

Divine sanctions? Can we believe that He "risked" the necessity of having to deprive His own servants of all the benefits that flow from communion with His Church for no other crime save this—that, at the peril of their lives, they co-operated with Him in daring to take their stand for truth and righteousness against "unspeakably shocking" corruption?

If alike our moral sense and our religious instincts constrain us to repudiate so monstrous a conclusion, Bishop Gore's whole theory of Apostolical Succession must perish with it, and along with this all necessary impediment to Home Reunion. There is nothing that need permanently keep us apart from our fellow-Christians, if once we can bring ourselves to regard the authority of the ministry as a delegated authority, inherent in the Church, and thus capable of being transmitted to her executive.

It is to the Church, not to any particular form or type of ministry, that Christ has promised His presence "all the days," and to her He has granted the power of binding and loosing (Matt. xviii. 18). We may believe that the Episcopal form of government has been providentially evolved in the history of the Church, and that it is the wisest and best form of government that can be adopted, and this is my own profound conviction; but it is not a matter of revelation, and therefore any attempt to make it an essential feature of Christian religion is to commit the Pharisees' error of teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.



## The Date of the Crucifixion was A.D. 29.

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THE subject of Gospel chronology has, until lately, been generally regarded as almost insoluble, and therefore unprofitable; it has consequently been neglected or left to the consideration of only a few specialists.

During recent years, however, historical knowledge has

greatly increased, owing to the discovery of ancient original documents and inscriptions, and fresh methods of investigation have been employed. It is therefore high time that all thoughtful Christians who reverence the Word of God should consider the subject of the chronology of the New Testament with care and attention. If the chief dates can be determined, and if they are accepted as true, the theories of destructive critics and of those who regard the Gospels as mere myths must fall to the ground.

The following are the leading data, in very brief outline, which have been at our disposal for a considerable time :

1. The historical testimony of the Early Latin Fathers that Christ was put to death in the Consulate of the Gemini, which was A.D. 29.

2. The historical references in Luke iii. 1, 2 and John ii. 20 are considered to be consistent with the date A.D. 29 for the Crucifixion.

3. The Crucifixion took place at Passover, which was on the fourteenth day of the first month (Exod. xii. 6). It is generally accepted that this day was a Friday. These conditions are only fulfilled (in the years historically possible) in A.D. 29.

4. The prophecy in Dan. ix. of the "weeks" possibly points to the date of the Crucifixion.

The consideration of the available data has led most of our leading chronologists and scholars to accept this date, A.D. 29, for the Crucifixion. Among them are Prebendary Browne, Dr. H. Grattan Guinness, Professor Sir W. M. Ramsay, Canon Sanday, and Mr. C. H. Turner. It must be allowed that this is only the finding of a majority;—it is not accepted by all. Some of those who advocate this date do so in cautious language—for instance, Mr. Turner<sup>1</sup> summarizes the historical evidence as follows: "It appears, then, not indeed certain, but possible, and even probable, that a trustworthy Christian tradition does point to A.D. 29, and to the Consulate of the Gemini as the

<sup>1</sup> Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible," "New Testament Chronology," p. 414.

year of the Crucifixion;" and Canon Sanday<sup>1</sup> writes of this chronology: "Not as certain, but as on the whole the best of current systems, by placing the Crucifixion in the year A.D. 29."

The following reasons for the date A.D. 29 are newer,<sup>2</sup> and they give good confirmatory evidence—(A) and (B)—that A.D. 29 really was the date of the Crucifixion:

(A) *The Crucifixion was A.D. 29, because it is attested by Allusions in the Gospels to the Sabbath Year A.D. 26-27.*

The Sabbath year began at the Feast of Tabernacles, near the autumnal equinox (Deut. xxxi. 10-13; Neh. viii. 18). The Hebrews were then forbidden to sow or to prune their vines and olives (Exod. xxiii. 11; Lev. xxv. 3-7), and the land was to rest. Any harvest which grew of itself was not for the owners, but for the poor, the strangers, and the cattle (Lev. xxv. 5-7). Also all debts were to be remitted among the Israelites (Deut. xv. 1-3, 9).

