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1931

740TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, JANUARY 5TH, 1931,
AT 4.30 P.M.

SIR AMBROSE FLEMING, D.Sc., F.R.S., PRESIDENT,
IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed, and signed, and the HON. SECRETARY announced the following elections:—As Members: Charles W. Pike, Esq., and Dr. Eliot Curwen; and as Student Associates: Douglas Johnson, Esq., B.A., and Gordon F. Claringbull, Esq.

The PRESIDENT then called on Lieut.-Col. A. G. Shortt to read his paper on "The Fifteenth Year of Tiberius."

THE FIFTEENTH YEAR OF TIBERIUS.

(Luke iii, 1.)

By LIEUT.-COL. A. G. SHORTT, B.A. (LATE R.A.).

§ 1.

IT is very remarkable that, after nineteen hundred years, with all our modern methods of criticism and enquiry, the datings of Our Lord's Life and Ministry have not been definitely determined. The reason, of course, is simple, and lies in an unfortunate clash between the statement in Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* that Herod reigned 34 years, and St. Luke's precise dating of the beginning of the Ministry of John the Baptist as occurring in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, coupled with the added statement that Our Lord not long afterwards began to be about 30 years of age, and with St. Matthew's story of the Flight into Egypt as indicating that the Nativity was *before* the death of Herod.

These statements are irreconcilable, though much ingenuity has been brought to bear on the problem, and we must therefore examine them in the light of all available evidence which we can collect.

The words of St. Luke are as follows :—“ Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness ” (Luke iii, 1). That the wording is intended to be precise is obvious. There is no event in Scripture which is more carefully dated. And yet the only part of it from which we can get precise information is the first item, “ the fifteenth year of Tiberius.” On the face of it, it is clear enough. Augustus died on August 19th, A.D. 14 ; the fifteenth year of Tiberius therefore would begin on August 19th, A.D. 28. But as, by Josephus, Herod died in 4 B.C., Our Lord would be more than 31 years of age in A.D. 28 if the Nativity preceded Herod’s death.

We will consider St. Luke first. He was a man of education, a physician, and, as is admitted by all, most accurate in his statements. He claims (Luke i, 2) that his information was direct from eyewitnesses. He is therefore, as a witness, in an extremely strong position. Yet efforts have continually been made to work round the dating he gives. It is said that Tiberius was given equal power with Augustus in the provinces before the death of the latter, as far back as A.D. 11 or 12, but no satisfactory evidence is produced of his reign being dated from so early a time. Those who do not go as far as this say that St. Luke was speaking casually without any special knowledge of any such dating, or may have followed the Roman custom of beginning their year in January, so that the fifteenth year of Tiberius may have begun in January, A.D. 28. Again no evidence is produced, and the wording of the passage shows extreme precision rather than looseness of wording.

To test these arguments there can be no surer evidence than that of coins, and it is proposed to set out below certain coins of Antioch which may assist us. Antioch was the capital of Syria and the headquarters of the Roman rule in that province. These coins, therefore, would circulate all over Syria, including Judæa, and would be well known to St. Luke himself, who is believed to have been a native of, or to have resided in, Antioch.

They are also coins issued by the Roman governors and therefore strictly official :—

Coins of Antioch.

1. Coin of Tiberius marked ΓM (= 43rd year of the Actian era).
2. Coin of Tiberius marked ΔM (= 44th year of the Actian era).
3. Coin of Tiberius doubly marked A (= first year of Tiberius) and EM (45th year of Actian era).
4. Coin of Tiberius doubly marked Γ (= third year of Tiberius) and ZM (47th year of Actian era).
5. Coin of Augustus marked XII (Cons.) and ΘK (29) year of Victory (Actium).
6. Coin of Augustus marked XIII (Cons.) and ΘK (29) year of Victory (Actium).
7. Coin of Augustus marked ΞΑ (36) and ΔN (54).
8. Coin of Galba marked 117 (from era of Antioch).
9. Coin of Otho marked 117 (from era of Antioch).

For these coins and others reference should be made to Eckhel, *Doctrina Nummorum*, 1794, III, p. 272 ff., and O. Kaestner, *De Aeris quoe ab imperio Cæsaris*, etc., pp. 7–22. T. Lewin's *Fasti Sacri* also will be found most useful for the copious evidences he had collected for the years 70 B.C. to A.D. 70.

The first two are considered doubtful, but our attention is attracted by the third, which equates the first year of Tiberius with the 45th year of the Actian era, and we shall require first to ascertain the date of this era.

The battle of Actium was fought on September 2nd, 31 B.C., and the battle of Pharsalia, which inaugurated the Cæsarean era (the era of Antioch), occurred on August 9th, 48 B.C.

Now Eckhel proves from Nos. 8 and 9 that the Cæsarean era began not in 48 B.C., but in the autumn of 49 B.C., after August 9th in order that this first year would contain the date of the battle. He proves this from the fact that Galba reigned from June 9th, A.D. 68, to January 15th, A.D. 69, and Otho from then to April 16th of the same year (Eckhel, III, p. 282), and as by coin No. 7, which refers to the eras of Antioch and of Actium, there were 18 years between the two, the era of Actium must begin in the autumn of 31 B.C. Now this agrees with the fact that the civil years of the Antiochenes, as of other Eastern nations, began in the autumn, and though, at Antioch, the actual

beginning varied at different times between September and October, yet we have literary evidence (Kaestner, p. 13) from the writings of Lydus (*De Mens.*, IV, 80) that when Augustus defeated at Leucas the Egyptians with Antony and Cleopatra, he introduced the cycle of the so-called indiction from the beginning of September. We may therefore take it that the Antiochene year in 31 B.C., began on September 1st. And this explains the two coins, Nos. 5 and 6, which are both of the year of the Actian era 29 (September, 3 B.C.—September, 2 B.C.), Augustus having been made Consul for the thirteenth time on January 1st, 2 B.C. And, further, following on this last evidence, the year of the Actian era 45 (EM), as shown on coin No. 3, began therefore on September 1st, A.D. 14, and ran on to September 1st, A.D. 15.

But we have yet to deal with the way the years of Tiberius' reign are reckoned, for though the Antiochene year began on September 1st, the years of Tiberius may still have been reckoned from the previous January. Yet this at least is impossible, as the following examples show :—

“C. Asinius and C. Anstinius being consuls, it was the *ninth* year of Tiberius” (Tacitus, opening of 4th book of *Annals*). This was the year A.D. 23. Were the years of Tiberius reckoned from January 1st, A.D. 14, it would have been his tenth year. So also in the cases given below.

“In the *ninth* year of the reign of Tiberius in the consulship of Asinius Pollio and Anstinius Vetus” (Pliny, *N.H.*, xxxiii, 8). This again is in A.D. 23.

Dion Cassius, LVII, 24, and LVIII, 24, mentions that in the course of the year A.D. 24, ten years of the reign of Tiberius expired, and puts the consulship of Lucius Vitellius and Fabius Persicus (January 1st, 34) in the twentieth year of Tiberius.

Mommsen, again, quotes an inscription at Marseilles, *Cil.*, XII, 406, which is known to belong to A.D. 19, and is dated the fifth year of Tiberius (see *Staatoreckt II*, 3rd Edn., 1887, p. 802).

