

*THE MORNING STAR AND THE CHRONOLOGY OF
THE LIFE OF CHRIST.*

THE connexion between the two parts of the above title is not obvious at first sight. It is the merit of Colonel Mackinlay, in the book which we propose to review, on *The Magi: How they Recognized Christ's Star*,¹ to have shown that there is a very real connexion. His title is, perhaps, not very well chosen, for it does not allude to any of the parts and topics which seem to me to be the most important and interesting in his work, while it emphasizes what is most speculative and least convincing. Although the present writer has written a brief preface to the book, it seems not out of place for him to review; indeed it appears justifiable, and almost obligatory, to state more fully than was possible in the few paragraphs of his preface the reasons which make him consider that the book deserves careful reading.

That men, when conversing familiarly with one another, and speaking naturally and easily, usually draw any figures of speech and symbolism which they may chance to employ from the range of their own interests and knowledge is a principle that cannot be denied and will be freely admitted by every one. The lawyer uses legal metaphors, the stock-broker the slang of the exchange, in explaining his meaning. The contrast in this respect between St. Paul's language and that of most of the writers in the Bible is well known, and has often been pointed out, as, e.g. in the *EXPOSITOR*, September, 1906, p. 282 ff. He uses the language of city

¹ Hodder & Stoughton, 1907.

life and of education, and, to some extent, of business and trade. The Bible generally contains a far larger proportion of metaphors and imagery drawn from the phenomena of nature, the wind, the rain, the storm, the heavens, sun and stars, the growing and dying or harvested vegetation of the earth, etc.

In regard to the imagery of this latter class a second principle may be observed. Those who live and talk in the open air tend to draw their illustrations from what is present and visible to, or in the mind of, their hearers and themselves at the time. Probably every expositor and preacher has occasionally drawn his inspiration more or less unconsciously from this principle, and every careful reader has sometimes been impressed with particular instances of it. But the formal commentators do not make sufficient use of it. It is not obvious to the secluded scholar in his study amid the atmosphere of books. You feel it most strongly in the world of life. Sir Isaac Newton, however, though he was (so far as I know) unused to life in the open air as well as unfamiliar with the Mediterranean lands, perceived this principle, and stated it in a very interesting passage which is quoted by Colonel Mackinlay. It is not one of the least of the merits of his book that it gives prominence to this excellent observation of a great man; if I may suppose that the passage is as unfamiliar to the world of scholars as it was to me. "I observe that Christ and His forerunner John in their parabolic discourses were wont to allude to things present. The old prophets, when they would describe things emphatically, did not only draw parables from things which offered themselves, as from the rent of a garment (1 Sam. xv. 27, 28) . . . from the vessels of a potter (Jer. xviii. 3-6) . . . but also, when such fit objects were wanting, they supplied them by their own actions, as by rending a garment (1 Kings xi. 30, 31); by shooting (2 Kings

xiii. 17-19), etc. By such types the prophets loved to speak. And Christ, being endued with a nobler prophet spirit than the rest, excelled also in this kind of speaking, yet so as not to speak by His own actions—that were less grave and decent—but to turn into parables such things as offered themselves. On occasion of the harvest approaching He admonishes His disciples once and again of the spiritual harvest (John iv. 35 ; Matt. ix. 37). Seeing the lilies of the field, He admonishes His disciples about gay clothing (Matt. vi. 28). In allusion to the present season of fruits, He admonishes His disciples about knowing men by their fruits. In the time of the Passover, when trees put forth their leaves, He bids His disciples ‘learn a parable from the fig tree ; when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh.’ ” This admirable passage is quoted from Newton’s *Commentary on Daniel*, a work which is proverbial in modern times for fanciful and strained interpretations, and which I confess that I have never even seen ; but if there is much more in it like this paragraph, it must be better worth reading than some modern commentaries, for this is original and true.

The author mentions several other examples in corroboration of Newton’s principle. One pair of examples is peculiarly interesting. In Matthew xx. 1-16 occurs the parable of the householder, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. Every one who studies ancient literature or life knows the strong prejudice that was entertained against hired labourers alike in Palestine and in Italy in ancient times. The “hireling” was despised as untrustworthy and idle, an unwilling labourer who worked for money and not for interest in or love of the work. He was always looking for the reward and the pay for his labour, not aiming at doing it well for its own sake (Job vii. 2). John x. 12 f. contrasts

the cowardly hireling with the true shepherd ; the former neglects the sheep, and flees when the wolf approaches, but the true shepherd defends them to the death. So in Italy *mercennarii* or hired labourers were always disliked, and contempt is often expressed for them. A man who wanted important or delicate work well done employed the members of his own family, especially his household slaves.¹ Every person who attempts to explain to a class the spirit of ancient Roman life has constant occasion to insist on this ; and it applies also to Greek life, though it is not there so strongly forced on one's attention.

