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ARTICLE II.

CHERUBIM.

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AMONG the Articles of minor importance which are found in our Dictionaries of the Bible, and which have the quality of unsatisfactory treatment, perhaps none are more conspicuous for this quality than those headed by the word "Cherubim." The quality of treatment results in large measure necessarily from the nature of the subject treated. The symbolism of the Hebrews, like that of all other nations, is obscure in itself, while the evidence necessary to clear up this inherent obscurity is at the best only scantily to be obtained. There are also not wanting readers who will readily believe that those writers, who by long study acquire most profundity in the interpretation of symbolism, are sometimes, for that very reason, less apt to seize the correct interpretation. The questions of the cherubim are more or less questions of symbolism. They are therefore, as a matter of course, somewhat difficult questions.

But the difficulty has, as it seems to us, often been unnecessarily increased by the failure to observe a very plain and important distinction between the earlier Mosaic cherubim and the "living creatures" of prophetic vision. Such a distinction is warranted by the evidence of the text and by the nature of the case. It should be clearly made and faithfully maintained. The nature of the case warrants the distinction. We should not expect that the work which followed a fixed pattern, and was wrought in enduring metal, or as tapestry, would correspond to the ideal productions, which can shift with every new phase of the vision, and which by their nature, both in regard to construction and function, invite constant change. Nor does the text of passages, which furnish

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to the critical student his evidence as to the facts, fail to corroborate the impression derived from a consideration of the nature of the case. How clearly indicated in the text is this distinction between the earlier cherubim of the artisan's handiwork and the later cherubim of the prophet's vision, our following examination will, we hope, make apparent.

It would be the usual way of procedure in such inquiries as the present, and at the same time a pleasant and safe way, could we begin by ascertaining the derivation of that word (כְּרוּב), the subsequent contents of which it is our purpose to examine. But unfortunately this word has thus far resisted all the power of that great solvent, modern philology. The older writers, among whom may be mentioned Origen and Jerome, were all satisfied with a derivation of the word which have it the meaning "abundance of knowledge," so that even Aquinas could write, "the name seraphim is given from their fervor, as belonging to love; but the name cherubim is given from their knowledge." The modern writers are satisfied each one with his own derivation, but with that of no one else. It is likely that most of those who make domestic and amatory use of the word "cherub" little suspect what trouble its dignified but obscure original has given to scores of philologists and commentators. Investigation, however, reveals this consoling fact, that no theory of its symbolism can well be adopted which will not find support in some one at least of the many meanings which have been discovered for the word. One learned German whose theory of the thing itself would seem to demand a meaning hitherto unventured for the word, has called it a *crux interpretum*, and summarily dismissed the investigation. We may well follow the example which Bähr set us in his Symbolik.

But if we may not know what the word "cherub" originally meant, is it possible for us to discover what the thing cherub was? On this point our knowledge can be at the most only partial, and in some specialities only such knowledge as consists in an acquaintance with conflicting opinions, amongst the claims of which it is difficult or impossible to

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make a satisfactory choice. We shall surely, however, escape much confusion and error if we keep constantly in mind the two following considerations.

And first of the two stands the consideration to which we have already directed attention. We are sharply to distinguish between the "living creatures" of Ezekiel's vision and the cherubim which overshadowed the ark, adorned the curtains, and clung upon the walls of the tabernacle and temple. The latter were fashioned in enduring metal or wrought as tapestry by those who were acquainted with Egypt's temples and palaces. The former passed, repeatedly shifting and fleeting, before one who was surrounded with Assyrian symbolism. The latter, in so far as they are ideal forms realized in wood, gold, and tapestry work, are historical, objective. The former, though they have some points of union with the latter, and thus in some of their elements of composition share in the real, still, as a whole are unhistorical, subjective, and never actualized in any known image or painting. As the former pass before the prophet in his inspired vision, they change and unfold new elements. They serve his purpose, and then vanish, except so far as they obtain for themselves a fixed form in the record of the vision. But they cannot be used, even to prove the conventional form of the cherubim in Ezekiel's time, on the supposition that any such conventional form was in existence — a supposition which may seem warranted from the fact that the prophet attributes to his "living creatures" the "face of a cherub." Much less can they be used to settle questions arising in the discussion of the Mosaic cherubim. To treat these strange, changeable creatures of the prophet's vision as though they were historical realities, and, having determined their supposed form and meaning, force them back through many centuries to obscure an account which though meagre is otherwise tolerably plain, is the usual method of investigation.