Tiberius reigned actually for 22 years 6 months and 25 days, dying on March 16th, A.D. 37.

Philo makes it 23 years (*Leg.* 21).

Clement of Alexandria, 26 years 6 months and 19 days (*Strom.*, Lib. I.C., XXI, p. 406).

Josephus in *Ant.*, XVIII, 6, 10, 22 years 5 months and 3 days, but in *Bell II*, 95, 22 years 6 months and 3 days.

In the above it is obvious that the first year of Tiberius cannot be reckoned from January 1st. Philo, being a Jew, may have reckoned it as from the 1st Nisan, but the others evidently take it from the date of accession, though Clement is wrong in his years, and we see that the custom was general not only in Rome but in the provinces.

If we accepted, with Philo, March as the beginning of the regnal years, it would not affect the point we have in view, which is to ascertain the year of the winter and early spring before the Baptism; but to be exact we must on the above evidence make the fifteenth year of Tiberius run from August 19th, A.D. 28—August 19th, A.D. 29, and omitting consideration of coins 1 and 2, the existence of which has been denied, we now are in a position to define what is meant by the dating on coin No. 3.

Thus the Ministry of John beginning in the autumn or winter must be placed at the end of A.D. 28 or the beginning of 29, and the First Passover of Our Lord in April, A.D. 29.

§ 2.—THE PUBLIC LIFE OF CHRIST.

With the Passover of A.D. 29 the Public Life of Our Lord may be said to have begun, though the real Ministry did not commence till John the Baptist was imprisoned. We learn that after this Passover He taught in the synagogues of Galilee and came to Capernaum and taught *on the Sabbath days* (Matt. iv, 23; Luke iv, 31). It was after this again that the disciples were reproved by the Pharisees for plucking ears of corn on the "Second Sabbath after the first" (*δευτεροπρωτον σαββατον*) (Luke vi, 1). The meaning of this expression is obscure, and has been taken to be either the first Sabbath after the sheaf offering in Passover week, or the first Sabbath of the second Jewish month, Iyar. In any case it is impossible, in view of the extended tour throughout Galilee and the *weekly* teaching in the Synagogues at Capernaum, that the incident can have occurred in the year A.D. 29, and must be assigned to the year A.D. 30. There is a further reason for this, too, in that it occurred after the imprisonment of John, and this will be shown later to have taken place in the autumn of A.D. 29. After this again comes the feeding of the five thousand (Luke ix, 10-17), which St. John (vi, 4) tells us was just before a Passover. Since the plucking of the

ears of corn was *after* a Passover, the Passover of A.D. 30, it is clear that this is the Passover of A.D. 31.

Between this and the Crucifixion we are told that Our Lord was present in Jerusalem for a Feast of Tabernacles and a Feast of Dedication (John vii, 2 ; x, 22), and, further, that Pilate had murdered certain Galileans at their sacrifices. The only feasts for which the Galileans went up to Jerusalem were Passover, Dedication, Tabernacles, and Pentecost. Now if we allow only one year from the feeding of the five thousand to the Crucifixion we are faced with a difficulty, for Our Lord was not at Jerusalem when the Galileans were murdered. Word was brought to him regarding it. It cannot, therefore, have taken place at the Feast of Tabernacles in October, A.D. 31, or Dedication in December of the same year, for Our Lord was at Jerusalem for both these feasts. And it appears impossible that it should have occurred at Pentecost, A.D. 31, since between the feeding of the five thousand just before the Passover and Pentecost (say 60 days) was an interval of eight days up to the Transfiguration, the return to Capernaum, a journey to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, an exercise of the Ministry in Decapolis, a journey to the villages of Cæsarea Philippi, a return to Capernaum, and the despatch and return of the seventy disciples on their mission, a mission which by itself must have occupied more than the whole time between Passover and Pentecost. We are therefore compelled to consider that all these events cannot be compressed into the year A.D. 31-32, and that the Crucifixion cannot have been before A.D. 33. This would give room for a feast to which the murder of the Galileans could be allotted.

And this year is supported from astronomical considerations, for it is certain that Our Lord was on the Cross on a Friday, 14th Nisan, and this point has been definitely set at rest by Dr. J. K. Fotheringham, Reader in Ancient Chronology at Oxford. Until recently there has been some doubt as to the precise way on which the Jews reckoned the 1st day of Nisan. This, the first day of the New Year, was not settled until the new moon had been observed at 6 p.m. in the evening. If the expected new moon was not then visible the first day was put off for 24 hours. The result was an element of uncertainty, but by using a series of 76 observations made by Schmidt in Athens, and finding the azimuth as well as the altitude of the moon when first seen, Dr. Fotheringham has found a curve which divides those positions of the moon which would result in its

being seen from those in which it would not be seen, and the following table, which gives his conclusions, definitely sets the matter at rest. For details the reader is referred to the *Journal of Theological Studies* for 1910.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Nisan 14th.</i>
29	Friday-Saturday, March 18th-19th.
29	Sunday-Monday, April 17th-18th.
30	Thursday-Friday, April 6th-7th.
31	Monday-Tuesday, March 26th-27th.
32	Sunday-Monday, April 13th-14th.
33	Thursday-Friday, April 2nd-3rd.
34	Tuesday-Wednesday, March 23rd-24th.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Nisan 15th.</i>
29	Saturday-Sunday, March 19th-20th.
29	Monday-Tuesday, April 18th-19th.
30	Friday-Saturday, April 7th-8th.
31	Tuesday-Wednesday, March 27th-28th.
32	Monday-Tuesday, April 14th-15th.
33	Friday-Saturday, April 3rd-4th.
34	Wednesday-Thursday, March 24th-25th.

(The above are Julian dates. For Gregorian, deduct two from each.)

From this table we find that the only years in which the 14th Nisan after midnight fell on a Friday are A.D. 30 and 33, while for those who consider that the Crucifixion was on the 15th Nisan, not one of these years is eligible. And as from what has been said above the year A.D. 30 is ruled out, we are left with the year A.D. 33.

§ 3.—THE MINISTRY.

Although the public life of Our Lord began with the Passover of A.D. 29, it was not then that He began His real work. John the Baptist was still continuing his ministry, and it is not until he was cast into prison that we hear that Christ "began to preach" (Matt. iv, 12-17; Mark i, 14, 15; Luke iv, 16-21). It was then that we hear that "the time is fulfilled" and "from that time He began to preach." And the time of this can be dated as follows: Herod Antipas about this time had made a

voyage to Rome, and while waiting for a ship, lodged with his brother Philip (not the tetrarch). Here he fell in love with Herodias, Philip's wife, and arranged with her that she should come to him on his return from Rome. This was done, and called for a stern rebuke from John the Baptist, because it was contrary to Jewish law that he should marry his brother's wife, as she had had a daughter, Salome, by Philip. For this reason we may assign the journey to Rome to the year A.D. 29, in which John was imprisoned, more especially as Livia, the wife of Augustus, died early in this year, and Antipas would be likely to go to further his interests in a share of her property in Judæa.