It is generally concluded<sup>3</sup> that the years 164-163, 38-37 B.C., and A.D. 68-69, according to 1 Macc. vi. 49, 53, Josephus, "Ant.," Book XIV., chap. xvi. 2, and Jewish tradition about the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus respectively, were all of them Sabbaths. These years are at intervals from each other, which are multiples of seven years, and so each record supports the testimony of the others. It is easily found that an intermediate year A.D. 26-27, which fell in Christ's ministry, if the Crucifixion were in A.D. 29, must also have been a Sabbath year.

Sir Isaac Newton has forcibly reminded us of the habit of Christ to refer to things actually present in His parabolic teaching. Taking into account the graphic living touches

<sup>1</sup> "Outlines of the Life of Christ," p. 33, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> They were first brought forward in the author's book, "The Magi: how they Recognized Christ's Star," published at the end of 1907. The arguments are there stated in detail, but most of those connected with the Sermon on the Mount mentioned in this article are now published for the first time.

<sup>3</sup> Professor G. Schiaparelli, "Astronomy in the Old Testament," p. 144, 1905; Sir Isaac Newton, "Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel," note on pp. 149, 160; also "St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen," p. 192 (Sir W. M. Ramsay).

which exist in the Gospel narratives, we must judge that the unusual events of the Sabbath year would almost certainly be referred to if it occurred during the Lord's ministry. In other words, if we find consistent chronological references in the Gospels to a Sabbath year ending eighteen months before the Crucifixion, we must accept them as a demonstration that the Crucifixion was A.D. 29.

We shall briefly consider a *few* of these references (there are several more, which we have not space to consider here).

The reading at Nazareth (Luke iv. 18, 19, from Isa. lxi. 1) about the acceptable year of the Lord and the release of captives forms a fitting introduction to the Sabbath year A.D. 26-27, as does also the quotation in Matt. iv. 12-16, from Isa. ix. 1, 2, about the rising of a great Light in Galilee, which refers to the same time.

The Sermon on the Mount was delivered in the following summer, because the lilies of the field (then in bloom) and the bringing forth fruit are both alluded to in it. All the petitions of the Lord's Prayer (which forms a part of this Sermon) refer to some circumstances connected with the teaching of the Sabbath year. The coming kingdom, the will and honour of the Father, and deliverance from evil, are all in harmony with this idea. But there are two petitions which claim special attention. One of them: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. vi. 12, R.V.) refers to definite acts which many of His hearers had done in the Sabbath year then present, when, in accordance with Deut. xv. 1-3, each creditor had released his Hebrew debtor from his obligations. An explanation is given just after the prayer, that our trespasses against God and the trespasses of others against us are intended by the word "debts."

The Evangelist Luke, however, conveys the same meaning in fewer words by calling our debts to God "sins" in the prayer itself, thus dropping one of the allusions to the figure of debt, and rendering the subsequent explanation which occurs in Matthew unnecessary: "Forgive us our sins; for we our-

selves also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (Luke xi. 4). The Evangelist Luke wrote for a wide Gentile circle, to whom the reference to the Sabbath year would not come with such force as to the Jews, to whom Matthew seems chiefly to have addressed himself. *Some* reference to the Sabbath year, however, remains in this paragraph of the Lord's Prayer in Luke's Gospel, though very likely it was hardly noticed as such by the first Gentile readers. But *all* reference to the forgiveness of debts is now abandoned by us in the phraseology of the Lord's Prayer with which we ourselves are most familiar: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

Let us endeavour to picture to ourselves the condition of Christ's hearers at the time of the Sermon on the Mount, when the Sabbath year was in progress. They were farmers dependent upon their own produce; the time of harvest had come, but there was no reaping, no gathering into barns, because there had been no sowing. Anxiety must naturally have been in the minds of many. How very appropriate at such a time was the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. vi. 11), because there was practically no corn grown in Palestine in that year, and consequently the supply of bread might run short!