Why is it that the kingdom of heaven, the prophets and the servants of God, are compared by Matthew in this passage to hirelings, who all receive the same pay at the end of the day, whether they have worked in the vineyard one hour or a whole day ? In Matthew xxi. 28 it is the owner's son who works in the vineyard ; in John xv. 2 the owner himself is the workman. What is the reason for this difference ? In the first passage there is no stress laid on the trustworthiness or untrustworthiness of the hired labourers. the only point of comparison lies in the reward that is given to all alike : so much is true, but this does not quite satisfactorily and fully explain the choice of this parable.

The Author points out that the passage in Matthew xx. 1-16 relates a conversation held about midwinter or January, whereas Matthew xxi. 28 and John xv. 2 were spoken in the middle of March. Wherein, then, lies the difference ? He very aptly quotes Mr. W. Carruthers, F.R.S., who writes, " For tilling the ground and keeping it free from weeds in winter, hired labour would be sufficient ; but for cutting off the rapidly growing shoots in March or later,

¹ That household slaves were a part of the family, and regarded as specially trustworthy servants, is a fact of immense importance in the study of ancient society.

so as to prevent the energy of the plant from being directed to mere vegetative development, an intelligent workman would be needed." The delicate labour of pruning must be intrusted to one who has both skill and interest in the result ; but unskilled labour was sufficient to turn over the soil and to destroy the weeds. Moreover, there is a great deal more of tedious labour involved in the latter ; and it must often have been necessary to get in more hands to do the winter work in the vineyard.

In both cases the illustration was drawn from what was actually being done at the moment. Speaker and hearers saw the suggestion of the parable taking place before their eyes, as the words were spoken. Similarly I have elsewhere tried to point out¹ how inevitable it is that, when Christ said to Nicodemus " the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth," the two were not in some cellar in Jerusalem but out on the side of the Mount of Olives, with the wind of spring moving gently around them. The character which is impressed on speech and thought by life in the open air is apt to escape the reader who is used to live and think and study and address audiences in a room ; for he often assumes unconsciously that scenes must have occurred in closed spaces, though something of the vitality is lost on this assumption. Part of what is called the Oriental character of the Bible should more correctly be called the open-air character.

These cases may be generalized as a principle. Those who live in the open air and draw their imagery from the visible phenomena of nature must be to a large extent guided in their choice by the present circumstances. A man who is sitting or walking in the open air and conversing is not likely to talk about the beautiful bloom of

¹ *The Education of Christ*, p. 74.

the fruit trees in an orchard close by, if the trees are bare in the winter season or loaded with fruit. If he talked of the beautiful flowers that clothe the trees, you know that the conversation occurred in the spring time. The careful reader can tell in many cases the time of the year when such illustrations were spoken, and thus a system of annual chronology can be established. Every reader of literature can illustrate this from his own experience or study. There are few commentators on any ancient author who have not sometimes employed reasoning of this class. Colonel Mackinlay's merit lies in employing it systematically and more thoroughly and with greater attention to the facts and habits of ancient Palestinian life and surroundings than any other person (so far as the present reviewer's knowledge extends), and in establishing on this basis, which is theoretically a perfectly sound one, a complete chronology of the life of Christ. In doing so he rests his reasoning on many acute and subtle observations, which are well worth careful reading.

This method of reasoning has, of course, its dangers and its defects. It is almost inevitable that the reasoner should press some of his observations too far, and should be too subtle and apt to take more from a passage than others (and especially the hasty reader) think it can stand. But there is always that danger in the cumulative method of reasoning: one brings in everything large or small that can add to the pile. I would illustrate this, and explain its limits, by quoting a parallel case.