But as news of her death would not reach Antipas till approximately April, and the journey to or from Rome is generally calculated at two months, we cannot put his return earlier than the late summer or autumn, and this is as near as we can get it until we examine the date of the Nativity; but, as it is, it is a further argument in favour of placing the incident of the plucking of the ears of corn by the disciples after the Passover of A.D. 30 rather than A.D. 29.

§ 4.—THE NATIVITY.

In Luke iii, 23, we are told that at the time of His Baptism Our Lord "began to be about 30 years of age," a phrase which has been altered in the Revised Version to "when He began to teach was about thirty years of age." The correction is unfortunate, for there is no hint in the text of any reference to teaching, nor is there any evidence that He taught before the end of the Ministry of John the Baptist, which, as shown above, was in the autumn six months later.

In reality the meaning of the phrase is simple and is intended to imply that the age of 29½ had been reached and that Our Lord was going on towards his thirtieth year. In view, therefore, of the close connection between all His actions and the Law, in view of the way in which He carried out the prophecies, it is practically certain that the day when He could say "the time is fulfilled: this day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears," the day when He "began to preach," was His thirtieth birthday, and for this reason. Thirty years was the priestly age. Before it He could not enter on priestly duties. At thirty He was bound to enrol Himself for His work in the Temple. If He did not do so, if there was any delay, His observance of the Law would

fail. And if this reasoning is right, the Nativity must be placed in the autumn of 2 B.C.

We can, however, get a closer approximation than this. Josephus tells us (Bell., VI, 4, 5) that the Temple was burned on the 10th Ab (5th Aug., Jul.), A.D. 70. According to the Rabbins (Mishna, III, 298, 3) it was on the 9th Ab, and was the day Jehoiarib, the first of the 24 courses of priests, entered on his duties. These duties were for a week at a time (2 Chron., xxiii, 8) and went from Sabbath to Sabbath.

Now Zacharias (Luke i, 5) was a priest of the eighth course, and, as there is no record of any break between 3 B.C. and A.D. 70, we can, by working back, calculate that his course ended on July 13th, 3 B.C. The Annunciation of the Virgin Mary was in Elizabeth's sixth month, say, between December 9th, 3 B.C., and January 8th, 2 B.C., and allowing 280 days, this would bring the Nativity to the month from September 15th to October 15th, 2 B.C.

We have thus a period of some thirty days in which to locate the Nativity, but even yet we have a further clue. Our Lord's exposition of Isa. lxi, 1, related in Luke iv, 16-21, was on a Sabbath. The Day of Atonement in A.D. 29 was on October 7th-8th (Julian) and also was a Sabbath. In the ordinary way the chances against the Day of Atonement coinciding with the beginning of the Ministry would be one to five, since there are five Sabbaths between September 15th and October 15th, but if we realize that the great work of the Saviour was mediation and atonement, we must find it difficult, if up to this point the reasoning has been sound, to discard the Day of Atonement as the date both of the Nativity and the commencement of the Ministry. [In 2 B.C. the Day of Atonement was October 7th-8th (Julian).] So long, therefore, as it is remembered that this exact dating rests on symbolical grounds in its final stage, we shall accept the date, October 7th-8th (Julian) as the day of the Nativity in 2 B.C., and the beginning of the Ministry as October 7th-8th, A.D. 29, the Baptism being before the Passover of this latter year and the Crucifixion on April 3rd, A.D. 33 (Julian).

§ 5.—THE FORTY-SIX YEARS OF THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

At the time of the first Passover in A.D. 29 the Jews brought it against Our Lord that the Temple had been 46 years building

(John ii, 20). Had the figure been 45 or 50 we might have considered it to be a round number, but it appears to have been a close estimate, especially as Herod commenced it about the time of a Passover. For the *ναός*, or inner temple, was finished on the anniversary of Herod's accession in October, and it had taken a year and six months to build. It was the first part to be built, and therefore we may accept April as the time of year when work was commenced.

Now Augustus visited Syria in 20 B.C. (Dion., LIV, 7), and Josephus supports this, saying (Bell., I, 20, 4) that it was in the tenth year after his former visit in 30 B.C. Herod stays with him in Syria up to the end of his visit, escorting him to the coast when he left. This would be in the autumn of 20 B.C. After Herod's return he builds a temple in Paneas (Josephus, Ant., XV, 10, 3), and then to appease the Jews for this he remits a third of their taxes, after which he gives out his intention of rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem.

The preparations must have been considerable. Solomon did not begin to build till $2\frac{1}{2}$ years after his accession, though part of the materials had been collected by David his father, and we are told that 1,000 wagons and 10,000 workmen had to be provided by Herod, besides the training of 1,000 priests in carpentry and masons' work. All this would take considerable time in addition to the preliminary work of selecting an architect, getting out plans, etc., and it is very doubtful if it could have been done between the autumn of 20 B.C. and the Passover of 19 B.C. But it appears quite impossible when we read that the Jews were extremely loth to allow it, being afraid that the Temple would be pulled down and not rebuilt. And that it was only after Herod had agreed not to pull it down till all preparations were complete (Josephus, Ant., XV, 11, 2) that they gave their consent. So that the demolition of the existing structure could not be carried out nor the foundations prepared while the other preparations were being made, but had to wait until they were ready.

As therefore it appears out of the question that all this could have been done in less than six months, we must discard the Passover of 19 B.C. and take that of 18 B.C. as the time when the building was begun. And 46 years from this latter date brings us to the Passover of A.D. 29, which we have found to have been the first Passover of Our Lord's public life.

§ 6.—THE ECLIPSE AND EARTHQUAKE AT THE CRUCIFIXION.

A chronological note is supplied by Eusebius (Chron. ad Olymp., 203, 1), who quotes Phlegon of Tralles, the author of the Olympiads, to the effect that in the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad there was an eclipse of the sun at mid-day and an earthquake in Bithynia. The 4th of the 202nd Olympiad began about the Summer solstice of A.D. 32, and would cover the Pass-over of A.D. 33, thus supporting the datings found above from the Gospel narratives.

It has been objected that there was no eclipse of the sun recorded in that year, but it is forgotten that at the time of the Crucifixion the moon was full. Any eclipse, therefore, must have been by an outside body not belonging to the solar system.

A further objection is made in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, where the writer summarily dismisses Phlegon's testimony by saying that he probably obtained it from Christian sources. This, however, does not appear an argument for putting it on one side, and in any case, had it been obtained from Christian sources, the earthquake would have been located in Judæa rather than in Bithynia.

§ 7.—JOSEPHUS.

We have now taken the evidence of the Gospels. It appears to be consistent and harmonious throughout, but our difficulties commence with Josephus. This writer, a Jew of noble family, was born in A.D. 37 or 38, but he does not appear to have written his histories till after A.D. 70. A conscientious and trustworthy historian, yet living in an age when materials for history were not over-plentiful. He was given certain records of the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem, which no doubt assisted him, but his writings are not entirely without mistakes. And we must remember that we cannot lean too much on his chronology. Much of his datings of the periods from the Exodus to the time of Herod are wrong, and as we know well, the Jews were a people who cared little for dates. So that, while his history is of the greatest value as giving details of a time of which practically no other description has come down to us, yet as a witness he cannot be compared to Luke, the latter having access to eye-witnesses, the former having to rest on what records he could collect of a period some forty years before he was born.

