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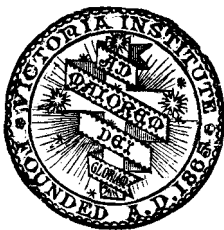
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1928

706TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, JANUARY 16TH, 1928.

AT 4.30 P.M.

LIEUT.-COL. F. A. MOLONY, O.B.E., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed, and signed, and the HON. SECRETARY announced the following elections:—As a Member: William Tylter, Esq.; and as Associates: the Rev. George E. White, D.D., Miss E. M. Delevingne, and R. Biddulph, Esq., Royal Artillery.

In the absence of the author, Dr. W. Bell Dawson, his paper, on "The New Testament Era in the Sequence of Prophecy," was read by Lieut.-Col. F. A. MOLONY.

It was mentioned that Dr. W. Bell Dawson was the son of the well-known Scientist Sir Wm. Dawson, F.R.S., President of the British Association in 1881.

THE NEW TESTAMENT ERA IN THE SEQUENCE OF PROPHECY.

By W. BELL DAWSON, Esq., M.A., D.Sc., M.Inst.C.E.

IT is difficult to make clear in a short title the purport of this Paper; and it may therefore be well to explain this concisely at the outset.

(1) We desire to point out that the salient years in the Life of Christ stand at the close of definite periods, which connect them with the era of the Captivity in Babylon and the ensuing era of Restoration. These two eras extend from the times of Jeremiah and Daniel, to Ezra and Zechariah. The life of Christ on earth, is thus in accord with definite time-lines in the general scheme of the Prophetical periods.

(2) The entire era of New Testament times extends from the Birth of Christ to the date when Revelation was written. In regard to the later part of this era, predictions were made by Christ which depicted the destruction of Jerusalem; and He also gave hints of a further divine communication which we have in the Book of Revelation.* The dates of these, also stand at the end of definite periods, which run similarly from the Restoration era.

(3) These time-correlations bring to light a connected scheme under divine Providence; which has its beginning in the days of the Captivity when the great Prophetical periods were first revealed; which deal with future events in their relation to the people of God. In this Paper, however, we will narrow down the matter as closely as possible to the time-connections between the New Testament era and the earlier eras indicated.

It may be that dates and periods resemble only the skeleton or framework on which a living creature is built up. Yet without this, the vital structure would be unsupported and formless. The Prophetical periods, and the Scriptural dates which give them a basis, may stand in a similar relation to divine plans and purposes.

The outlook from the Captivity era.—To anyone who has read the Bible, it is evident that great importance is attached to this era, in which the Hebrew people were taken into captivity in other lands, and the monarchy which had continued from the days of David, came to an end. Three leading prophets, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel lived in this era; and several other books of the Bible besides theirs, are associated with the Captivity and with the Restoration from Babylon which ensued.

We can hardly suppose that seven books of the Bible would be grouped around this era, unless it were something more than an outstanding episode in the history of the Hebrew people. When we inquire into the reason that so much importance attaches to the Captivity era, it appears chiefly to be that a fundamental change took place at that epoch, in the providential relation of God to His people. From the days of Abraham,

* See Luke 21; 20. John 16; 12-13. Also, John 15; 15, and Revelation 1; 1.

the Hebrew people had been independent; with the exception of the sojourn in Egypt. For a thousand years since the Exodus from Egypt, they had been under judges and kings of their own. But from the Babylonian captivity, a complete change was to take place; and the people of God were to be ruled over by a succession of Gentile powers, often more or less unfriendly and sometimes even persecuting.

At this era also, revelations were given to the prophets regarding the duration of these conditions. At the outset, the period of the captivity in Babylon was made known to Jeremiah. It was to last for seventy years. (Jeremiah 25; 11 and 29; 10.)* The continuance of the great ensuing age known as the Times of the Gentiles can be inferred from the periods revealed to Daniel, which are taken up again in the Book of Revelation where they are further explained. It became evident that the people of God, whether Jew or Christian, were to remain under domination for an extended age; for in New Testament times, Christ refers to the conditions as still continuing, when He says that Jerusalem shall be trodden down until the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Luke 21; 24.)

If the periods in the prophecies are interpreted in the light of this outlook, and are taken to refer to a prolonged age, it can be recognized that the "three and a-half times" of Daniel and Revelation represent half of a complete series of Seven Times. And since the $3\frac{1}{2}$ Times are stated to be equivalent to 1260, each "Time" is to be reckoned as 360 years.† The whole of the series is thus 7 Times of 360 years each, making up a total duration of 2520 years for the continuance of the conditions so graphically portrayed in the symbolism of Daniel and Revelation; until the domination of worldly powers shall end, when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ."

The foundational number 2520 which is thus deduced, is wonderfully divisible; because it is found to be the least common multiple of the first ten numerals. It is thus "a great fundamental number in arithmetic."‡ We find accordingly that all the periods mentioned in Scripture are exact fractions

* For the fulfilment of this predicted period, see NOTE A, appended.

† That a day in the prophecy represents a year, see NOTE B.