Anxiety is repeatedly referred to in the Sermon on the Mount, and always in terms which refer to the events of the Sabbath year. The safety of stored corn must then have been a special care to those who possessed any; the depredations of hungry insects and men were to be guarded against. So the Lord expressed His warning against anxiety in the following words, as they may be truly translated: "Lay not up for yourselves stores [of corn] upon earth, where moths, even the eating [of moths] doth cause them to vanish away, and where thieves break through and steal"<sup>1</sup> (Matt. vi. 19). Our Lord further continued His exhortations against anxiety by saying: "Behold

<sup>1</sup> The verb *θησαυρίζω* refers to the storing of corn in Luke xii. 21. The word *βρώσις*, translated *rust* in this passage, occurs nine other times in the New Testament, where it is translated *eating* or *food*. The phrase *στῆς καὶ βρώσις* is an example of hendiadys, comparable to Acts xiv. 13, and the word *ἀφανίσει*, translated *doth corrupt* in this passage, is elsewhere translated *vanisheth away* (Jas. iv. 14).

the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; and your Heavenly Father feedeth them " (Matt. vi. 26)—words most appropriate to His hearers during the Sabbath year, because *they* had not sown, and could not, therefore, reap or gather into barns (Lev. xxv. 4, 5). Further still, He taught the same lesson by asking His hearers why they took thought for raiment ; He exhorted them to consider the lilies of the field, which "toil not, neither do they spin" (Matt. vi. 28). In the Sabbath year the fields of flax must have remained untilled, and hence no one had toiled at their cultivation, or spun the produce of that season.

These allusions, as well as several others which we have not space to give, all point to the summer of the Sabbath year A.D. 27. Considerations of Gospel chronology show that the Crucifixion took place a little less than two years afterwards, or in the spring of A.D. 29.

(B) *The Crucifixion was A.D. 29, because it is attested by Allusions to John the Baptist as the Morning Star.*

It is first of all necessary to remember that Christ is spoken of in Scripture as the Sun (Isa. ix. 2 ; Mal. iv. 2 ; Luke i. 78 ; John viii. 12, etc.), and John the Baptist, His forerunner, is likened to the Morning Star,—the planet Venus, which goes before and heralds the rising of the orb of day (*cf.* Mal. iii. 1 and iv. 2 ; Luke i. 76 and 78 ; see also Matt. xi. 10 ; Mark i. 2, etc.). This is a certain, but hitherto little noticed, Scripture simile.

With our own present Western manner of life, when the early morning light of the sun is so strangely wasted, very few indeed notice the appearance of the sky before dawn. It is doubtless a fact that very many may not know that there is any particular celestial object which is pre-eminently the Morning Star. But it is very different in the East, where early rising is usual, and where clocks are few.

Dr. Pinches tells us that the Assyrians named the Morning

Star "Delebet," *she who proclaims*, and modern Persians still allude to it as a well-known type of a forerunner. At the present time the rising of the Morning Star in parts of the world so distant from each other as China, India, Turkey, Syria, and Spain, is the signal for many of the labouring classes to prepare for the work of the day.

Even in England our own poets have sung of "the star that led the dawn."<sup>1</sup>

"Now the bright Morning Star, day's harbinger,  
Comes dancing from the East."<sup>2</sup>

"Fairest of stars! last in the train of night,  
If better thou belong not to the dawn,  
Sure pledge of day, that crown'st the smiling morn."<sup>3</sup>

"Look! the unfolding star calls up the shepherd."<sup>4</sup>

Alluding to the Duke of Monmouth, Dryden wrote :

"Fame runs before him as the Morning Star."<sup>5</sup>

Others wrote of its fading away :

"As sets the Morning Star, which goes not down  
Behind the darkest west, nor hides obscured  
Among the tempests of the sky, but melts away  
Into the light of heaven."<sup>6</sup>

"For a breeze of morning moves,  
And the planet of Love is on high ;  
Beginning to faint in the light that she loves  
On a bed of daffodil sky.  
To faint in the light of the Sun she loves,  
To faint in his light, and die."<sup>7</sup>

Little as we may now regard it in England, the Morning Star has attracted universal attention in the past, as it still does in the East. It evidently forms a very beautiful and appropriate simile to John the Baptist.