§ 8.—THE LENGTH OF HEROD'S REIGN.

Josephus tells us (*Ant.*, XVII, 8, 1) that Herod reigned 37 years from his appointment as king by the Romans, in 40 B.C., and 34 years from the capture of Jerusalem and death of Antigonus, in October, 37 B.C. There is no question about the starting points of these two periods, as they are generally accepted on good and sufficient evidence. And it is certain also that Josephus reckoned the reign not from October, but, in the Jewish fashion, from the previous 1st Nisan (about April). As such the 34 years would end on 1st Nisan, 3 B.C., but his death might actually have occurred any time after 1st Nisan, 4 B.C.

It is here where the great difficulty has arisen. For if Herod did die before the 1st Nisan, 3 B.C., the Gospel evidence must be at fault. Josephus is considered to have the support of at least three items of evidence: (1) The presence of P. Quintilius Varus as Governor of Syria at the time of his death; (2) The dates when Herod's sons, Antipas and Archelaus, began their rule; (3) The eclipse of March 13th, 4 B.C., said to be shortly before Herod's death.

§ 9.—HEROD'S AGE AT HIS DEATH.

Herod is described at the time of his death as "about seventy" (*Bell.*, I, 33), or "almost seventy" (*Ant.*, XVII, 6, 1), and if he died in 3 B.C. he would have been born about 73 B.C. It is rather startling, therefore, to find that Antipater in 47 B.C. made his sons Herod and Phasælus captains respectively of Galilee and of Judæa, Herod then being 15 years of age (*Ant.*, XIV, 9, 2). This is generally considered to be a mistake, but this it cannot be. The *Wars* was an earlier work, and in this (*Bell.*, I, 10, 4) Herod is said to have been "very young." In the *Antiquities* the statement, instead of being corrected, is emphasized and his actual age given. Moreover, if he had been 25 as these critics wish to make it, so as to harmonize the chronology, he could not have been described as "very young." We find Caius Cæsar given command of the East in 2 B.C. at 18 years of age without any such suggestion. However we look at it, it affects seriously the evidence of Josephus, for if Herod was 15 years old in 47 B.C., he would not be "about seventy" till well into the first few years of the Christian

era, and this would shake the evidence that he died in 4 B.C. very considerably.

§ 10.—THE ECLIPSE.

There is no evidence that Herod died anywhere near a Passover. Certainly Josephus does not say so. Yet it has been widely held from a misreading of Ant., XVII, 6, 4. This paragraph tells us that Herod deprived Matthias the high priest of his office and burnt certain of the Jews who had taken part in a riot, and that on that very night was an eclipse of the moon. In the middle of this relation Josephus somewhat clumsily introduces a piece of gossip about "this Matthias," who, he says, dreamed of having a conversation with his wife the night before a fast of the Jews, and for that reason could not officiate. The two accounts were connected, and as there was an eclipse on March 13th, 4 B.C., it was claimed that this was the eclipse referred to, and that the fast was the fast of the 13th Adar, the day before the two-day feast of Purim. On this it may be observed that in 4 B.C. there was an intercalary month, Ve-Adar, which covered March 13th, and the Jews never had any fasts in Ve-Adar, and, again, had there been no intercalary month, the 13th Adar is not one of the fasts recognized by the Jews in the Megillath Ta'anith or Scroll of Fasting.

And if the paragraph be read, it will be seen that the anecdote about the dream and the fast has no connection with the burning of the Jews or the eclipse, for it opens with the words: "Now it happened that, *during the time of the high priesthood of this Matthias*, there was another person made high priest for a single day, that very day which the Jews observed as a fast."

It was not at the time of the eclipse, therefore. It may have been a year or several years before, and had nothing to do with it, and there is nothing, therefore, to connect this eclipse with the eclipse of 4 B.C. Yet the eclipses of this time have a bearing on the date of Herod's death. For some time before the eclipse Herod had sent an urgent embassy to Rome for Augustus' views on the misdeeds of his son Antipater. Being urgent, we cannot allow more than five months for the going and returning and time spent in Rome, and as the answer was received within a few days of Herod's death, the eclipse must be reckoned as occurring not more than five months before. The eclipses of

the moon between 4 B.C. and A.D. 4, which occurred *at night*, were as follows:—

March 13th ..	4 B.C.	May 4th ..	A.D. 3.
January 9th ..	1 B.C.	October 28th ..	A.D. 3.
November 9th ..	A.D. 2.	October 17th ..	A.D. 4.

Now we are given the month and day of the month of Herod's death in the Megillath Ta'anith, which is a list of fasts compiled in the first century A.D. The Jews had suffered so much at Herod's hands that they kept the day of his death as a fast, and this day was the 7th Kislev, which answers to November. There are few more persistent traditions than anniversaries, as witness our May 1st and April 1st, and we may fully accept this as good evidence. As such the 1st, 2nd and 4th of the above eclipses would be ruled out, and we are left with the three autumn eclipses of A.D. 2, 3 and 4, which all occurred on the 14-15th Bul, which is the month preceding Kislev, and this evidence points to one of these three years as being the year of Herod's death.

Note.—Some writers say that the Fast Day for Herod's death given in the Scroll of Fasting is the 2nd Sebat. This, however, appears to be incorrect. A translation of the Scroll into French will be found in an article by M. Schwab in *Actes du Onzième Congrès International des Orientalistes*, Paris, 1897, from which it will be seen that both the 7th Kislev and the 2nd Sebat are entered in the Scroll as days of fasting without comment. But in the Commentary attached the 7th Kislev is assigned to Herod and the 2nd Sebat to Alexander Janneus. M. Schwab says that certain critics transposed these two dates in order to connect the eclipse of Josephus with that of January 9th, 1 B.C.!

§ 11.—THE DATE WHEN THE SONS OF HEROD BEGAN THEIR RULE.

Coins of Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, have been found dated, some in his 43rd year and others in his 44th year (Eckhel, III, 486). He was banished in A.D. 40 in the 4th year of Agrippa (*see* Lewin, *Fasti Sacri*, paras. 1561, 1592), and after April 1st, as Agrippa's accession was about that date. This means that the rule of Antipas was reckoned from 1st Nisan, 4 B.C. Herod Philip, tetrarch of Trachonitis, ruled 37 years and died in the twentieth

year of Tiberius, A.D. 33-34 (Ant., XVIII, 4, 6). As the years of Tiberius were reckoned from August, this means that Philip's rule was from Nisan, 4 B.C., to Nisan, A.D. 34.

Archelaus was deposed in his 10th year in A.D. 6 (Ant., XVII, 13, 2), which would again bring the official reckoning of his obtaining office to Nisan, 4 B.C. In the following paragraph, Josephus tells the story of a dream of this Archelaus, which was interpreted to mean that he would see ten harvests as ethnarch, and as in Judæa the harvest follows the opening of the Jewish year on 1st Nisan, this would be the case if he actually began to rule between the 1st Nisan and the harvest. Although this was a dream only, yet such dreams do not pass into history unless they come true, and we may take it that Archelaus, and probably, therefore, Antipas and Philip, did obtain their territories close to the 1st Nisan, 4 B.C.