‡ Explained in *The Approaching End of the Age*; Dr. H. Grattan Guinness, 1882. Pages 440-442.

of it; such as 30 years, 40, 70 and 120 years.* This number 2520 to which the prophecies point, may therefore be regarded as an inclusive one, which makes it permissible to look into its fractions; not only the half or 1260 years, but its other fractions such as the quarter, the seventh or the fourteenth part; which are 630 years, 360 and 180 respectively. May we not find in this a parallel with the moral sphere? For in the teaching of Christ, broad general principles are laid down from which detailed applications may be deduced.

This brief outline is given to show the relation of the period with which we wish specially to deal, to the prophetic periods in general. On this subject much literature is available.† Our present object, however, in this Paper, is to point out that the important dates in the New Testament era stand at a distance of 630 years from the series of events in the Captivity and Restoration eras. This period is one-quarter of the great age of 2520 years, and also half of 1260 years.

The determination of dates.—The successive steps in the captivity of Israel and Judah, when deported to Assyria and Babylon, together with their restoration to their own land and the rebuilding of the Temple, occupied in all about two centuries. It is not too much to say that the dates in those two centuries are the most definitely fixed in all ancient history. They are more reliable than in the times preceding them or in those following. We are not therefore feeling our way back into the centuries before the Christian era, with increasing uncertainty. The reason of this is that the Chaldeans and Persians had a method of fixing dates which is unsurpassed in all history. They correlated the years in the reigns of their kings with eclipses of the sun and moon.

On this Dr. William Hales, the eminent Bible chronologist, remarks: "Eclipses are justly reckoned among the surest and most unerring characters (*i.e.* marked points) of chronology; for they can be calculated with great exactness backwards as well as forwards. . . . There is no danger of confounding any two eclipses together, when the circumstances attending each

* Numbers 4; 3, and 14; 34. Jeremiah 25; 11. Daniel 9; 2. Genesis 6; 3.

† See *The Time is at Hand* by the present writer; and the standard works therein referred to. (Thynne and Jarvis, London; 1926.)

are noticed with any tolerable degree of precision.”* In Haydn’s *Dictionary of Dates*, it is stated that the solar eclipse of 763 B.C. recorded in the Assyrian eponym canon, is the basis of Assyrian chronology. Dr. H. Grattan Guinness gives a list of seven eclipses between 721 and 491 B.C. which fix the reigns of Babylonian and Persian kings.† This interval extends from the captivity of the Ten Tribes to the time of Zechariah; and in secular history, this corresponds with the period from the accession of Nabonassar of Babylon (which is “the year one” in Babylonian chronology) until the invasion of Greece by the Persians. One of the eclipses may be cited as an example: “In the seventh year of Cambyses, between the 17th and 18th of Phamenoth, at one hour before midnight, the moon was eclipsed at Babylon by half the diameter on the north.” This eclipse, as now calculated, occurred at 11 p.m. July 16th, 523 B.C. The seventh year of Cambyses is thus definitely fixed; and his reign and even the kings immediately before and after him, can be confidently dated.‡

The dates are thus perfectly definite in this stretch of more than two centuries, which correspond with the Captivity of Israel and Judah and the prophets of those days. The Bible itself sanctions the use of these dates; for in the historical books as well as in the prophets, the kings of Judah and the events of those times are correlated with the kings of Babylon and Persia; and the years in which communications from God were made to the prophets, are frequently dated in the reigns of those kings.§ We may well regard the reliability of the dates in these times as providential, when it is here that the great prophetic periods have their beginning.

It is evidently incorrect therefore, to suppose that the dates in these eras are dependent on the Canon of Ptolemy, by using it to reckon backwards from later times; and it cannot be maintained that if any error is discovered in this Canon, the dates in these early eras must be reconsidered. It is also futile

* *A New Analysis of Chronology*; Dr. W. Hales, 1830. Vol. I, page 73.

† In *The Approaching End of the Age*, Guinness, 1882. Appendix, pages 585–588.

‡ The uncertainty in the much-discussed eclipse of Thales results from its being very vaguely described. Even the locality is undefined, which is essential in identifying a total solar eclipse.

§ For example, see II Kings 24; 8–12, and 25; 8. Jeremiah 25; 1. Daniel 8; 1. Zechariah 1; 1.

for the Higher Critics to attempt to alter the dates themselves that are cited in the Book of Daniel. They may disbelieve the book, and attempt to show by their literary methods that it is fiction written at a later epoch ; although recent archaeology authenticates all the incidental details given in Daniel, as pertaining to those times. In the attack upon Daniel, it is a serious matter to set aside the dated years on which a revelation from God was made to His prophet ; for such dates may have a high significance.

To illustrate the reliability of the dates in these times, the capture of Jerusalem is given by Usher as 588 and by Hales as 586 B.C. although at the Exodus these authorities differ by 157 years. The earlier Egyptian dates have often an uncertainty of a century or more, according to different authorities.* In the other direction, the dates in the New Testament era have only been arrived at by modern research ; as the Romans had quite lost the earlier ideas of accuracy.

When a date is only given to the nearest year, there is a possible uncertainty of one year in placing it in the B.C. series. For, if a king began to reign in midsummer, say in 536 B.C., half of the first year of his reign lies in 536 and the other half in the following year 535, because of our reckoning from January to January. An event in the first year of his reign may be dated in either of these years B.C., unless the season of the year can be ascertained.

