

Original.

THE VISION OF THE MYSTICAL CHARIOT IN EZEKIEL EXPLAINED.

EZEKIEL—Chap. 1—Verse 4.

Concluded.

"And the living creatures ran and returned, like the flashes of lightning."

The rapid progress and effects of the gospel are thus further expressed.

"Now, as I beheld the living creatures, there appeared upon the earth by the living creatures, one wheel with four faces."

The wheels of this mystical chariot are its motive machinery, or the engines which bear it along the surface of the earth. These are evidently the pastors of the Church; to whom Christ said "go and teach all nations." There is but *one wheel* mentioned in the first instance, having *four faces*; and resting on *the earth*; which is understood of the chief pastor; the only one whose see is permanently fixed to a particular spot upon the earth. It has *four faces*, because it looks to all the four quarters of the globe; and moves towards them by its missive authority and spiritual jurisdiction. It seems to be the only one ever adhering to its place; always visible and in motion.

The same fact was mysteriously signified to Daniel by "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands;" namely that Apostle whom the Saviour, *with his word*, detached from his side; calling him *Pe- phus*, Peter, or *the stone*; which, after dashing down the Pagan Colossus, standing on its last legs in Rome its imperial capital; grew into "a great mountain, which filled the whole earth"—Dan. 2, 35—which mountain the Prophet interprets to be the everlasting kingdom of the Messiah; whose Vicar on earth is the lawful successor of Saint Peter.—Ibid. v. 44.

"And the appearance of the wheels, and the work of them, was like the appearance of the sea; and the four had all one likeness: and their appearance, and their work was, as it were, a wheel in the midst of a wheel."

The wheels here mentioned in the plural number, as being *four*, *one by each Cherub*—ch. 10, 9—and contained, as it were, the one within the other; are, in the first place, interpreted the four Gospels; every one of which is contained within the other; so as all to be but one Gospel; and therefore "the four had all but one likeness;" on which Gospel the fabric of Messiah's Chariot, or Church, rests, and is rolled along; the first wheel, or *the one by the first Cherub*, Saint Matthew, rested on the earth; by shewing forth at the outset the human genealogy of the Saviour; or the connexion which the Son of God, whose life he describes, has with the earthly nature of man. "The man clothed with linen," mentioned in the tenth chapter, verse 2, who is ordered to gather from between the wheels "coals of fire; and pour them out upon the city;" is evidently, as appears by his dress, a Priest, who is to take of that sacred fire contained within the wheels; and pour it out in glowing exhortations upon the faithful: or rather, as some explain it, a Bishop, who has an

ordaining and a missive power; and who takes of the individuals, attached by their vows to the sacred chariot; and sends them forth, filled with the Holy Ghost, to spread abroad the fire divine imparted to them in their ordination.

But though the four wheels are in this limited sense the four Gospels; they are still the same wheels set in motion, and moved along by the preaching of the lawful Pastors: for by these was the Gospel to be propagated all over the earth. These are therefore the chosen and inspired conductors of the mystical Chariot: the only individuals authorised to preach. "How can they preach," says Saint Paul, "unless they be sent?" Rom. 10, 15. And hence, alluding to what Isaiah, 52, 7, and Nahum, 1, 15, say upon the subject; he exclaims "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of Peace! of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" The Pastors therefore are thus identified with the four Evangelists; and the construction of their order corresponds exactly with that of the four mystical wheels: for, like them, they have *four faces*, being sent to preach the Gospel to all the four quarters of the earth. "They have all one likeness;" for they all teach the same doctrine. And "their work is, as it were, a wheel within a wheel;" that is, an inferior wheel moved by a superior one. For the whole Government of the Church consists in the obedience and due subordination of inferiors moved themselves by superiors; and moving others under them in the propagation of the Gospel: the Bishops immediately set in motion, in all directions, from the common centre, the supreme Pontiff: the Priests and inferior Clergy moved by the Bishops; and the people by the Priests; all in their onward march to heaven; like the Israelites under the guidance of Moses and Aaron, the Priests and Levites, towards the land of Canaan; carrying the ark, and proceeding or stopping, according to the indication given them from above by the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night.

"The appearance and work of the wheels was like the sea."

The Sea, on the surface of which the wheels are represented to glide, is *time*, or this life; which is more than once in Scripture alluded to under that figure. For, as the sea never long retains the same aspect; but is smooth in a calm; ruffled in the breeze; raging, tossed on high, roaring and foaming in a tempest: while all the objects spied upon its surface are constantly shifting their positions, varying their forms; flitting past us, and disappearing: so exactly is it the case in this ever changeable and changing life. Thus, in the mysterious adventure of the Prophet Jonas, who, like the Saviour, devoted himself to death for the salvation of his fellow passengers; the stormy ocean, on which he sailed, represented this life: the sea monster that swallowed him up; the all-devouring monster death: and the dry land, on which he was vomited forth the third day; the firm, fixed and permanent state of eternity.