Mr. Hobart has been blamed in the same way for bringing into his proof that the writer of the Acts and the Third Gospel was a physician many details which add little or nothing to the strength of his demonstration. This is quite true, and Mr. Hobart was as fully aware of it as any of his critics. But when the critics go on to maintain that

this detracts from the strength of his reasoning, they are altogether mistaking the character of cumulative evidence. The valuelessness of one detail, the lightness of one stone, does not take away from the strength and the weight of the other details, though it may annoy and mislead the hasty reader who judges by a sample and takes by chance, or by design, the poorest. Moreover, the critic who is accustomed to the more fascinating and brilliant method of deductive reasoning (in which, however, the weakness of even one link in the chain is fatal to the strength of the whole) is apt to forget that cumulative reasoning is not of the same kind. Each has its distinct character, its own separate merits and defects.

Accordingly, Colonel Mackinlay may lose in the reader's estimate many of his props, and yet retain enough to support an edifice which continues to stand and to be habitable. The subject is difficult and obscure ; and every attempt to reason out a new line of proof ought to be heartily welcomed. The reasoning in this case proceeds from a mind which assumes at starting the complete trustworthiness and perfect accuracy of the Gospels. This will at once discredit the book with many of the prejudiced and arbitrary class of scholars, whose mind is already completely made up and closed to any new evidence ; and it may be granted that the prejudice in the Author's mind does in some cases produce what I must call a certain weakness in the argument, where he abandons the cumulative method of observing details and facts, and proceeds to reason from general principles, as for example about the character and conduct and past life of the Magi in his chapter vii., in which he no longer stands on what can be considered firm or safe ground.

While the present reviewer is personally most interested in the thorough-going chronology of the life of Christ

month by month, or at least season by season and feast by feast, which the Author works out, it is certain that many, probably most, readers will follow with more lively interest his observations on the meaning of particular sayings and their relations to the surroundings of time, season, atmospheric phenomena and the position of the familiar stars. Although in regard to the phenomena of the heavens almost all interest in and knowledge of even the more striking stars has been lost in western society, yet the true scholar must try to place himself in the mental atmosphere of ancient Palestinian life, when a certain familiarity with some of the stars was possessed by all and was made an essential part of their thought and expression and was used as a guide in their ways and times of life. One or two examples may therefore be given of the class of observations on which the Author's system is founded.

When Christ saw Nathanael under the fig-tree, this may be regarded as an indication of the summer season. In Matthew xxiv. 32, when the branch of the fig tree "is now become tender and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh." The fading of the leaf of the fig tree is alluded to by Isaiah xxxiv. 4. Between those limits lay the scene when Nathanael retired under the fig tree. He was astonished that any one could see him, and therefore he must have been hid from view by the thick foliage. Moreover, the Author points out that he had evidently gone there to pray in quiet and secrecy, as "an Israelite without guile." This was about the beginning of the Ministry of Christ; the Baptism and the Temptation had already occurred; but there seems to have been no great interval between them. The Temptation apparently followed the Baptism immediately, and lasted forty days. The Author places these events in August and September.

Some time previously occurred the first appearance of

John the Baptist as a teacher. The Author points out that three expressions in his early teaching refer to the season : (1) "The axe is laid to the root of the tree" : the decision to cut down a useless tree would be taken later than the pruning season in March, when it was evident that the tree (possibly for the second season) was not productive. (2) "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is cut down." This emphasizes the same allusion. Both point to April. (3) "Whose fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshingfloor ; and He will gather His wheat into the garner." The season is harvest and the locality was the deep hot valley of the Jordan, where harvest was very early. The preaching of John, therefore, began to arrest the attention of the Jews in April and the time immediately following. After a certain interval, a few months probably, Jesus came to be baptized. As John passed like a meteor across the sky of Palestine, or rather like the Morning Star heralding the light of day, there is no reason to place the Baptism in a later year than the first appearance of John. On this point there is a practically universal agreement of opinion. All these events belong to the spring and summer and early autumn of the same year. Since the Baptist is so persistently regarded as the Morning Star, it must have been shining at his appearance and gladdening the eyes of the crowd of his followers every morning, marking him out as the Herald for whom the nation was looking, according to the prophecy of Malachi. The cycle of appearances of Venus as the Morning Star prove that this year was A.D. 25.