At first sight all this appears to support Josephus in saying that Herod died in this year, but this is doubtful. On Herod's death his sons journeyed to Rome to have their father's will approved by Augustus, and we are told that part of this judgment ran: "Idumea and Judæa and the country of Samaria paid tribute to Archelaus, but had now a fourth part of that tribute taken off by order of Cæsar" (Ant., XVII, 11, 4).

It follows from this that Archelaus had been receiving tribute before his journey to Rome, and this journey, therefore, was not for the purpose of obtaining his territory, but of getting confirmation of it. It seems clear that he and probably the other two had been governing their tetrarchies during Herod's lifetime and probably drawing the revenues, less such amount as was necessary for Herod's wants. And there would be nothing strange in this. Herod himself and his brother had been tetrarchs under their father Antipater, and certainly Herod was too ill towards the end of his life to see to all the details of government.

§ 12.—THE GOVERNORS OF SYRIA.

We have coins of Antioch struck by P. Quinctilius Varus of the years 7-6, 6-5, and 5-4 B.C. After that time we know nothing till we find, in A.D. 6, P. Sulpicius Quirinus (the Cyrenius of St. Luke) superseding Saturninus as governor.

There is some evidence, apart from the account of the "Taxing" in Luke ii, 1, 2, that Cyrenius had had a previous term of office.

The argument is too lengthy to be produced here, but is discussed in Lewin's *Fasti Sacri*, para. 955. In any case we cannot gainsay St. Luke, for we know of no other governor in 2 B.C., and until we do his evidence stands.

Josephus, however, states that Varus was in office till after Herod's death, and this would harmonize with 4 B.C., but there is no particular reason why Varus should not have been governor at the time of Herod's death, even if it occurred in A.D. 4, as we have found might easily have been the case. We know of no other governor at that time, and it is quite possible that Augustus, as in the case of Quirinus, gave Varus a second term in order that a turbulent people like the Jews should have over them a man who had had previous experience of their ways. Moreover, Varus is said to have gone to Syria a pauper and left it an extremely wealthy man, and he would have more prospect of doing this in six years than in his first three alone.

At least we can say this, that the presence of Varus in Syria at the time of Herod's death is not necessarily supporting evidence that that death occurred in 4 B.C.

§ 13.—SUMMARY.

We can now take a general view of the evidence. That Herod reigned 34 years is in direct conflict with his appointment as Captain of Galilee in 47 B.C., at 15 years of age, but this latter would support the Gospel evidence that Herod was alive in the autumn of 2 B.C.

Of the three items which are held to support Herod's death as occurring in 4 B.C., there is nothing to connect the eclipse before Herod's death with that of March 13th, 4 B.C. Indeed, Herod's death date of the 7th Kislev would seem to put it out of court.

The three sons of Herod did begin their rule on or about 1st Nisan, 4 B.C., but this was in the lifetime of Herod, and the two cannot be connected in any way.

The presence of Varus, again, is not necessarily evidence that Herod died in 4 B.C. as shown above.

It follows, therefore, that that statement of Herod's 34 years is left in the air. It is contradicted by Josephus himself in regard to Herod's appointment as Captain of Galilee, and can only be regarded with extreme suspicion.

On the other hand, we have seen that the Gospel indications

are that Our Lord's public life began at the Passover of A.D. 29, and that no statement in Josephus confutes this with the single exception of the unsupported 34 years of Herod's reign.

That Josephus should have made the mistake may have been quite natural. As Herod's sons did begin to rule in April, 4 B.C., we may easily understand that, in the absence of fuller details, it was inferred that Herod was then dead. In any case, however, it is satisfactory to be able to uphold the trustworthiness of the Gospel writers.

I would like to add that it has been in no spirit of pedantry that this subject has been selected. Many people at the present time consider that chronology is of no value and say that a few years more or less are of no consequence. But a very little examination into Bible periods in general, and the details of Our Lord's life in particular, are enough to show that the same care exhibited by Him in following out the ancient prophecies was exercised in regard to chronological matters. It is not too much to say that His life on earth was one of the greatest pivots of religious history, and the further our study of chronology is extended the more do we find that it branches out and its ramifications extend into almost every field of Biblical study, and connect up with the history of almost every one of the Eastern nations and of their earliest mythical beliefs.

And it is easily shown that its study is necessary, for, until we have settled the main datings, the Seventy Weeks of Daniel hang in the balance, and we have to abandon his standing as a prophet to those who consider that he never existed, his writings being the work of a pseudonymous writer of three centuries later. And if Daniel is depreciated, the authority of the other prophets, and of prophecy in general, is seriously weakened.

I have no wish, however, to lay undue stress on any particular dates. My wish has been rather to set out in available form evidence which is in the highest degree material, but hardly ever made use of. And it cannot be too strongly insisted on that no other evidence carries as much weight as that of the coins which have been detailed above. One or two might be spurious, but there are too many of them here, and too many of each kind. They are strictly official, and are coins which were in common use in the Holy Land. And, further, they cannot have been tampered with in the same way as the writings of historians on whom we are accustomed to rely.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN (Sir Ambrose Fleming) said : I am sure I shall be expressing the feeling of all present in saying that we are greatly indebted to Colonel Shortt for his learned and interesting paper. As a rule dates and chronology are generally considered to be very dry things by most persons, and especially by young readers. In connection with sacred history, however, they are very important, as they serve to connect Biblical and secular events and give us means of confirming the accuracy of the Bible histories.

The difficulty which presents itself to the ordinary reader is that of deciding between the confident statements of different authors or chronologists. It is, as Colonel Shortt remarks, strange that, in connection with such a supremely important event as the redemption of the world, we are still in doubt as to the exact dates of the Nativity, the Baptism, and the Crucifixion of our Lord. For instance, we call the present year A.D. 1931, and most persons, if asked why or from whence the 1931 is reckoned, would probably reply : " From the birth of Christ." They are, therefore, puzzled to understand why the date of the Nativity should be given as 2, or 4, or even 8 B.C.

Very few people understand that our present mode of reckoning time dates from an assumed era or date of the birth of Christ, and was introduced into Europe about the sixth century by Dionysius, a Roman abbot ; but more modern knowledge has shown us that the Nativity certainly took place before the date assigned to it by Dionysius. Then, again, the common custom of taking the 25th of December to be the day of the Nativity was not introduced until after the accession of the Roman Emperor Constantine, about the beginning of the fourth century.

It is curious to note that even at the present day so many preachers, in addresses delivered at Christmas, or about December 25th, speak as if there could be no doubt that the birth of Christ took place then. It is as certain as anything can well be that the Nativity took place in the autumn, and not in the winter. St. Luke tells us that the Roman Emperor Augustus, at a certain time, decreed that a " taxing " should be universally made. This was, in effect, a " census " for the purpose of ascertaining the man-power

and resources of the Roman Empire. The Romans were very stern governors, but they were not fools, and they would not have ordered all persons to return to their native towns or villages in the dead of winter, when women and children would have to endure great hardship in travel. Winter in Palestine is often very cold, and shepherds do not keep their sheep in the open or lie out themselves then.

