdom: and he that perceives it not is no philosopher or lover of wisdom.

There are two things in looking back upon God's dealings in times past: the first is historical truth, that is, the matter of fact; the second is the theological truth, that is, the spiritual or Divine operation therein. It is in this way that the Church's unity is preserved, by her being able to discern, through all the disadvantages of space and time, the one cause, operation, and end of God: yea, it is in this way of lying all dispersed over time past and time to come, that the Church arrives more near to the condition of the Divine Mind, which knows no distinction of past, present, and to come.

And I am convinced, nay, and I partly see it in the condition of the dissenting bodies, that whenever knowledge of things past and things to come is lacking in the ministry, or held back from the people in preaching, it comes to pass that they fall into all manner of temporary and local prejudices, guide themselves by everyday rules of expediency, or lose themselves amidst the reveries of inward experiences, moods, and frames, brought on by no spiritual or super-sensual cause, but by some of the various conditions of the natural or carnal

man.

I fully believe that the chief work of the Spirit is to lift us out of ourselves, our place, and our day, and to enlarge our thoughts to all men, to all places, and to all times, so as that we shall see things as much as may be from God's own point of vision, upon whom persons, times, and places, work no change whatever.

Certainly the office of the Church in glory is thus to look back and thus to look forward: and though few be the words of their adoration, there is one for recollection, "which was;" one for anticipation, "which is to come;" and one for inspection, "which is." To this last we are now arrived: for besides the eyes which they had behind and before, they had also eyes within.

It is remarkable, that this feature of the four living creatures, "they were full of eyes within," should be in a different part of the description than the other, "they were full of eyes before and behind;" not mentioned till their outward appearance had been completely gone over, and standing immediately before the description of their worship. Now, the meaning of this is, as it appears to me, that meditation, which is the office of the inward eye, follows contemplation, which is the object of the outward eye; and must be added to it, in order to prepare us for the great end of our being, which is to worship God.

Contemplation regards the temple of the universe in which we dwell; meditation regards the thoughts of the mind and the heart which arise within ourselves; and adoration of God the Creator, who is at once Creator of the thing beheld and of the beholder, is the proper issue. And these things not occasionally, but always; so that the occupation of a spiritual man might, it seems to me, be represented by these three words, contemplation, meditation, adoration.

The inward eye with which the Church is endowed is given

to her for the study of herself, as the chief of all the works of God; in which self is included, not the body only, but also the Head, who is of the Church a part, yea and the life, though also one with the glorious Godhead. Incarnate, He is of the Church a part, He is the Church's Head, at once the foundation and the chief cornerstone. And what is a member of the Church, but one conformed into His image by the inworking of the Holy Ghost? In studying Him, we study our nature redeemed and glorified; in I studying Him, we study Godhead manifest in our nature. In Him the creation and the creature meet and dwell and harmonize together.

This now is the office of the Church, in knowing Christ to know herself; yea, in knowing Christ, to grow into the same likeness; as it is written:

2 Corinthians 3

¹⁸ But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

By studying Christ we know God also, the only searchable God, the only God that is; and if the only God that is, we see in Christ, harmonious with our nature, how can they say that God is not at peace and in love with man?

This inward eye looks upon Christ formed within us; looks upon the Father and the Son dwelling within us by the operation of the Holy Ghost; contemplates the beauty, the cleanliness, the loveliness, of the new man of the Spirit; beholds God; for the pure in heart ever see God.

There is a mode by which God manifests Himself to us, as He is not wont to do unto the world, by which He lets us see Him; and what is this? The question was once put to Christ, and this was the answer:

John 14

²³ Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will

come unto him, and make our abode with him.

To look inward, therefore, is to look upon a manifestation of God and of Christ; it is to see that image of God, in which we were created, renewed again in righteousness and true holiness. It is in a human soul that God is glorified; it is in man and the Son of Man that the eternal and incomprehensible Godhead obtains that image of Himself, to which it is the very object of creation to give outward expression.

Within Himself from all eternity there was an image of Himself in the person of the Eternal Son: out of Himself that image is found in man; first in the person of Christ, and then in every one who is renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness. *Ephesians* 4:24.

Here also, within the soul of a renewed man, it is that all creation finds itself concentrated. Everything visible is only a minister and a subject of man. To him it brings its homage, and into his lap pours out its treasure. And he it is who is to divert it from, or direct it into, the current of worship and glory unto God.

Man is made the sovereign of creation, which sinks or swims, which falls or rises with man. Man is the responsible creature; he only is the responsible one: all the rest are subject to him, and look up to him; not to God directly, but to man directly, and through him their offering is to be presented unto God.

Contemplation, therefore, of things without, remembrance of things past, and anticipation of things future, can and do amount to nothing, so far as God is concerned, unless we add to them meditation of man, for whom all these things were created, and for whom they undergo their several revolutions and changes.

God expects not the wonder of man, to see what he sees, but the gratitude of man, to be the object of such wonderful

things. It is the praise of man meditating himself as the subject of such a work, as the object of such a continual working, as the possessor of such perfected glory, that God desires.

These inward eyes present to us this the bearing of creation upon the Church, present us the Church queen and mistress over creation, present us the Church beloved of Christ, over which God Himself sings that song of songs, setting forth her several parts of beauty.

Oh that I could sing that beautiful song, which now no man regards! Oh that I could look inward, and tell of the beauty of Christ's bride! Very sweet in the days of old were these canticles in the ear of my Mother Church: the leaders of her choir were wont to strike their harps to the song of the Church's loveliness in the sight of God.

If any one would understand the ravishment which Christ has in looking upon His spouse, and considering her various points of beauty, let him read the 4th chapter of the *Song of Solomon*. If any one would understand the glory with which the Church should look upon the world, let him read the 8th *Psalms*. The former of these exemplifies the Church using her eyes for inspection; the latter, for contemplation: and the end of both should be worship unto the glorious Creator and Redeemer.

Accordingly, after the mention of the eyes within, the vision proceeds to describe the incessant worship which these four living creatures offer to the Most High God, in whose presence, notwithstanding their own excellent beauty, they do cover their faces and their feet with their wings.