To take another example of the influence which the seasons and the state of agriculture exerted on the customs of the people among whom Christ lived and taught, we take one from the sphere of action and no longer from that of mere language. The author points out on p. 120, that

at the feeding of the five thousand Jesus "commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass" (Matt. xiv. 19). To us who live in the moist lands of these islands this conveys no intimation of the time of year, but in the dry soil and under the hot sun of the Levant lands, it means that the season was spring. Only in spring is there grass, which withers early along with the flowers under the summer sun. This fact plays an important part in the economy of farm life; and the traveller is often reminded of it, when he seeks to hire horses at that season: they are all out at grass. A free life on the grass is regarded as necessary to their health and vigour. Their keep costs nothing during that time, but they cannot do hard work on grass. Hence the traveller, if he insists on getting horses in that season, must tempt the owners by a higher price. Such are the facts in Asia Minor, and I have no doubt that they are similar in Palestine.

The brief phrase which Matthew uses may seem to some—especially to those who have not had the opportunity of familiarizing themselves with the kind of thought and expression which arises from the rarity and value of grass in such countries—to be an insufficient basis to support the Author's inference as to the season. But, as he points out, Mark vi. 39 speaks of "the green grass," and John vi. 10 says "there was much grass in the place." Moreover John vi. 4 mentions that the time of the year was just before Passover.¹ The inference from the scanty phrase of Matthew is perfectly confirmed.

The Author points out well that this is the season of the year when bread is scarce and dear for people who live

¹ The inference from Mark and John is, of course, familiar and common, and has been used against Hort's unfortunate suggestion that *τὸ Πάσχα* in John vi. 4 is an interpolation. But my object is to demonstrate that the brief word of Matthew would alone be sufficient evidence, though I suppose that some Western scholars would have scouted such an assertion, if it were not supported by the clearer testimony of John and Mark.

on the fruits of their own soil and are not affected by imported grain. The produce of the last harvest is coming near an end, and is often exhausted or almost exhausted by this season, while the new harvest is coming on but is still useless. People have often to go hungry, and prices rise high. In this time of dearth the relief which Christ gave was really needed, for the villages (none of which were even near) would be also on the verge of famine.

While in this case the individual character of the scene and the suitability of the surrounding conditions are extremely well marked, one must observe that the details which give life to the incident are lacking in the story of the feeding of four thousand (Matt. xv. 32 ff., Mark viii. 1 ff.), except that there the people sit down on the ground : there was no longer grass to sit on at this season. But that is the general fact : the other scene gathers individuality and life from the unusual character of the circumstances.

But when the Author attempts to find an allusion to the varying seasons in Luke x. 3, "Lambs in the midst of wolves" (dated February or beginning of March), as compared with Matthew x. 16, "sheep in the midst of wolves" (in harvest time, about May, "the young sheep by this time would no longer be considered lambs"), I do not think his reasoning can be accepted. In my experience the term "lamb" is in Asiatic Turkey used for a young sheep at any season of the year, and any flesh of sheep that is sold as fit to eat is "lamb"; and the flesh of a sheep in its second year is already coarse, and not considered eatable except by poor and hardy peasants.¹ Moreover, the Author himself dates the words of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God," in the autumn, whereas his principle would require a date about February to April.

¹ This is mentioned and illustrated in my *Impressions of Turkey*, p. 17.

The main feature of Colonel Mackinlay's book is its insistence on the importance of the Morning Star in the symbolism of the Gospels. Some of the references to this Star are so emphatic and distinct in the Gospels that they cannot be misunderstood. This species of symbolism was employed freely, as every reader knows, in the Gospels. The Author, however, shows that it was carried very much further than has been hitherto observed; and some of the passages in which he detects the use of this symbolism gain much effect from his interpretation. John the Baptist was the Forerunner, the Morning Star. Christ was the Sun, the Light of the World. On p. 16 the Author protests against the mistaken idea in Holman Hunt's picture, "The Light of the World," where Christ is represented as illuminating the world with a lantern. It was as the Sun that He illumined the world; and He used the words about himself at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, which "reminded the Jews of their deliverance from Egypt and of the Divine leading by the pillar of fire in the wilderness (Neh. ix. 1, 9, 12, 19)." At this Feast large lamps were "lighted in the Temple court, which were reminders of the ancient guiding pillar of fire in the wilderness; He said in effect, 'I am like the sun which gives light to all in the world,'—a greater blessing than the Hebrews had of old, when they followed the pillar of fire."

Similarly in John ix. 5, where "the Light of the World" is Christ, the allusion must be to the sun, for there is in the context a contrast between day and night. The Author also compares xi. 9, xii. 35 f., 46, i. 9, 1 John ii. 8, Luke i. 78, ii. 32, Acts xiii. 47, in all of which Christ is the Sun.