On the other hand, in the autumn, when the weather is warm, and at a time when the wheat harvest has been got in, and the farm animals—asses, camels, mules, etc.—are mostly at liberty, the people could easily move about and sleep out of doors, and the village people would think it rather good fun to have an excuse for such an excursion. The Israelitish Feast of Tabernacles was held at that time, when the people lived and slept in booths out of doors for a whole week. Hence it is more than probable, in fact, nearly certain, that this "census" took place at about that time and that this was the occasion which brought Joseph and Mary up to Bethlehem as described by St. Luke, and there the birth of our Lord took place, when "the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us." Whether that birth actually took place on the great Day of Atonement, as Colonel Shortt suggests, is a matter on which I can offer no opinion, but I have always felt that the date must come somewhere in the autumn, and certainly not on December 25th, as is our custom now to celebrate it. Grattan Guinness, in his book, *The Approaching End of the Age* (p. 527), mentions that Archbishop Ussher, the great Biblical chronologist, placed the Nativity (as Colonel Shortt has done) on the great Day of Atonement.

Next as to the year of the Nativity. Dates even as early as 8 B.C. have been given. The astronomer Kepler fixed the Nativity as early as 6 B.C., from the assumption that the star which guided the Magi was a conjunction of the planets Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars occurring about this date. But such a celestial planetary phenomenon could not be the star mentioned by St. Matthew, as this star is said to have "stood over where the young child was" (Matt. ii, 9). It was much more likely to be a supernatural phenomenon.

The whole question, then, as to the date of the Nativity, really turns upon the exact date of the "fifteenth year of Tiberius,"

and the dates on the coins mentioned by Colonel Shortt seem quite decisive on that point. The date of the battle of Actium was September 2nd or 3rd, 31 B.C., when Augustus Cæsar defeated his rival, Antony, and made himself sole Emperor of Rome. Tiberius was the adopted son of Augustus, and after many successes as a soldier he became, at about the beginning of A.D. 11, practically joint Emperor with Augustus, and sole Emperor on the death of Augustus on August 19th, A.D. 14.

There is no doubt about these dates, and the only question at issue always has been whether the fifteenth year of Tiberius was to be reckoned from the date of his practical co-regency with Augustus, in A.D. 11, or whether it should be reckoned from his accession to the throne as sole Emperor in A.D. 14. The coins mentioned by Colonel Shortt, especially the third, seem decisive. The Greek letters denoted also numerals. Thus the A (or Alpha) on the third coin is I, and means the first year of Tiberius; the EM on that coin are *epsilon* and *mu* of the Greek alphabet, which mean respectively 5 and 40. Hence the coin gives us the chronological equation—1st year of Tiberius is the same as the 45th of the battle of Actium, and $45 - 31 = 14$. Accordingly, the first year of Tiberius began in A.D. 14, and his fifteenth year would then begin on August 19th, A.D. 28, which was, therefore, the year when John the Baptist began his reformation, and near to the date when Christ was baptized, and when he was said to be *about* 30 years old.

We are not given specifically in the Gospels the duration of Christ's earthly ministry, and hence some difficulty exists in fixing the exact date of the Crucifixion. Grattan Guinness fixes this as occurring on March 18th, A.D. 29. Sir Robert Anderson gives it as April 11th, A.D. 32, and Anderson determines it on the basis of the Daniel prophecy of the seventy weeks. He arrives at the figure by showing that the edict of Artaxerxes, to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, was given on March 14th, 445 B.C. and then, reckoning forward 69 weeks of years (each of 360 days), he finds that Christ rode into Jerusalem on April 6th, A.D. 32, and, therefore, the Crucifixion must have taken place on April 11th, A.D. 32. This proof, however, is somewhat artificial. The data given by Dr. Fotheringham as to the days of the 14th of Nisan seem to prove beyond doubt that the Crucifixion must be assigned to April 3rd, A.D. 33.

It is an astonishing thing to notice how little agreement exists even between eminent chronologists as to the actual dates of cardinal Biblical events. Thus there are differences of even several hundred years between dates given for the Exodus and great differences as to the date of beginning Solomon's Temple. In his *Romance of Biblical Chronology*, Martin Anstey gives 4 B.C. as the year of the Nativity, and A.D. 30 as the year of the Crucifixion. One thing, however, remains quite clear from all that Colonel Shortt has told us, and that is that the "fifteenth year of Tiberius" began on August 19th, A.D. 28, and that fixes the beginning of the Ministry of Christ.

The Greek word in Luke ii, 1, which is translated "taxed" in the A.V., is in Greek the same word which occurs in Heb. xii, 23, and is there translated "written" or "enrolled." Hence the "taxing" decreed by Cæsar Augustus was, in effect, a census.

In conclusion, I beg you to support by your applause the hearty vote of thanks to Colonel Shortt which I have the pleasure of proposing for the very able and learned paper which he has given us.

Dr. J. K. FOTHERINGHAM, of Oxford, expressed general agreement with the methods and conclusions of the paper. He thought that St. Luke's phrase, "about thirty years," allowed a margin of several years on either side, and could not be used to establish a fixed chronology. He drew attention to the coins struck by the Roman procurators of Judæa, one of which, issued in the first year of Tiberius, bears the name of the Empress Julia, and cannot, therefore, be older than the death of Augustus, since Livia received the name Julia by Augustus' will. Another coin dated in the sixteenth year of Tiberius also bears the name Julia, which proves that the sixteenth year as reckoned in Judæa was already current when she died, apparently in the earlier part of A.D. 29. This evidence would seem to suggest a year reckoned from Nisan, in which case the fifteenth year would begin in the Nisan of A.D. 28.

Dr. NORMAN S. DENHAM said: Regarding the day of Herod's death, one has always understood that there was no reason to doubt the acceptability of 2nd Shebat. We are given the impression on p. 51 that M. Schwab favoured 7th Kislev; but the fact is that both were Festivals not Fasts, and Schwab himself thought that the commentator was wrong in taking on himself to assign the death

of Herod to 7th Kislev; he considered it to be more probable that the rejoicing for that event was upon 2nd Shebat, the former date being historically unacceptable.*

If the eclipse of March 13th, 4 B.C., fell before the death of Herod, which we know occurred at least some months before a Passover, the numerous events related by Josephus as transpiring between Herod's death and the Passover, make certain that Herod could not have died in 4 B.C., but in 3 B.C. This would agree exactly with the account of Josephus as to Herod's *de facto* reign of 34 years, the last of which includes the 2nd Shebat, falling in January, 3 B.C. None of the records of Matthew, Josephus or the Megillath Ta'anith need be challenged, for they provide perfect harmony. We remember that Herod desired to slay, not the "babe" (*brephos*) of Luke ii, 12, but the "young child" (*paidion*) of Matt. ii, 16, of two years old or under.