The reasons for giving such prominence to the distinction between the "living creatures" of Ezekiel and the cherubim of the tabernacle and temple will show themselves more

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fully in the progress of the discussion. It is enough, at present, to say that the intent of the description of the cherubim in the two cases is entirely different, and that the things described, in their nearest approaches to similarity, are quite unlike, — certainly in form, and probably also in original and significance.

The second consideration which will assist in avoiding error and confusion is common to all questions of criticism. As we pass from what is plainer to what is more obscure, we are not to let our dubious attempts at a solution of that which is by its nature obscure throw a shadow back over the conclusions which taken by themselves seem trustworthy. Why the cherubim of the artisan's handiwork and the cherubim of the prophet's fantasy should *not* differ in original, in form, and in significance, we are not prepared to say. That the two *did* differ in all three particulars, the evidence clearly shows. To treat the two under one heading is somewhat like writing two Articles under one title.

Bearing these considerations in mind, we have to answer three questions of main importance: What was the form of the cherubim? What was their significance? And whence was their origin?

I. To the question, What was the form of the cherubim? Meyer replies, we may make our "answer by asking the counter question, How does a thing look that has no fixed form?"[1] To this reply Bähr[2] agrees. According to the latter author, the cherubic figure might have one, two, or four faces, two or four feet, one or two pair of wings, and might have the bovine or leonine type as its base. Beginning with the cherubim of Ezekiel's vision, he proves their changefulness of form, and, arguing from these short-lived, ideal existences to the forms which stood in real image-work for centuries, asserts the same characteristic of the Mosaic cherubim. These are, in brief, Bähr's reasons: The cherubim in tapestry-work could not have been conceived like those on the ark, because the latter were statues, the former rather

[1] Bibeldent, 179. [2] Symbolik. 1. 312.

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paintings. This would be a more decisive reason, if the forms of the cherubim over the ark had been as complex as the forms of those seen in the prophet's vision; but having only one face, as Bähr himself admits, it is hard to see why there must have been any more difference between the inwrought and upright cherubim than must be in the case of any other form, represented now in statue, now in painting. But Bähr farther asserts, that if at any time the cherubim had taken on a fixed form, they would have become objects of idolatrous worship. Yet not only did similar forms, but the same forms, raise aloft and spread abroad their wings in the tabernacle and in the temple for centuries, without becoming idols.

But "it lay in their nature to have no fixed form, and therefore no fixed representation of form." This is the cherubic nature only according to Bähr's theory; and to what lengths his theory carries him remains to be more clearly seen in the subsequent part of our discussion. These reasons seem to us unsupported and little satisfactory.

1. The truth with regard to the form of the Mosaic cherubim — and only with regard to it need changes of form puzzle us — is, we think, that it was a fixed form, and remained the same in all representations throughout history. We are not, however, on this account, to attempt to fix the details of the form any further than we have evidence.

Their general aspect and proportions were probably human, — "Specie maximam partem humana," as says Gesenius in his Thesaurus. To this view, however, there is no direct testimony, so far as the Mosaic cherubim are concerned. The cherubim of Solomon's temple, standing ten cubits high upon their feet, stretched out their wings so that they reached the same distance from tip to tip, which equality of proportion is that of the perfect human form. Of the cherubim standing upon the mercy-seat, which was two and a half cubits in length, and raised by the ark to the height of a cubit and a half (Ex. xxv. 17; xxxvii. 6), it may be said that the two with their pedestal are in best proportions if they are admitted to have

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had those of the human form. These hints are, it is true, slender evidence, yet are all the evidence we have, unless we admit the statement of Ezekiel (i. 10) to stand in proof as to the form of the cherubim in Moses' time.[1]

The historic cherubim, except possibly those on the walls and doors of Solomon's temple, had only one face. For of those upon the "mercy-seat," or, more properly, "cover" of the ark (כַּפֹּרֶת, see Gesenius in his Thesaurus), it is said: "Their faces shall look toward one another, toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubim be" (Ex. xxv. 18 sqq.; xxxvii. 9). Of those in Solomon's temple, we are told (2 Chron. iii. 13) that "their faces were inward" (in Hebrew, לַבָּיִת), or toward the house.