Dates in these eras.—Although empires do not rise in a day, the year 623 B.C. may be taken as the establishment of the Babylonian empire. Two years previously, Nabopolassar had asserted his independence of Assyria ; but in this year, both he and Nebuchadnezzar made important alliances which confirmed the rule of Babylon. This is considered the first year of the empire in contemporary usage ; for its “ thirtieth year ” is stated by Ezekiel to co-incide with the fifth year after the captivity of Jehoiachin, which occurred in 598 B.C. (Ezekiel 1 ; 1-2.)

Nebuchadnezzar succeeded to the throne while absent from Babylon, and his accession was in the following year. The date

* In the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, edition of 1910, it is noted as remarkable that up to that date “ no records of eclipses are known from Egyptian documents.”

that is counted as the first of his reign may thus differ by one year according to the reckoning in Jeremiah and in Daniel.* The Dream of the Image in the second year of his reign, which was the first revelation of the great succession of Gentile powers, may best be placed in 605 B.C.

The captivity of Jehoiachin took place in 598 B.C. This was properly the end of the Jewish monarchy; for the succeeding king Zedekiah was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar and practically his vassal. (II Chronicles 36; 10.)

Thirty-seven years later, relief came to Jehoiachin, in 561 B.C. This is mentioned twice in Scripture; and its accurate dating to the day places emphasis upon it.†

After the fall of Babylon in 537 B.C. when it was captured by the Persians, two years elapsed before Cyrus reigned there in person. The decree of Cyrus, permitting the return of the Hebrew people to their land, in the first year of his reign, was thus in 535 B.C.

The rebuilding of the Temple, authorized by the decree of Darius in his second year, was carried out between 518 and 514 B.C.; and the *central year* of these, in the fourth year of Darius, is the date emphasized in Zechariah.‡ It is this central year also which is connected by definite periods with the dates in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah from which in turn the notable period of the Seventy Weeks has its beginning. There is thus a connected scheme all the way through; but this we cannot enlarge upon. We are here dealing only with the outstanding dates which we will have occasion to refer to.§

The New Testament era.—In contrast with the very definite dates considered, there is much discussion regarding the dates in this era; but the uncertainty in them has been narrowed down to about two years. The point most definitely dated in the Gospels, is when the word of God came to John the Baptist. (See Luke 3; 1-2.) This is dated by the year of Tiberius Caesar, by the ruling Governor and tetrarchs, and by the high priests then in office. The view is generally held that the

* Compare Jeremiah 25; 1 with Daniel 1; 1 and 2; 1.

† In II Kings 25; 27, and Jeremiah 52; 31.

‡ See Ezra 4; 24, and 6; 1, 12. Zechariah 7; 1, 5.

§ For the fulfilment of the 70 years, the predicted period of the Captivity in Babylon, see NOTE A, appended.

preaching of John the Baptist began in the spring, and the opening of the Ministry of Christ was in the autumn of the same year. Tiberius began to reign as the colleague of Augustus in 12 A.D. and succeeded Augustus on his death in 14 A.D. The 15th year of Tiberius was therefore either 26 or 28 A.D. The most competent investigators consider the year 26 the more probable. Rev. E. B. Elliott, author of the foundational commentary on Revelation, says: "Luke seems to have dated from Tiberius' association in the Empire with Augustus, which was two years before Augustus' death, and the beginning of Tiberius' sole reign."*

The dates adopted for the Birth of Christ and for the opening of the Ministry must be thirty years apart, which affords a relative check upon them; because the Lord Jesus was 30 years of age when His ministry began. (Luke 3; 23.) The date of the Birth of Christ has been thoroughly investigated by Hales the chronologist; and with the aid of an eclipse of the moon which occurred during Herod's last illness, he places it in 5 B.C.† It is to be noted that in the A.D. and B.C. reckoning, there is no *zero year* where they meet, from which to count in the two directions; for in the scheme as devised, the years 1 B.C. and 1 A.D. are contiguous. This gives rise to a difficulty; for if an interval in years is found by adding dates before and after the Christian era, a unit must be omitted from the sum. Thus, from 5 B.C. to 26 A.D. is just 30 years.

In accordance with this basis, the Lord Jesus would attain His twelfth year in the autumn of 8 A.D. and His first Passover would be in the spring of 9 A.D. This was a memorable epoch in His life, when He first declared His sonship to the Father.

The dates of importance in the New Testament era beyond the Ministry of Christ, are the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. which is well authenticated; and the date of the Book of Revelation. This lies between 95 and 97 A.D., for Irenaeus assigns it to the close of the reign of Domitian during his persecutions, when the Apostle John was banished to Patmos. Elliott gives a discussion of this, and an exhaustive review of theories to the contrary; and concludes that the

* *Horae Apocalypticæ*; Rev. E. B. Elliott, 1862. Vol. IV, p. 712, foot-note. The authorities for this are discussed in his *Warburton Lectures*, Appendix, p. 458.