With regard to the fifteenth year of Tiberius, our lecturer's conclusion is negatived, I believe, by the evidence adduced by Lieut.-Colonel G. Mackinlay, who shows that the ministry opened in a Sabbatic year.† This year, A.D. 26, was the 31st Jubilee year from the entry into Canaan, and was prophesied by Isaiah (ch. lxi, 2). The true sequence of Sabbatic years is established by the records in 1 Macc. vi, ix, 43, and Josephus, Ant., XIV, 16, 2, and XV, 1, 2. The series was correctly noted by Sir Isaac Newton, Schürer, Dr. Grattan Guinness, and others. If we depart from the opinion held by Ussher, Lardner, Hales, Gresswell, and others, that Luke dated from Tiberius' co-partnership with Augustus, we are in immediate conflict with the sacred historians. Gresswell shows in his *Dissertations* (p. 278), that in A.D. 12-13, Tiberius was already *Princeps*, and exercising the functions of royalty by disposing of offices of patronage and trust, and entitled in his own right to the name of *Sebastos*. Sir Wm. M. Ramsay goes further. He claims that Luke knew that the reign of Titus was counted from when he was made colleague with his father, Vespasian, and was led to apply the principle in current and official use while he was writing, to the years of Tiberius.‡

* *Elements of the Jewish Calendar* (1901). S. B. Burnaby, p. 266.

† *Recent Discoveries in St. Luke's Writings* (1920).

‡ *Was Christ born in Bethlehem?* (1898), p. 197 *et seq.*

On the testimony of Velleius (*circ.* 19 B.C.—A.D. 31), Augustus himself proposed the granting of authority equal to his own in all the provinces and armies of the empire, before the triumph celebrated in Rome on January 16th, A.D. 12. The Decree of equal power must have been passed before the end of A.D. 11, and Sir Wm. Ramsay shows that whether we take the Roman or Jewish reckoning, the fifteenth year of Tiberius must have been current in A.D. 26. The first Passover of the Ministry mentioned by John (ii, 23), therefore fell in the spring of A.D. 27, and by the Biblical usage regarding ages, our Lord must have been born in the autumn of 5 B.C., probably at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Mr. G. WILSON HEATH said: May I say that I consider the paper to be a very serious and specious challenge! We have had set before us an array of authorities on this subject, most of them by the writer to be ignominiously turned down. At times I felt that we had reached a bed-rock position, but in a few sentences the lecturer was able to dynamite the supposed rock into rubble.

Even the summary at the close of the paper leaves us in doubt. The first paragraph speaks of direct conflict "as to the date of Herod's reign." The second paragraph suggests that we "cannot trust to eclipses" (I agree). The third paragraph points out that confusion exists as to "how many kings did reign in A.D. 4." The fourth paragraph tells us that the presence of Varus is "not necessarily evidence." The fifth paragraph assures us that the 34 years of Herod's reign is "left in the air." And finally, with strong insistence, that the evidence of coins carries great weight, "but some of them may be spurious."

I am anxious for all the light I can get on the Scriptures. The Bible, thank God, will bear reverent inspection. I have, therefore, read over this paper several times, but I have to confess that I am still not convinced that the half-hearted conclusions suggested in it are the correct ones, or that the deductions from the evidence placed before us is sufficient to encourage us to reject that which hitherto we may have accepted.

I think we shall all admit that we must accept the Julian Calendar when considering this period, seeing this calendar was promulgated by Julius Cæsar on January 1st, 46 B.C. (The Gregorian Calendar

was issued in March, 1582, and is out of the period we are considering.) We should also, I suggest, accept the date of the victory of Actium as in the autumn of 31 B.C. Also that the datings and markings of reliable coins is good evidence, and as to this I suppose we shall all be prepared to accept coins Nos. 3 and 4 of the set on p. 40, that is to say, the “*doubly marked*” ones, and these are, of course, the most important ones mentioned. (I rather think that coin No. 6 is wrongly figured, but this is not important.)

In the coin room of the British Museum anyone can, I believe, inspect Augustus coins of the years 27, 28, 29, 30, and Actium victory 31.

Now admitting these important premises, I judge that apart from these altogether, by comparing carefully the dates, *Anno mundi*, *Anno urbis* (Rome) B.C. and A.D. (Julian) we get the following bed-rock results, which are *not* in accord with the paper read to us:—That the mysterious Nativity occurred at the end of September, 4 B.C., the date of the first taxing by Quirinus, which would be *Anno mundi* 4000 or *Anno urbis* 749 (Rome), and the 28th year of Augustus. That Herod died in January, 3 B.C., or *Anno urbis* 750. That the first year of Tiberius as joint Governor with Augustus in the 44th year of his reign was in A.D. 12, or *Anno urbis* 765. That after the death of Augustus, Tiberius reigned alone, A.D. 14, or *Anno urbis* 767, or *Anno mundi* 4018. That the fifteenth year of Tiberius was A.D. 26 (not 29), or *Anno urbis* 779, or *Anno mundi* 4030. That our Lord at that date would have reached the necessary age, under Jewish law, of 30, in order to enter upon His public ministry (Luke iii, 23). That in the eighteenth year of Tiberius, A.D. 29, or *Anno urbis* 782, or *Anno mundi* 4033, our Lord was crucified.

I have been informed that Justin Martyr mentions at least three times that our Lord was born during the first Governorship of Quirinus, and the date of this is authenticated (1 to 3 B.C.), at which date our Lord would be three years old. During this period there should have occurred three ten-yearly taxings or census-takings. One did, we know, occur during the first Governorship of Quirinus, but there is some question as to the exact dates of the other two. They were certainly previous to A.D. 26. Thus the Scripture record and profane history agree that our Lord entered on His ministry when 30 years old, in A.D. 26, and was crucified in

A.D. 29, and that the fifteenth year of Tiberius coincided with the opening of our Lord's ministry, in A.D. 26.

Then as to the 14th and 15th Nisan : May I say that the *itinerary* of our Lord is so clearly traced in the Gospels, and the seventh-day sabbaths, and also the special sabbaths (for, of course, there were two sabbaths in the Passover week) so definitely stated, that we ought easily to be able to fix the date. It is easy to fix on Wednesday-Thursday, the 8th Nisan, as the day our Lord was in the house of Zaccheus, and that He passed through Jericho on His way up to Jerusalem; on Thursday-Friday, the 9th Nisan, He was in Bethany; on Friday-Saturday (Sabbath), the 10th Nisan, He was in the Temple the first day of the inspection of the Passover Lambs; on Saturday-Sunday, 11th Nisan, He was in the Temple; on Sunday-Monday, 12th Nisan, in the Temple; on Monday-Tuesday, 13th Nisan, for the fourth or last time, in the Temple, the inspection was complete. On Tuesday-Wednesday, the 14th Nisan, the Chagigah supper, betrayal, judgment, crucifixion, and tomb. (This was called the "preparation" day, when the inspected lambs were slain.) Then the 15th, 16th, and 17th, the three days and three nights in the grave (Matt. xii, 40). Saturday-Sunday, the 18th Nisan, "the 1st of the weeks," the day on which the Resurrection took place.

The Gospel story is absolutely complete, the itinerary, the Passover week, the Resurrection on "the 1st of the weeks," all exactly agree, and from the 8th to the 18th the days are definitely marked off in the Gospels, proving that the 14th Nisan fell on Tuesday-Wednesday of that year.