Spencer and others have argued, from Ezek. i. 10 compared with x. 14, that the distinctive face of the cherubim of Moses, as well as of Ezekiel, was that of the ox; but the conclusion is unwarranted.

The cherubim are always represented with wings, when any explanation accompanies the mention of them. Those in the tabernacle stretched their wings toward each other "on high," "covering" (or, as the Septuagint translates the passage, συσκιάζοντες ἐπί) the lid of the ark. The huge forms of the temple were ten cubits high, and "stretched forth" (1 Kings vi. 27), or "spread out" (1 Chron. xxviii. 18) their wings, and with their faces in one direction so covered (Sept., περιεκάλυπτον ἐπί) the ark.

The cherubim in the temple had feet (2 Chron. iii. 13) upon which they stood; but of those in the tabernacle nothing in this regard is said.

Gesenius thinks[2] that they had hands as well, and cites Gen. iii. 24 in proof, as though these guardians of abandoned Eden held their weapon; but this seems to be decidedly more of inference than the text will support, especially since the sword is represented by the Hebrew as turning of itself.

The cherubim of Solomon's temple were, as their great size made necessary, constructed of olive-trees overlaid with

[1] See Keil and Delitzsch, Pent. ii. p. 170. [2] See Thesaurus, in loco.

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gold, and are called "image-work" (מַעֲשֵׂה, 2 Chron. iii. 10, *opus statuarium*, Vulgate, and so Gesenius; ἔργον ἐκ ξύλων, Septuagint). According to Gesenius and De Wette, those of the tabernacle were formed in like manner; but this conclusion is by no means universally received. The Hebrew word used to describe the construction of the cherubim of the tabernacle is מִקְשָׁה (Ex. xxv. 18), which is rendered by some, as in our version, *beaten*, or "solid work"; but by others, among whom is Gesenius, *opus tornatum*, or "turned work"; by the Seventy, χρυσοτορευτά, "worked in relief," or "chased work"; and by Bähr, *opus ductile*, with which the Vulgate agrees. Meyer and others assert that they were of one piece with the "mercy-seat; but Bähr, with more of probability, contends that they were only indissolubly joined to it. "Of the mercy-seat," our version reads, "shall ye make the cherubims."

In the tabernacle these same forms were wrought upon the curtains (Ex. xxvi. 1; xxxvi. 8), and upon the vail before the oracle (Ex. xxvi. 31; xxxvi. 35); while in the temple they were found upon the walls of the holy place (1 Kings vi. 29). Upon the doors of the oracle and of the temple they are carved with palm-trees and open flowers. They appear, also, upon the borders to the bases of the sacred lavers, and on the plates of the ledges — mingled, in the former case, with lions and oxen, and in the latter, with lions and palm-trees. Thus mingled, the cherubim of the temple, unlike those of the tabernacle, bear witness to the influence of foreign workmen. Hiram, as a Tyrian sculptor, "did not scruple," says Stanley, "to introduce bulls in the greater laver, and bulls and lions and cherubs in the lesser, probably as the emblems of the two chief tribes." It is often assumed, because the cherubim upon the walls of Ezekiel's ideal temple have two faces, one "of a man" and the other of a "young lion," that those upon the walls of Solomon's temple were also double-faced. But at this point we are again warned not to force details of the temple seen in vision upon the temple built in stone, wood, and gold. If the

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cherubim of the historic temple had had two faces, it is not likely that the historians would have failed to mention such an anomaly in their form. Besides, we should not expect two-faced cherubim, with one face "the face of a lion," mingled with lions upon the sacred lavers. In the cherubim of Ezekiel's temple, where they are represented as paintings upon a flat surface, only two faces of the four could, as a matter of course, well appear; but the other two are, according to Hengstenberg, Lightfoot, and others, to be considered as existing, though not in sight. The faces which are described as in sight are the two most important among the faces of the cherubim of prophetic vision.