† See *A New Analysis of Chronology*; Hales. Nearly all good commentators place the Nativity between 6 and 4 B.C.

date must be "near the end of the year 95, or beginning of 96 A.D." For Domitian was killed in September of the year 96.*

The connecting period.—We now wish to point out that the New Testament era is connected with the earlier eras at the time of the Captivity, by a period of 630 years. It thus stands at exactly one-fourth of the distance along the march of the great Seven Times, or 2520 years, which have their beginning in the Captivity era. If we take the 1260 years as the period which is most definitely mentioned in Scripture, 2520 years is its double, and 630 years is its half. The connections which this period gives between the dates in the two eras, are here concisely shown :—

- 8 to 9 A.D.†—630 years from the establishment of the Babylonian Empire in 623 B.C. Also, 630 years from the noteworthy Passover in the 18th year of Josiah, in 622 B.C.
- 26 A.D.—630 years from the opening of the Book of Daniel and the Dream of the Image, in 605 B.C. ; when the great succession of empires was first revealed.
- 33 A.D.—630 years from the captivity of Jehoiachin when the monarchy fell, in 598 B.C.
- 70 A.D.—630 years from the uplift of Jehoiachin, at the extreme end of the Captivity era when the dawn of restoration began, in 561 B.C.
- 96 A.D.—630 years from the Decree of Restoration issued by Cyrus in 535 B.C. and also 630 *lunar years* from the rebuilding of the Temple in the Restoration era.

It is not possible to suppose that such correspondence throughout these two series of dates, is merely coincidence. It occurs between outstanding dates in the Captivity era which are fixed with astronomical accuracy, and the best authenticated dates in New Testament times. The reason and meaning of such a connection may well stir our thoughts and give us cause

* See *Horae Apocalypticæ*, Elliott ; Vol. I, pages 32 to 47, and the copious foot-notes there given.

† The same year in the life of Christ includes parts of these two calendar years, as already pointed out.

to ponder. For, by taking the Bible as it stands, and investigating all that can be deduced from it, we are much more likely to discover further rays of truth for our illumination than by submitting it to adverse criticism.

The correlation of the first Passover of the Lord Jesus, when He was twelve, with the noteworthy passover in the reign of Josiah, is impressive; for its date is recorded, and it is said of it: "There was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did any of the kings of Israel keep such a passover." (II Chronicles 35; 18-19.) This one recorded occasion in the early life of Christ is thus illumined in its place in the connected series. The connection with the Babylonian empire may be a presage of the open manifestation of the kingdom of Christ which is to succeed the Four Empires; a presage thus brought to light at the time when the Lord Jesus first declared His divine Sonship.*

The connection of the opening of the Ministry of Christ in 26 A.D. with the beginning of the prophecies of Daniel, sets before us a vista of inquiry. And in addition to this period of 630 years, there are others which terminate in 26 A.D. when Christ announced: "The time is fulfilled." There is just one of these that we may here indicate:—

26 A.D.—560 years from the Decree of Restoration issued by Cyrus in 535 B.C.

The length of this period is 70 less than 630, and it thus runs appropriately from a date in the Restoration era, which is 70 years later than the Captivity.† This connection with Cyrus corresponds with expressions in Isaiah which make him typical of Christ; for Cyrus is called the shepherd, the Lord's anointed, raised up to let His exiles go free.‡ In one of the earliest discourses of Christ, He says that He was sent "to preach deliverance to the captives," which He quotes from Isaiah. (Luke 4; 18.)

In the well-known prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, the Opening of the Ministry of Christ is also indicated, as the beginning of the "seventieth week." This is very generally recognized;

* See Daniel 7; 13-14, and Revelation 11; 15.

† Not only 70 less than 630, but also 70 more than 490, the period of the Seventy Weeks. 560 is thus the mean value between these.

‡ See Isaiah 44; 28, and 45; 1, 13.

but the close of this last week brings up a wide difference of interpretation. We would point out, however, that a definite interval of seven years subsists between the year 26 A.D. when the Ministry opened, and 33 A.D.; a year which falls in its place in the series that we are now considering. This is also the *central year* between the Birth of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., which further emphasizes its importance.

Many careful commentators hold that this interval of seven years represents the last "week" in the Seventy Weeks of the great prophecy.* It would thus end with the martyrdom of Stephen when the rulers of the Jews, who had rejected Christ, rejected also the testimony of the Holy Spirit as Stephen so pointedly declared to them. (Acts 7; 51-52.) The Lord seems to consider this their final decision, as a nation; for thereupon He enlightens the Apostle Peter by a vision and sends him to preach to Cornelius, a Gentile; and the Lord also commissions the Apostle Paul to open the door to the Gentiles.† This juncture marks the close of the Jewish dispensation and the founding of the Gentile church; which would explain the outstanding character of the year 33 A.D. For the close of the Jewish dispensation is thus correlated by a definite period with the fall of the monarchy in the Captivity era.

The next connection to be considered, is between the relief to Jehoiachin and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. This tragedy, which the historian may suppose to be the final end of Jewish nationality, and which is indeed the beginning of the great dispersion for centuries to come, is yet illumined by a ray of hope from its connection with the dawn of Restoration in the time of Jehoiachin. It is not final in the eyes of Jehovah; there is to be a restoration in the latter days.

The Book of Revelation may almost be considered as a continuation or amplification of the earlier revelation given to Daniel, as many have pointed out. The connecting period with the first year of Cyrus is a strong confirmation of this. For

* Hales the chronologist, states this explicitly as a conclusion in his researches: "The *one week*, or *Passion week*, in the midst of which Our Lord was crucified, began with His public ministry and ended with the martyrdom of Stephen." (See full discussion in *A New Analysis of Chronology*; Vol. I, pages 199-206.)