<sup>1</sup> "Ode composed on May Morning" (Wordsworth).

<sup>2</sup> "Song on May Morning" (Milton).

<sup>3</sup> "Paradise Lost," Book V. (Milton).

<sup>4</sup> "Measure for Measure," Act iv., Scene 2. "The star that heralds the unfolding of the day calls upon the shepherd to unfold his sheep" (*Contemporary Review*), July, 1908; Museus, "The Astronomy of Shakespear."

<sup>5</sup> "Absalom and Ahithophel."

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in "The City of God," p. 190 (A. M. Fairbairn, D.D.).

<sup>7</sup> "Maud" (Tennyson).

We must remember, however, that the Morning Star does not shine every morning, but only for a period of about eight or nine months; it then disappears from view altogether for a few weeks, and then the same planet appears in the western skies as the Evening Star for some eight or nine months, shortly, however, to reappear in the east as the Morning Star. There are five of these cycles in (very approximately) eight years, and their times can be calculated from astronomical tables. Hence the periods of the shining and of the non-shining of the Morning Star during the times of Christ's ministry have been found.

Bearing in mind the Biblical plan of reference to things actually present, we conclude that John the Baptist is referred to in terms connected with the Morning Star in agreement with the actual visibility or invisibility of the planet before sunrise at the time.

If we assume that the Crucifixion was A.D. 29, and that Christ's ministry lasted for three years and a half, we find that the Morning Star was shining when John the Baptist and Christ each began their ministries. But when John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John iii. 30), shortly before his imprisonment, the Morning Star had withdrawn its shining. When, later on, Christ said of the Baptist, "He was the lamp that burneth and shineth" (John v. 35), and when, shortly afterwards, He again referred to him as "My messenger before Thy face" (Matt. xi. 10), the planet was again glowing in the eastern sky before sunrise. But when, some months later, John was put to death (Matt. xiv. 10, 14-20; John vi. 4-13), the Morning Star no longer shone. Later still, when Christ again referred to this simile by proclaiming Himself the Light of the World (or the Sun) (John viii. 12), and when, a little while afterwards, He visited the scene of John's labours at Bethabara, where the people witnessed "All things whatsoever John spake of this man were true" (John x. 41, 42), the Morning Star again shed its bright beams in the east towards the close of the night. On the other hand, the Morning Star had again ceased to shine on the morning of the Crucifixion.



If, however, any other date (which is historically possible) than A.D. 29 is assumed for the date of the Crucifixion, the harmony of these references is lost, because the Morning Star does not shine at the same seasons every year. We therefore conclude that this method of inference also confirms the previous deductions in pointing to A.D. 29 as the year of the Crucifixion.

These two lines of investigation (A) and (B), connected with the Sabbath year and with the Morning Star, may appear to be unusual, but they are founded on correct principles. As a further test of reliability, they have both been employed to find the date of the Nativity, and both have consistently indicated it to be 8 B.C., which is earlier than the year, until lately, generally thought to be probable. But the historical evidence, when closely examined, is now found to be so strongly in favour of 8 B.C. for the Nativity that Sir W. M. Ramsay wrote: "This date (8 B.C.) may now be accepted provisionally, as the only one which has all the evidence in its favour."<sup>1</sup>

If still found to be reliable after fuller investigation by others, these new methods may perhaps be applied with success to the solution of other Biblical problems.

It is impossible within the limits of this article to enter fully into all the arguments in favour of the date A.D. 29 for the Crucifixion. But it is hoped that attention will be drawn to this subject, which reveals so many marks of the consistency and truthfulness of the sacred record. If flaws can be found in the foregoing deductions, or if better evidences can be brought forward in favour of any other date for the Crucifixion, let them be produced. It is believed that, practically, historic certainty has now been obtained, because the available data are now so considerable.

<sup>1</sup> The *Expositor*, December, 1908, and "Luke the Physician," p. 246, 1908.