It appears, then, to be tolerably clear that the form of the Mosaic historic cherubim, the component parts of which can be only partially described, was in its totality one and definite, and that this form was retained without considerable change throughout Jewish history. Herder has even understated the truth, when he says that the forms wrought in the tapestry and upon the walls, both of the tabernacle and temple, were probably the same as those which rose over the mercy-seat above the ark.

We shall soon, after making the attempt, discover that it is impossible to reconcile the forms of Ezekiel's vision with those which have been thus far described, and which were the tangible results of the workman's hand. The two have few points in common. Nor is it necessary to attempt the reconciliation. The "living creatures" of Ezekiel never had any existence outside of the prophetic vision, changed the ideal form of that ideal existence like the shifting costume of the theatre, and passed away with the fading of the vision. We have no need, then, to hold the opinion that the form of the cherubim varied in various times. The form of the cherubim, so far as the figures wrought in metal and tapestry are concerned, seems to have remained the same. The only variation which appears is between the cherubim of the artisan and the cherubim of the seer, and also among the several forms of this latter sort of cherubim. Nor need we

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be forced by this gratuitous attempt to reconcile things normally different into the opinion — which has already been mentioned, and is credited by Meyer, Bähr, and others — that the cherubim never had any fixed, conventional form. If its delineation varied even in unimportant details, we have no evidence for the assertion that it did thus vary. It does not follow, however, from what has just been said, that we are to go to the other extreme of fixing for ourselves those details upon the nature of which we have no evidence. "The complete delineation of the Mosaic cherubim," says Winer, "is forever to be renounced."

When Solomon's temple was finished, assembled Israel, chiefs of fathers and people, looked on while the priests "brought up the ark of the Lord," and brought it in "unto his place" under the wings of the gigantic cherubim. Whether the smaller figures, which had crouched over the ark in the tabernacle, remained upon it in the temple of Solomon, we are not told. But they probably had already disappeared, no mention being made of the more important cherubim, while a minute account of what was done with the staves is given; and all the sacred relics having gone from the inside of the sacred chest. It is also to be noted that two pair of cherubim over the ark would seem incongruous.

2. The form of the cherubim of vision differs almost completely from that of the Mosaic cherubim, and changes its own details according to the demands of the prophet's imagination.

From the time that the gigantic cherubim received the long wandering ark to a resting-place beneath their outspread wings, no further historical mention is made of them. If the eighteenth Psalm is, as Ewald supposes, Davidic, and the eightieth belongs to the exile, then only in the prayer of Hezekiah (2 Kings xix. 15) and in Ps. xcix. 1 (written perhaps in the time of Chaldean oppression) is even incidental and figurative mention made of the cherubim, until the prophecy of Ezekiel introduces to us, under the same name, a very different thing.

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The recognition of the essential difference in form, significance, and origin, between the Mosaic cherubim and the cherubim of the vision will alone prevent confusion. This difference we find more clearly set forth in Ewald's note on Ezekiel and in Winer's *Realwörterbuch* than elsewhere; from the latter of which we quote the statement: "We cannot understand how the mere fantasy of this prophet, if only he held fast in general to the original type of the Mosaic cherubim, should not have been freely handled in the carrying out of its forms." How fast the prophet did hold to this type, and how much freedom there was in details of form, a comparison of the two representations will show us. We cannot expect the same simplicity and consistency in the delineation of the forms of vision as of historic reality, and as a matter of fact we do not find them.

The "living creatures" of Ezekiel's vision are thus described: "They had the likeness [probably the upright posture (?)] of a man"; "Every one had four faces and every one had four wings"; "Their feet were straight feet" (translated in the Septuagint, *καὶ τὰ σκέλη αὐτῶν ὀρθά*; the Hebrew word יְשָׁרָה meaning, in this place, straight, as opposed to curved); "and the soles of their feet like the soles of a calf's foot," which the Seventy render, *καὶ πτερωτοὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτῶν*. They "sparkled like the color of burnished brass." "And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides"; of which wings we read that "two of every one joined to another, and two covered their bodies." "And they four had the face of a man and the face of a lion on the right side, and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle." "Wheels" full of eyes, a "firmament," a "throne," "the likeness of a man above upon it," accompany these strange creatures, and almost make an integral part of them. Surely it would need a cunning workman in metal and tapestry to delineate these forms, were their complexity the only difficulty which he had to overcome. They are, however, not only complex, but also changeful.