† On the date of this juncture, see explanations by Dr. C. A. Auberlen, in *Daniel and St. John*, 1856; in which he states that Bengel concurs. Also, Rev. E. P. Cachemaille, *Papers on Prophecy*, pages 88-89.

at the opening of the Book of Daniel, before the prophecies begin, it is said: "Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus." Historically, this is the culminating date in his book, when the decree of restoration was issued. He thus received an incipient answer to his appeal to the covenant-keeping God, which he based on a period revealed to a previous prophet regarding the desolations of Jerusalem.* This response in the form of a historical occurrence, stood as guarantee that all the further predictions of periods which were made to him would likewise be fulfilled. It is surely significant therefore to find this definite connecting period between the culminating date in Daniel and the Book of Revelation; a period of just one-fourth of the great Times of Gentile domination which the Image depicts; and in accord with the solemn oath that these times would be limited.†

As though in confirmation of this, there is another connecting period of 630 years, on the lunar scale of twelve lunar months to a year.‡ This period runs from the central year in the rebuilding of the Temple (516 B.C.) to the date of Revelation in 96 A.D. The theme of that book is thus correlated with the culmination of the Restoration in the re-established worship of God, in the days of Zechariah and Ezra. (Regarding these two periods, see NOTE C.)

Concluding Remarks.—The explanations here given regarding the meaning of these connecting periods, may not by any means exhaust their significance. A much wider grasp of the matter would also be obtained if we could take time to consider the setting of this period of 630 years in its relation to the general scheme of prophetic chronology. But the fact that there is a series of connecting periods of the same length, cannot be questioned; for it is not possible that such a relation between the outstanding events in two different eras could be a coincidence. Nor are they events specially selected with a purpose; they are those to which the Scriptures themselves give prominence.

We may best take a reverent attitude towards these things, as showing that the appearance of the Messiah in history was when the fulness of the time was come; and that the ingathering

* See Daniel 1; 21, and 9; 2-3.

† Daniel 12; 7, and Revelation 10; 5-7.

‡ The lunar year of twelve lunar months, or lunations, has been adopted by several Eastern nations as the year they reckon by.

from Gentile nations which followed the Jewish dispensation, as well as the final Revelation to man, are all in accord with the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

If our finite minds cannot grasp fully the mysterious wisdom by which the Almighty moulds the events of history, under His providential rule, into subservience to His deep counsels, we may at least recognize the more obvious outcome of the present limited investigation :—

(1) The successive steps of downfall in the Captivity era were so spaced in time, that they are in accord with the successive points of uplift in the Restoration era ; with an interval of seventy years between them respectively. (See NOTE A.) This involves the providential over-ruling of the dates at which the attacks of Nebuchadnezzar were made, the date of the fall of Babylon, the decrees of Cyrus and Darius, and so forth.

(2) The whole series of dates in these two eras are so spaced in time as to be in accord with the outstanding points in the life of Christ and the remainder of the New Testament era. This brings out the parallelism of the earlier and later eras in its providential aspect, as all included in one divine plan.* There is also a testimony in this to the Messiahship of Christ ; but this is more distinctly given in the predicted period of the Seventy Weeks, which we have here scarcely touched upon.

(3) Amongst the dates in the earlier eras, as well as in the New Testament era, there are several which are years that God Himself chose, on which to make a revelation to His prophet. These stand as the initial or terminal points of periods, and they thus fit into their place in the providential scheme. We may expect therefore to find special significance in any date in Scripture which marks a communication from God, as well as in all dates that are recorded.

When we bring these wide vistas of providential dealing before our limited apprehension, we may well bow before the wisdom and knowledge of God, and recognize that His ways are past finding out.

* In corroboration also, it is from the same basis that the system of periods stretches down the centuries to the Time of the End.

NOTE A.—The fulfilment of the Seventy years of the Captivity in Babylon was three-fold ; which is very instructive in showing the manner of fulfilment of a predicted period. The three starting points are :—

623 B.C.—The establishment of the Babylonian Empire.

606 B.C.—The first year of Nebuchadnezzar (in the reckoning from the first siege of Jerusalem, as in Daniel).

587 B.C.—The capture of Jerusalem and burning of the Temple.

From each of these starting points, the *seventieth year* is as follows :—

623—554 B.C. the vision of the Four Wild Beasts, corresponding with the Dream of the Image ; at a date chosen of God. (Daniel 7 ; 1.)

606—537 B.C. the fall of Babylon, when the kingdom was numbered and brought to an end. (Daniel 5 ; 26, R.V.)

587—518 B.C. the restored Temple begun ; the laying of the foundation being emphasized. (Haggai 2 ; 10 and 18. Ezra 6 ; 14-15.)

There is also a central period of 70 full years from the opening revelation to Daniel (the Dream of the Image in 605 B.C.) to the decree of Restoration proclaimed by Cyrus in 535 B.C.

NOTE B.—The principle that a *day* in the prophecies represents a *year* has not only the sanction of Scripture,* but it is dealt with by many competent authorities. Sir Isaac Newton points out that all prophetic symbolism is in miniature, and so likewise a short period of time represents one much longer. Hales, that most pains-taking chronologist, in his voluminous work of 1830, explains the year-day system very thoroughly and convincingly. These investigations are carried forward in the elaborate foundational works written from 1830 onward ; †

* See Numbers 14 ; 34. Ezekiel 4 ; 6.