Finally, as to the 70 weeks of years of Daniel ix, these we all, I hope, agree, date from the commandment given by Artaxerxes in his 20th year to rebuild Jerusalem, and this was in Anno mundi 3547 or 454 B.C. The 69 of the 70 weeks, or 483 years, to *Messiah the Prince* would bring us exactly to Anno mundi 4030 (allowing for the well-known 3 to 4 years error in the B.C. dates) or A.D. 26, the date of the opening of the Messianic Ministry, and, therefore, the *cutting-off in the midst of the week* would exactly synchronize with our Lord's 33rd year in A.D. 29, or Anno mundi 4033 and Anno urbis 782. And I verily believe also that the dates on unquestionable coins, if properly calculated, would confirm these results. The tragic

scene of Golgotha was enacted in A.D. 29, and this confirms the prophetic words by Daniel in chap. ix and the 70 weeks of years.

MR. SIDNEY COLLETT said : On p. 45, referring to Luke iii, 23, where we are told that Christ was about 30 years of age, Colonel Shortt says that : "Thirty years was the priestly age. Before it He could *not* enter on priestly duties." But surely the Colonel forgets that that referred to the *Levitical* priesthood, and Christ was not of the tribe of Levi, and, therefore, could not be (and, indeed, was not) an *earthly* priest, as is clearly stated in Heb. viii, 4. Moreover, "it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood" (Heb. vii, 14).

As I read the paper the author's aim seems to be to confirm the statement in Luke iii, 1, concerning "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar," and he has marshalled a great number of coins to support that claim. It is significant, however, that, in this particular case, St. Luke is the one Evangelist who tells us where he got his information from which he gives us in his Gospel, viz., not from any human source whatever ; but *from above*, as is specifically stated in the third and fourth verses of his opening chapter. There he tells us that he had *perfect* understanding of *all* things not "from the very first"—the Greek word used here is nowhere else so translated ; we have it correctly rendered in John viii, 23, where our Lord said : "Ye are from beneath, I am *from above*." So that we have those four definite statements for our guidance : (1) That he had *perfect* understanding ; (2) of *all* things ; (3) *from above* ; (4) so that, in the midst of a number of other human records, those who read *his* account might know the *certainty* of things he wrote !

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

Lieut.-Colonel L. M. DAVIES, R.A., wrote : Colonel Shortt has done good service in collecting evidence regarding the actual dating of the years of Tiberius, as proved by coins. There seems to be no objective evidence whatever for a dating prior to the death of Augustus. It is significant that Josephus himself, who repeatedly refers to the years of Tiberius, invariably reckons them from the

death of Augustus (cf. *Ant.* XVIII, 2, 2; 4, 6; 6, 5, 10; *Wars* II 9, 1, 5; etc.); and if a Jew like Josephus did this, how much more must a Gentile like Luke have done so, especially when writing to a Roman (Luke i, 3; Acts i, 1).

I would also, in this connection, point out that Josephus himself gives no real support to those who would place Herod's death before the Passover of 4 B.C. Not only does he (Josephus) nowhere definitely state that Herod died before that particular Passover, but a number of his statements seem to indicate the belief that Herod did not die until late in 3 B.C. Thus he mentions so many events as occurring between the famous eclipse and the Passover following Herod's death, as to make it seem impossible that the latter could be the Passover of the same year as the eclipse. Again, Josephus definitely states that Herod reigned 34 years "since he had procured Antigonus to be slain," and 37 "since he had been declared king by the Romans" (*Ant.* XVII, 8, 1. He repeats the same statement in *Wars* I, 33, 8). Now it can be shown by many interlockings of Roman, Armenian, and Jewish records that the former event occurred late in 37 B.C., and the latter late in 40 B.C. This, in each case, takes us to late 3 B.C. as the approximate time of Herod's death.

We also arrive at the same result if we accept Herod's age at the time of his death, for Josephus states that he was "almost seventy" years old, and "about the seventieth year of his age," some months before his death (*Wars* I, 33, 1; *Ant.* XVII, 6, 1). So the statement (*Ant.* XIV, 9, 2) that he was 15 when first made governor of Galilee after Cæsar's visit in 47 B.C., does seem to me to be a corruption. Reconciliation of these passages seems to demand either that we read 25 instead of 15 in one passage or 60 for 70 in two passages, and the former alternative seems to be preferable. In either case this again brings us to the year 3-2 B.C. for the time of Herod's death.

Even, then, if we go by Josephus, we have good reason for placing Herod's death late in 3 B.C., and our Lord's birth somewhat earlier. In that case our Lord might still have been in His 31st year at the beginning of the fifteenth year of Tiberius. Is this not compatible with Luke iii, 23? We may, in any case, remember that, according to C. H. Turner, even had our Lord been 32 years of age at that

time, that "tallies well enough with St. Luke's general estimate" (*Enc. Brit.*, 1910-11, vol. iii, p. 889).

Mr. W. R. ROWLATT-JONES wrote: As symbolism is one of the distinctive features of Holy Writ, our lecturer is fully entitled to use it, and when times (dates) and seasons (anniversaries) coincide we may see their Ordainer at work. It is possible that at the Nativity three events all befell upon the same moment of time. These three festivals would be the opening of the Year of Jubilee, the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles and the great Day of Atonement. All three commenced at sunset (6 p.m.), all three were inaugurated by the sounding of the ram's horn (*see* Numb. x, 9, 10; Ps. lxxxi, 3).

Notice the dovetailing of these events:—At the striking of the Jubilee Year the Ransomer was born; on the great Day of Atonement (the anniversary of Moses coming down from the Mount of Reconciliation), the long-drawn-out agony that only finished at the Cross commenced; just as the Feast of Tabernacles was proclaimed, God Himself tabernacled among men, and this not only in a metaphorical sense but in actual deed, for failing room in the Khan of Bethlehem, Joseph found temporary shelter for Mary under the Great Pergola which ran along the inner wall of its vast outer court for about two hundred yards, "the place where the cattle chew the cud," as the word translated "manger" really means.

Isaac and Jacob knew this khan and its great court as the Tower of Edar, Gen. xxxv, 21; Micah iv, 8 (the Tower of the Flock). Ruth the Moabitess knew it as the parcel of ground that was once Elimelech's. David as a child knew it as a delightful playground, containing the home-well of Bethlehem, and the prophet Jeremiah called it the Palace of Chimham. In the Talmud it is styled the Great Camp of Chimham.

Here from spring till autumn the flocks and herds were sheltered from the intense heat of the sun, and daily at 4 p.m. were driven out to feed on the veldt.

I invite our chronologers to endeavour to discover that Jubilee year, and the problem we are invited to study will then possibly be solved.

LECTURER'S REPLY.

I would like to thank the President for his appreciative remarks, and Dr. Fotheringham for his general acceptance of my paper. Also I am grateful to Mr. Sidney Collett for his criticism in regard to Our Lord's age at the beginning of His Ministry. I think that reading the whole of Hebrews VII rather confirms my view. Melchizedek took tithes of Abraham, not because he was a Levite, but because both conformed to certain rules for those who dedicated their lives to God. Our Lord did the same as regards His age. The point, however, needs further careful consideration.

That the 7th Kislev was a feast and not a fast, as Dr. Denham says, I will not contest. There are obvious difficulties in so considering it, but it is quite unimportant in this connection. Both he and Mr. Wilson Heath have re-stated their views, but they do not attempt to combat the evidence which I have put forward. If this evidence is disproved, well and good ; but until this is done, I think I need not add anything to what I have already said.