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In that wonderful tenth chapter, these beings, which had before been called "living creatures," are again described, with some changed and some entirely new details, and are thereupon called "cherubims." At the fourteenth verse of this chapter, the four faces are again enumerated; but now "the first face was the face of a cherub," and the face of "an ox on the left side" had disappeared. This fourteenth verse is, however, omitted in the Septuagint as edited by Tischendorf, though it is not without manuscript authority. What is meant by "the face of a cherub," in this connection, it is not easy to determine. The opinion of Spencer and others, that this interchange proves the face of an ox to have been the distinctive cherubic face, is now generally abandoned.[1] May not the expression be held to show that there was a distinctive historic "face of a cherub," and thus disclose touches of the real in this imaginative compound? At any rate, this phrase and the one which attributes to these living creatures the likeness of man are the most certain elements of the old Mosaic cherubim considered as contributing anything besides a name to this new compound. The latter phrase is, however, restricted by Ewald to the common intelligence of man and these cherubim. In this tenth chapter, where the word "cherubim" occurs twenty-one of the something like eighty-five times in all, we are also told that their whole body and their backs and their hands and their wings, as well as the wheels, were full of eyes round about. Well may Gesenius say, "Pro ingenii luxuria et nimia fere ubertate," has the prophet constructed them. Well may we say, with more emphasis than Winer, "Thus executed, one will not easily recognize the form of the Mosaic cherubim."

Indeed, strictly speaking, they cannot thus be executed at all; and Ewald is certainly right in claiming that the whole of this compound, as Ezekiel thought of it, cannot be represented in drawing or plastic, but only in the imagination of the prophet. Why, then, should the discussion of the subject be perpetually confused by assuming the essential

[1] See Bähr's Symbolik. i. 313.

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similarity of the cherubim of Ezekiel's vision and the cherubim of the tabernable and temple?

II. From the inquiry into the form of the cherubim, we now turn to consider their significance. This question and the question of their original throw a slight mutual light or shadow one upon the other. The question of significance is one hard to decide; and though Bähr, who asserts that even the commonest materials and measures of the tabernacle were symbolic, may be sure in every instance, we must be content to know less.

1. As to the significance of the historic cherubim, the first passage in point is Gen. iii. 24, where they are, according to Gesenius and most others, mentioned as guardians of Eden. Indeed, this mention of them leads Herder to conclude that they were a sort of Hebrew griffin. According to Bähr,[1] however, they are set as beings of abounding life, to inhabit, and not to guard, this garden of life. The plain import of the text is that their office was that of guardians. There is another allusion to these guarding cherubim of Eden, which cannot well be passed by. In Ezek. xxviii. 14, the king of Tyre is called "the cherub of extension that covereth" (wrongly rendered, in our Bibles, "anointed cherub," but "cherub extentus," in the Vulgate); because, according to Gesenius, he guards his treasures as the cherub "covered with his wings and protected radiant gems in the holy mount of Eden." With a fierce joy does the prophet say to this guardian cherub, the king of Tyre: "Thou hast sinned, and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire."

We next find the cherubim set up by Moses over the ark of the covenant. Were the chronological relation of these two passages — Gen. iii. 24 and Ex. xxv. 18 sq. — known beyond doubt, we might feel more ready to assert or deny that the cherubim in both instances symbolize the same thought. Their watchful posture, with wings overshading, and faces toward the mercy-seat, seem still to indicate the

[1] Symbolik. i. 351.

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guardian, and to be constantly saying: "Procul, O procul este profani." And since both records, by whomsoever first written, were doubtless put together by the same hand, we should expect such similarity of office. We conclude, then, that the earliest significance of the cherubim was that of simple guardianship.