† See the works of William Cuninghame, 1837 ; Professor T. R. Birks of Cambridge, 1843 ; Rev. E. B. Elliott, 1849 ; and Dr. H. Grattan Guinness, 1882. A good modern summary on these lines is given by Rev. E. P. Cachemaille, *Present-day Papers on Prophecy*, No. VII. 1911.

amongst the most valuable being those of Professor Birks of Cambridge, who brings to light the astronomical cycles which are associated with the prophetic periods.* To his explanations and researches, Dr. Guinness acknowledges his indebtedness.

NOTE C.—The dates in the Restoration era which are the starting points of the two periods that terminate concurrently at the date of the Book of Revelation, include between them an interval that is significant. The one begins at the Decree of Cyrus, and the other at the rebuilding of the Temple; and between these initial dates there was a long series of delays and hindrances, so pathetically described in Ezra; till under the exhortations of the prophets, the people took up the work and completed the Temple. Yet this delay only served to bring about a further fulfilment of the predicted period of 70 years between the burning and rebuilding of the Temple.

This same interval of delay causes the two periods, from their respective starting points, to meet in 96 A.D. when Revelation was written; and thus carries forward the same conception into that Book; showing that even opposition and delay may serve ultimately to illumine the purposes of God. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints; though the time appointed may be long.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN (Lieut.-Col. F. A. Molony) said: Whether we agree with the author of our paper or not, I am sure that we all think that we have listened to a very able lecture. The author knows exactly what he wants to prove, and marshals his arguments clearly and well. He has evidently given a great deal of thought and trouble to the matter, and I beg you to accord him a hearty vote of thanks. (This was given by acclamation.)

But I think I detect some weak points in Dr. Dawson's argument. There are no events mentioned in the earlier period which come 630 years before the Birth, Crucifixion or Resurrection of Christ, which were, of course, the outstanding events in the later period. The

* On this subject, see a Paper by the writer: "Solar and Lunar Cycles implied in the Prophetic Numbers in the Book of Daniel;" Trans. Royal Soc. of Canada, Vol. XI, 1906.

fourth connection, that between the uplift of JEHOIACHIN and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, seems to me to be weak. The first three connections are of *similar* events—the great Passover of Josiah and the first Passover attended by Jesus Christ, etc. But the fourth connection is a *contrast*, namely, the uplift of Jehoiachin with the fall of Jerusalem. The able wording of the third paragraph on p. 87 should not blind us to the weakness of the argument.

When a Christian man announces that he has discovered something that confirms Divine revelation, we should give his arguments careful consideration, but we should not be over-ready to accept his conclusions. For if an unproven proposition goes out from this Institute unchallenged, it is likely to do more harm than good in the end. So I invite you to speak your minds, and to give this paper a fair field and also some favour, in view of the fact that the learned author is unfortunately not present.

Rev. E. P. CACHEMAILLE said: I have long been in correspondence on prophetic topics with Dr. Dawson at Ottawa, but last year, when he came to England, I had the pleasure of making his personal acquaintance. He showed me a series of elaborate diagrams, resembling engineering diagrams, but representing in strict proportion the prophetic periods, with their dates. I mention this that you may rest assured that the paper to which we have been listening is no hasty or superficial production, but rests upon a wide and solid foundation of long and intelligent labour.

The writer of the paper deals especially with one section of a great subject. The visions of Daniel and Revelation are nothing less than history written beforehand by the Finger of God. Their symbolic language is easily understood if proper use is made of the clues that Scripture provides. Think what that means. Here is *true* history. All the really great and important events down the centuries are foreshown, each in its proper place and in its right proportion, for this is Philosophic History; in fact, God's own Philosophy of History. As an example, take such an era as that of the Reformation, the facts and events of which are common property. A Protestant will write its history from his own point of view, and a Romanist historian will write a history differing fundamentally from the other. Which of the two is true? Or which comes nearest to the truth? Now, in

Rev. 10, 11, God has given the true History of the Reformation, by which we may confidently test and correct all merely human versions. Or take such an event as the great French Revolution of 1789. An Englishman writes its history ; a Frenchman who took part in it will give quite a different impression. But God has foreshown it all, from the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet and onward. In these wonderful visions, then, we have Truth, because they are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and are written by the Finger of God. Here is indeed a treasure hid in the field, well worth making our own.

Mr. W. E. LESLIE said : In this paper two historic periods are compared. First, the interval between them is calculated ; then certain events in the two series are compared (*a*) in respect of their mutual character and (*b*) of their position in the series.

Consider, first, the length of the interval between the two series. Dr. Dawson bases himself upon what is known as the "year-day" hypothesis. This, therefore, requires first to be established, and that with a cogency and by critical methods suited to the wide circles to which the Victoria Institute addresses itself. Unfortunately, the author has not argued this point in the paper. Further, he does not consistently follow his own principle, for he takes the 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecy to be literal years. I fear he will not carry all Evangelicals with him, let alone the followers of men like Professor R. H. Charles.