"When they went (that is the wheels) they went by their four parts: and they

turned not, when they went." Or, as in chapter 10, verse 11. "When they went, they went by four ways: and they turned not when they went: but to the place whither they first turned; the rest also followed, and did not turn back."

In the progress of the Gospel towards all the quarters of the earth, it goes all entire, and not by parts: for, "to the place whither the first turned, the rest also followed." It is also observed that when once a nation has fairly lost the faith; it never more recovers it in all its former splendour. When the wheels, bearing along the sacred Chariot, are once departed from a place; though they leave their track behind, they seem destined never to return.

"The wheels had also a size, and a height, and a dreadful appearance: and the whole body was full of eyes round about all the four." Or, as in chapter 10, verse 12. "And their whole body, and their necks, and their heads, and their wings, and the circles, were full of eyes, round about the four wheels."

The size, height, and dreadful appearance of the wheels mark the lofty character, the awful dignity and god-like power of the movers in Messiah's car. For, as Christ says, speaking to his Pastors: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, &c. As the Father has sent me; so I send you. He who hears you hears me. And, lo! I am with you at all times; even to the end of the world," &c. &c. *The eyes with which the whole body is set round about*; denote the sharp-sighted watchfulness, and jealous care of the Pastors in all places and circumstances, to prevent error, vice and immorality from being attached to any portion of the mystical chariot; the Church: that Church, which, according to Saint Paul, "Christ has presented to himself, a glorious Church; not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Ephes. 5, 27.

The wheels are also likened in Chapter 19, verse 9, to the *Chrysolite stone*; which is of a gold, or flame colour, mixed with green; the emblem of Faith, Hope and Charity; of Faith, the beginning, or green spring of righteousness; which begets the hope of reaping, when matured in the summer heat, or divine fire of charity the harvest of good works.

"And when the living creatures went, the wheels also went together with them. And when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were also lifted up with them. Whithersoever the spirit went, thither, as the spirit went, the wheels also were lifted up withal, and followed it: for the spirit of life was in the wheels."

"When those went, these went: and when those stood, these stood: and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels also were lifted up together, and followed them; for the spirit of life was in the wheels."

The going of the wheels shews the progress; the lifting up of them, the taking away of the Gospel, or the faith, from the unworthy; all under the immediate influence and direction of the enlivening

spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, who abides in them.

"And over the heads of the living creatures was the likeness of the firmament, as the appearance of chrysal, terrible to behold; and stretched out over their heads above. And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one towards the other. Every one with two wings covered their body; and the other was covered in like manner."

The firmament over their heads is heaven, the end of their flight; pure, as the purest crystal, for *nothing unclean can enter there*; terrible therefore to conscious guilt. Straight towards it are their wings stretched out, but still under it during their earthly career.

"And I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of many waters; as it were the voice of the most high God. When they walked it was like the noise of a multitude; like the noise of an army. And when they stood, their wings were let down."

"The noise of their wings, like the noise of many waters;" is the sound of their preaching "Baptism and the remission of sins." For in the many waters of Baptism, their sound is heard, proclaiming, on their far and wide extending flight, the cleansing from sin in the name of the most High God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For, as the Psalmist sings: "their sound has gone forth unto all the earth; and their words to the ends thereof." Ps. 18, 5.

"As it were the voice of the most High God."

As such the Saviour commands all to hear their voice. "He who hears you," says he, "hears me; and he who despises you, despises me; and he who despises me, despises him who sent me." Luke 10, 16.

"When they walked it was like the voice of a multitude."

It was indeed like the voice of all generations professing the same faith for upwards of eighteen hundred years; such a multitude as no other church but the Catholic can boast of.

"Like the noise of an army."

A well disciplined, one, trained to victory by sufferings and martyrdom: all marching under one head; hearing and obeying the orders and directions of their several leaders; and bidding defiance to all their enemies. Such Balaam was forced to proclaim her figure, the orderly camp of Israel. Such is she, that Church, the spouse of Christ, described in the Canticles. Ch. 6, v. 9. "Who is she, that cometh forth as the morning; rising fair as the moon; bright as the sun; terrible as an army in battle array." Say, what force has ever prevailed against her supernatural might? What heresy has ever kept its ground before her?

The *letting down of their wings* denotes the fixed establishment of the faith in any place, where the voice of God commands it to tarry; as indicated by the following verse. "For, when a voice came from above the firmament that was over their heads; they stood and let down their wings."

"And above the firmament that was over their heads, was the likeness of a