But when once placed upon the ark their significance was necessarily farther expanded and defined. They are now enveloped with the visible glory of Jehovah; on them he sits or rides, from between them he speaks or shines forth; and they become, by an easy and natural transition, his throne, his place of most intimate self-revealing. "The cherub became among the Hebrews," says Ewald, "the token of the holy place, where Jehovah, as it were, has descended, and man feels his nearness more intimately than elsewhere."[1] "I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims," was God's promise (Ex. xxv. 22) to his servant Moses. Of this promise there is recorded one fulfilment (Num. vii. 89). Jehovah's distinctive epithet becomes, "He that sitteth the cherubim" (our version, "dwelleth between"). The presence of "the ark of the Lord of hosts, which sitteth the cherubim" was to vanquish the Philistines. Of "the God of my rock" David sings: "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly." The cry of the exiled and oppressed is: "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth" (Ps. lxxx. 1); and his exultation is: "Jehovah sitteth the cherubim, let the earth be moved." It is to the Lord of hosts, God of Israel, who sitteth the cherubim, that Hezekiah sends up prayer for succor. As these quotations prove, no break occurs in the thought. And the same forms have the same significance in the Temple of Solomon as in the ancient tabernacle.

According to Bähr,[2] cherubim are connected with Jehovah's throne, because, being creatures of most perfect life, they are the most perfect disclosures of his life, and thus belong to the throne, the place of highest disclosure. Upon the

[1] Die Propheten, ii. 342. [2] Symbolik. i. 372.

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walls and veil of the temple they find place, because here is a state of high life, a miniature Eden, "where everything blooms and is green as in Eden." The plain historic connection is much preferable to this profundity in the interpretation of symbolism.

The importance which attaches itself to the cherubim is not because of their original, intrinsic, and hidden symbolism, but because the cherubim above the ark were to the Hebrew mind, as shrouded in the Shekinah, connected by inseparable association with all that was most occult and most awful in Jehovah's self-disclosure. Being placed there, with perhaps the original significance of guardians, they simply acquired by their place the added significance which we find them possessing in poetry and prayer. If those golden forms had not first raised their wings aloft to overshadow the ark of the covenant, Jehovah would never have been called, "He that sitteth the cherubim." The cherubim receive this part of their symbolism from their place, not impart to the place the prior acquisition of their symbolism.

The expression "chariot of cherubims" (1 Chron. xxviii. 18) probably refers to the movable character of the ark and its apparatus of cherubim, upon which Jehovah is represented as sitting.

2. If we inquire, now, into the significance of the cherubim of Ezekiel's vision, we shall incur all the perplexity which is wont to attend the interpretation of prophetic symbolism. These "living creatures," and through their influence the cherubim of Moses' time, have been found to mean many things, from the vassals or "thunder-steeds"[1] of Jehovah to the most intimate disclosures of his own being and attributes. De Wette understands them as symbols of the strength, power, and wisdom of God and of his nearness. But Bähr, applying his cherubic theory, decides that they are called "living creatures," as possessing creature life, κατ' ἐξοχήν. Being the most perfect creatures, they are the most perfect

[1] So J. D. Michaelis in his "De cherubis equis tonantibus," though his view was founded mainly upon Ps. xviii. 10.

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disclosures of God and divine life. The number four is the "signature of the creation, especially in so far as it is a witness and disclosure of God." In particular, the ox is a symbol of the "generative and creative power" — a point it costs him much trouble to prove, and to the knowledge of which he admits that the Hebrews themselves had not attained. The lion, on account of his monstrous strength and irresistible power, and, conditioned on these, his frightfulness, is the symbol of the same characteristics in Jehovah. The eagle, as bird of greatest speed and far-sight, indicates the "unbounded life-power" and "all-seeing eye" of Jehovah. As man is in spirit above all creation besides, he fitly stands the symbol of Jehovah's absolute spirituality, or more particularly, wisdom. Thus much for the separate parts. In its totality the cherub, as before said, symbolizes "creation in its highest stage, an ideal creation, and is thus a witness and disclosure of Jehovah himself." Gesenius, with far more probability in his favor, says these four united in one signify in part the strength, in part the speed, of these ministers of Jehovah.

Though we can offer no detailed explanation of these strange forms, and doubt whether any very occult symbolism belongs to their consideration, and so whether any such explanation in detail is possible, yet we may venture upon one or two suggestions.