Again, even if the "year-day" theory be accepted, no ground is shown for the assumption that 2,520 years is the length of the "Times of the Gentiles." Yet, again, if this point were established, the shorter period with which the author deals must be some fraction of that longer period. No reason is given for attaching special importance to the fraction one-quarter. I think this part of the paper is "not proven."

Now, take the relative position of the events in the series. The date of the birth of Christ is admittedly uncertain by about 3 years. Luke says that He was "about" 30 at the beginning of the ministry, thus introducing another uncertainty of about 3 years. Adding these together, we get an uncertainty of 6 years in the relative positions of the test events before the martyrdom of Stephen.

We now come to the events themselves. Are there such striking parallels between them that we can afford to ignore the uncertainty of dates? It may be agreed that the Passover under Josiah and our Lord's first Passover, present features that are striking in their character. The parallel between the commencement of the ministry and Nebuchadnezzar's first vision is less impressive. The next comparison (between the captivity of Jehoiachin and the stoning of Stephen) involves several assumptions. Dr. Dawson looks upon Jehoiachin as the last Jewish king, because his successor was appointed by the King of Babylon. He forgets that Josiah's successor was appointed by the King of Egypt. There will probably be differences of view as to the end of "the Jewish Dispensation"—a phrase that will hardly commend itself outside Evangelical circles. The last equation—between the lifting up of Jehoiachin and the destruction of Jerusalem—is, to say the least, somewhat slender. The last equation, between the last year of Daniel, is even more dubious.

I submit that the main thesis of the paper is not established. The subsidiary correspondences introduced all suffer from the weakness that they are not arrived at upon uniform inductive principles. Periods which happen to agree are treated as though this were necessarily due to design. It is, in my judgment, to be deplored that Dr. Dawson has ignored the far-reaching inferences as to the prophetic Scriptures that are being put forward by "liberal" students of Jewish apocalyptic literature.

Mr. W. HOSTE said: I have always felt it a real honour, as a young man, to have met Sir William Dawson, F.R.S., in London, and to have had some conversation with him. His books had a great vogue at that time, and ought now to be read more than they are. They served to stabilize the faith of many. That will be a better record to look back on, "when this passing world is done," than that of some of his successors in the Chair of the British Association, who seem to regard the Presidential Address as an opportunity for subverting the faith of many. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* did Sir William Dawson the honour of writing: "In his books on geological subjects he maintained a distinctly theological attitude, declining to admit the descent or evolution of man from brute ancestors, and holding that the human species only made its appearance on this earth within quite recent times."

Sir William was a great geological authority, and, like another, the American Dana, bore witness that the story of Creation is in harmony with the facts of geology. It is, therefore, a privilege for us to have a paper from his son—also a scientist of repute. On prophetic questions, unity of view is unfortunately difficult in practice. For instance, our lecturer adopts what is known as the “year-day” theory, that is, that where we have periods of days, *e.g.* 1290, 1335, 1260, etc., *years* are meant in each case, and this is taken as axiomatic; whereas others think it is better to understand “days” as “days,” and “years” as “years.” But as the Seventy Weeks of Daniel (ch. 9) have been referred to, someone may remind us that this passage is in itself taken to be proof of the “year-day” theory. This is true, but the proof is only in appearance. The Hebrew word *shávúat*, translated “weeks,” is, as Gesenius points out, a hebdomad, or period of seven—it may be months, or years, or days, according to the context. Here the fulfilment shows that they are “hebdomads” of years. A few lines on, in Daniel 10; 2 and 3, when Daniel is fasting literal “weeks,” as we call them, our A.V. has “full” or “whole weeks” where the Hebrew is “weeks of days,” thus obviating ambiguity with the “seventy weeks” just spoken of.

When did these seventy weeks begin? When we say that this was not with the decree of Cyrus, but of Artaxerxes, we are accused of faking the date. But no faking is needed. Cyrus’s decree was to build the house of the Lord (*see* Ezra 1), while it is that of Artaxerxes which corresponds with the proclamation here mentioned (Daniel 9; 25, and Nehemiah 2 and 3). Surely the interpretation of the Seventy Weeks is not so intricate as to defy a simple interpretation. The period of 490 years is divided into three sections, seven weeks or 49 years, the building period; 62 weeks or 434 years, ended by the great crisis of history, “the cutting off of the Messiah.” Why it should be said that He is cut off in the midst of the last week is truly inexplicable. “*After the 62 weeks shall Messiah be cut off.*” One week is left, and not a word is said of its being fulfilled at the martyrdom of Stephen or in any other way. But before the completion of the prophecy (in *v.* 27) a period of “one week” is mentioned, and is it unreasonable to take that period of seven years as the week still over? Was not the cutting off of Messiah bound to affect the status of Israel as a people? Zechariah 11; 10, tells us that it did.

But they will be once more recognized as an independent people by the covenant made with them by the Roman Prince—the Man of Sin.

Most interesting as some of the parallels referred to by our lecturer are, between Old Testament and New Testament dates, *e.g.* the great Passover of Josiah and the first our Lord kept, which must have been to God the most wonderful ever observed, I am afraid I cannot feel that we are on very firm and scripturally convincing ground in building on such data. How, for instance, could the *date* of the Apocalypse, which is hardly certain, be considered important enough to serve as the chronological counterpart of Cyrus's Decree of Restoration (Ezra 1) ?