Is, then, the state of the prophet's mind such as to search out all these hidden meanings of details, and combine them into one whole so symbolic that each element of that whole must be thought to symbolize something? Has he not rather caught up the forms of remote memory and present sensation, bound them into one strange, indescribable, and changeful whole, and little regarded a meaning for each part, or even for the whole, any further than such meaning was connected with one or two main purposes?

Are these cherubim, if symbolic, to be recognized as symbols of Jehovah at all? We are told, that "upon the heads of the living creatures was the likeness of a firmament," and

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"the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it," "the likeness of the glory of the Lord." Thus enthroned upon the "living creatures," the glory of Jehovah carries the prophet about in sacred vision, and discloses to him strange things, until (Ezek. xi. 24) he is brought back into Chaldea, and the mission of these "living creatures," these four-faced cherubim, seems accomplished.

In all this there may be some trace, so far as significance is concerned, of the cherubim above the ark, which were at once the guardians and the throne of Jehovah's glory. While, however, the symbolism of the historic cherubim was largely a historic growth due to the position which they originally had in the midst of the shekinah, these cherubim of the vision seem to have been constructed with a view to serve the seer in his vision, and therefore are by their very nature symbolic. The majesty, movement, or universal presence, and the universal insight of these ministers of Jehovah are the characteristics most clearly symbolized by their construction.

III. The third question, Whence had the cherubim their origin? yet awaits us. And to this question, as well as the preceding questions, only a partial answer can be given.

Thus much, however, is clearly manifest: The imagination of the constructor, be he artisan or seer, is very largely, if not wholly, the source whence issue these forms, now wrought in metal and tapestry, and now projected in the air. There is no proof which can be adduced to show that the Hebrews thought of the cherubim as having any antitype in real existences, except that taken from Gen. iii. 24. And in this place it is most likely that the author should not be understood according to the most literal interpretation.

Among the forms which swarm upon the temples, tombs, and palaces of the ancient world there are many which might more or less vividly recall the cherubim; but there is no one form so closely like theirs, even in more prominent characteristics, as to lead all to agree that this is the one sought, and no other. The search for an individual origin is unsuccessful,

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for the data are insufficient. The usual method of procedure in the discovery — of which method Hengstenberg's argument is an example — is somewhat as follows: Find first some form more or less remotely like the "living creatures" of Ezekiel, and leaving out such of their elements as you choose, according to the form you have selected, assume that by just these omitted elements did the Mosaic cherubim differ from the cherubim of the vision, and, thus differing, agree with your theoretic original. This argument, however, is open to the objection that the closeness of resemblance which is made the basis of argument is the very thing which destroys the conclusion. For the little we know of the form of the Mosaic cherubim goes to show that they were almost the least possible like the "living creatures" of the prophet.

1. But with regard to the origin of the Mosaic cherubim; if it be unsafe, by comparing your selected form with the strange compounds of a later day, to reason that because it somewhat resembles them, it must exactly resemble something of by-gone centuries which, however, resembles them scarcely at all — if this be unsafe, any more secure method is scarcely attainable.

If the exact original of the Mosaic cherubim cannot be ascertained, shall we conclude that the cherubim were originated by the Hebrews themselves? The variety and kind of work which was done by the artisans of the tabernacle certainly seems to indicate that they were far from being incapable of creative art. And doubtless they fashioned at the first somewhat freely the forms which by their work became afterwards fixed for all Jewish history. But the analogy of the other constructions of these artisans seems to point us to Egypt for the original of the Mosaic cherubim. As a simple, pastoral folk, without religious ceremony and occult symbolism, the Hebrews had gone among a nation as unlike themselves as possible. And when after centuries they were made a nation themselves, we find everywhere in their tabernacle and its copy, the temple, in their priesthood, sacrifices, ark, and details of furniture, clothing, and ceremony, abundant wit-

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nesses to the impressions which the land of their bondage had made upon them. "That the cherub as such," says Hengstenberg,[1] "aside from its significance which includes a real original Jewish element, did not spring up on Jewish ground appears probable from the merely scattered notices of it which are found." And again: "we are especially guided to the Egyptian origin of the cherubim, since of all the people with whom in ancient times the Israelites were closely connected, only among the Egyptians are compound animals found in history."