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

Dr. J. A. FLEMING wrote : There are serious differences of opinion between Scriptural chronologers on important points, which it would seem to be necessary to clear up before we can reach certainty upon several matters. One of these is the interpretation to be placed on the chronological statement in the Gospel of St. Luke (3 ; 1, 2) : “ In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar . . . the word of God came unto John, etc.” All are agreed that Augustus Cæsar died on August 19th, A.D. 14, and at that date his successor Tiberius entered on his sole reign. But Tiberius had for two years previously been associated with Augustus as co-regent, and the difference of opinion, therefore, turns on whether the 15th year of Tiberius is to date from August 19th, A.D. 14, or from A.D. 12.

The author of this paper assumes that “ the most competent investigators ” take its reckoning from A.D. 12, but Sir Robert Anderson, in his book *The Coming Prince*, scouts this idea, and he and others state that the only *possible* reckoning is from August 19th, A.D. 14. Sir Robert Anderson, in a footnote (*loc. cit.*) gives other arguments against the earlier date. This date in question, of course, determines the starting-point for our Lord's ministry, and by inference also that of His crucifixion, which last event Sir Robert Anderson assigns to the year A.D. 32. No exceptional authority can therefore be given to the statements of E. B. Elliott on this point.

In the next place, we have serious differences as to the starting-point for the prophetic period of the “ 70 weeks ” in Daniel. One of three dates has generally been accepted : (i) the decree of Cyrus in his 1st year—usually taken to be 536 B.C. ; (ii) another in the 7th

year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, usually taken as 457 B.C. ; and (iii) another in his 20th year, taken as 445 or 444 B.C. If we take "the going forth of the Commandment" in the Daniel prophecy to be the decree of Cyrus, and if we take that year to be 536 B.C., then it is impossible to make out a fulfilment of the prophecy.

Accordingly, most expositors have taken the commandment to be one of the decrees of Artaxerxes. Anstey in his *Romance of Chronology*, boldly cuts the knot by declaring that the received secular chronology of that time, which is based on the Ptolemy canon, is wrong by 82 years, and that the true date of Cyrus's 1st year is 454 B.C. = AN. HOM. 3589.

Until this wide difference of opinion is satisfactorily cleared up, we cannot reconcile Scriptural and secular chronology. The Scriptural chronology reckoned by genealogies is perfectly consistent, but it differs from secular, and we do not yet appear to have reached absolute certainty on such important dates as the fall of Babylon and the 1st year of Cyrus. Sir Robert Anderson shows that if the 1st Nisan in the 20th year of Artaxerxes is taken as the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem, then it is exactly 69 prophetic weeks to April the 6th, A.D. 32, which he takes as the date for Christ's entry into Jerusalem in his Passion week, as "Messiah the Prince."

The differences of opinion of chronologers on all these important dates—viz., the Birth, the Crucifixion of our Lord, the initial date (or dates) of the 70 weeks' prophecy, and the dates of the Exodus, Flood, and other Old Testament events—are great and perplexing. We seem as yet to have no absolutely settled "fixed points," or datum-points from which to reckon the prophetic periods or the genealogical series.

From Lieut.-Col. G. M. MACKINLAY: The lecturer tells us that authorities agree in fixing upon 4 B.C. or 6 B.C., as the date of the Nativity. I have myself lectured on the subject before the Institute ; but I have never heard of such an agreement as that suggested. On the other hand, the year 8 B.C. has been spoken of in this connection, and I maintain that there is much to be said for that date. For one thing, it was the year of the taxing or enrolment, when large numbers would assemble at Bethlehem, which is only a few miles distant from Jerusalem.

REMARKS BY THE LECTURER.

In preparing this paper, the writer supposed that he was dealing with matters of historical fact, which merely required to be pointed out, with an endeavour to explain their significance. He is rather surprised, therefore, at criticisms from such various angles, which would take too much space to discuss fully.

If all the careful conclusions of early investigators are to be set aside, and primary principles have all to be established afresh, any paper on a prophetic subject would become a treatise of inordinate length. In many cases, these investigators have brought to light all the historical material yet available on the questions they deal with.

In regard to the "year-day" principle, if the striking fulfilments of the prophetic periods, at their terminations during the last two centuries and up to recent years, are not recognized as proof, it is difficult to see how any evidence would be convincing. Regarding the dates in the Captivity era, the studies of the writer have led him to conclude that these are more reliable and less open to discussion than those in New Testament times; because they are definitely fixed by eclipses which were so accurately recorded as to be unmistakable.

Recent writers who would make sweeping changes in these dates, can hardly appreciate this aspect of the question, which has been well explained by competent authorities. As I have been careful to point out, Haydn's *Dictionary of Dates* has stated that the record of a solar eclipse in 763 B.C. is the basis of Assyrian chronology. In contrast with this (as I have also shown) there is little help from astronomy in fixing Egyptian dates; for, as the *Encyclopædia Britannica* of 1910 says: "It is remarkable that no records of eclipses are known from Egyptian documents."

As there is unfortunately considerable difference of view on the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, the writer avoided its discussion in the present paper. It could not well be passed by without mention; but it is here quite secondary, as it does not bear directly upon the main points dealt with in this paper.

The writer desires to thank the Chairman and the Members of the Victoria Institute, for the considerate manner in which his paper was received.