But if from Egypt the Hebrew cherub came, which one of its many symbolic animal forms is the exact original? Bähr declares[2] that he has examined all the forms in the "great French work" and not one of them resembles the cherubim in anything except the wings. But the sphinx is oftenest pointed out (so Spencer and Hengstenberg). Of it Wilkinson says:[3] "The Egyptian sphinx was usually an emblematic figure representative of the king, and may be considered, when with the head of a man and the body of a lion, as the unison of intellect with physical force. Besides the ordinary sphinx, compounded of a lion and a man, was one with the head of a ram, another with the hawk's head and lion's body, and the asp-headed and hawk-headed sphinx with wings." Even if it were trustworthy to infer the exact original of the Mosaic cherubim through the descriptions of Ezekiel, a creature with four heads, one that of a lion, another that of a man, is not remarkably like a sphinx with a lion's body and a man's head. And Bähr judiciously remarks "if we admit the sphinx to have been part man and part lion, yet the eagle and ox are wanting, so that it no more resembles the cherub than the griffin of India which was part lion, part eagle." Something more to the point is to be found in Creutzer,[4] who, after speaking of the Egyptian ark or boat, says: "On a pylon of the great temple at Philae such a boat has a head of Isis and some other remarkable ornaments, which I pass

[1] Egypt, etc., p. 165.
[2] Symbolik, i. 358.
[3] Ancient Egyptians, i. 226.
[4] Symbolik, i. 249.

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by for brevity's sake, to call to mind some parallels with Hebrew festival rites. Four priests bear it on poles, and a small temple which stands in the boat is, as it were, 'shadowed' with winged figures. Before goes a boy with a smoking frankincense censer. Here Lancret compares the biblical account of the ark, which the Levites in linen clothing carried on staves of shittim wood; nor does he forget to mention the cherubim." Wilkinson as well says:[1] "Some of the sacred boats, or arks, presented the sacred beetle of the sun, overshadowed by the wings of two figures of the goddess Thmei, or Truth, which call to mind the cherubim of the Hebrews." From this or some similar original, somewhat freely handled, we believe that the Mosaic cherubim were derived. At any rate, such similarities and probabilities are the best answers that can be given to the inquiry into an Egyptian origin for the historic cherubim.

2. The imagination of the prophet is the most potent factor in the construction of Ezekiel's cherubim. They are therefore quite distinctively the result of the fancy of an individual, rather than a historic growth. "All the beings," says Ewald, "which he remembered as sacred companions of divine things, formed themselves in his mind into a new, wonderful whole, as though his imagination roamed abroad to conceive and depict in the most extraordinary way the highest that can be conceived or described."

It is to Assyria instead of Egypt that we are to look for whatever historic elements are comprised in the prophet's conception of the cherubim. And Assyrian art was characteristically given to forming images of the divine out of various and seemingly incongruous animal forms. "The imagery," says Stanley, "that Ezekiel sees is that which no one could have used unless he had wandered through the vast halls of Assyrian palaces, and there gazed on all that Assyrian monuments have disclosed to us of human dignity and brute strength combined, the eagle-winged lion, human-headed bull." "The resemblance," says Layard, "between the sym-

[1] Ancient Egyptians, i. 271.

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bolical figures I have described and those seen by Ezekiel in his vision, can scarcely fail to strike the reader." "It will be observed that the four forms chosen to illustrate his description, the man, the lion, the bull, and the eagle, are precisely those which are found on Assyrian monuments as religious types. The 'wheel within wheel,' mentioned in connection with the emblematical figures, may refer to the winged circle or wheel representing at Nimroud the supreme deity. These coincidences are too marked not to deserve notice, and do certainly lead to the inference that the symbols chosen by the prophet were chosen from the Assyrian sculptures." According to Spencer it was a Rabbinical saying that four things are highest in the world: the lion among wild beasts, the ox among cattle, the eagle among birds, the man among all.[1]

Should it seem that the present Article adds one other to the unsatisfactory attempts which have been made to treat this subject of Biblical Antiquities, we cannot do more to save its reputation than add the information of the learned Josephus: *τὰς δὲ χερουβεῖς οὐδεῖς ὁποῖαί τινες ἦσαν εἰπεῖν οὐδ' εἰκάσαι δύναται.*

[1] Spencer's de Leg. Heb. iii. 5. 4. 2.

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