In the first chapter the Author is careful to show how much larger a part the Morning Star plays in the life and language of the peoples in the Levant lands than it does among the late-rising nations of the dark north. The

Morning Star begins the day for the nomads and the agriculturists of those southern regions, and even in the cities people work at a very early hour ; in southern countries generally people rise very much earlier than they do in the cold northern lands ; and, where artificial light is scanty and bad, few sit up long after dark, and there is less disposition to lie late in the morning. Moreover, where sunlight is abundant, there seems to be much less need for long sleep than in dark countries. The Author touches on the question whether the ancients knew that Venus, the Morning Star, assumes at times a crescent form (which they probably did), and how they acquired this knowledge. He is disposed to think that they sometimes employed artificial aids to vision, as a lens was found by Layard at Nemrud ; and that the naked eye could not discover the crescent form, though people who know what to expect can see it or think they see it. But one of my friends, a distinguished Professor of Mathematics, tells me that the crescent form could be detected by any watcher of the skies, if he saw the planet against the edge of a sharp upright cliff. At any rate it is certain that the ancients "observed the planet with the utmost attention" and gave it a prominent place in their religion under the names Istar and Ashtaroth and Venus, and so on.

Now, just as John the Baptist about May-June A.D. 25 drew his illustrations from the harvest and the threshing-floors, which were busy at that season, and just as about December A.D. 27 the sowing which was busily going on all around suggested the parables in Matthew xiii. 3-32, Mark iv. 26-29, so the Author maintains that, when John preached, "He that cometh after me is mightier than I," drawing his idea from the Morning Star, herald of the Sun, that Star must have been in its morning phase at the time, guiding the conduct and plain to the eyes and touching

the minds of all his audience every day before dawn, when they rose at its summons. So with several other expressions, as, "he was the lamp that burneth and shineth" (John v. 35), "behold I send my messenger before thy face" (quoted in Matt. xi. 10).

Incidentally, we must notice that such accounts as those mentioned in the beginning of the preceding paragraph are not to be understood as reports of what John and Jesus said in one single speech. They should rather be taken as expressing the gist and marrow of the teaching at a certain period, as the general purport crystallized in the memory of certain auditors.

In the Apocalypse xxii. 16, Christ is called the Morning Star, but in the Gospels He is the Sun, while the Baptist is His Herald, an image taken from Malachi iii. 1, iv. 2, as seen in Luke i. 76, 78, Mark i. 2, Luke i. 17, John iii, 28, Matthew xi. 10, Luke vii. 27, Paul in Acts xiii. 24, John i. 7, 8, etc. The comparison in the Apocalypse belongs to a different period and another circle of thought. Its meaning may be illustrated by the expression in the letter to the Church at Thyatira, "he that overcometh . . . I will give him the Morning Star" (Rev. ii. 28). In this phrase there lies probably more than is allowed for in the *Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, p. 334. We must understand that the Star is the dawn of a brighter day and a new career. To the victor there shall be given the brightness and splendour and power that outshine the great Empire, and the promise of and entrance upon a higher life. It is the same thought as afterwards suggested the term *dies natalis* for the day on which a martyr died: this day was his birthday, on which he entered into a nobler life. After the same fashion Christ calls Himself in Revelation xxii. 16 the Morning Star, as the beginner and introducer of a new era. In the Gospels the point of view is so different as to show that they belong

to an earlier age and another style of thought, not contradictory, but the result of a new point of view.

In chapter vi., the author discusses the length of Christ's Ministry, and concludes that it was three and a half years, It has long seemed to me that this was the true length ; and the shorter periods assigned by many scholars appeared to be based on misconceptions. The estimate of one year (or, more strictly, one year and some months) is due to misinterpretation of Luke iv. 19, where " the acceptable year of the Lord " is taken as the period of Christ's Ministry. This is an almost inexcusable error, for it supposes that the period of one year and several months could be called one year by the ancients. This period would have been called two years, according to the universal rule.¹ Some of the early Fathers, who were uninterested in and careless of chronological exactness, are responsible for this misinterpretation,² which ought not to survive when it is recognized that the Ministry must have lasted over at least two Pass-overs, together with some months before the first.

The Author passes over this estimate as requiring no notice, and inquires only into the possibility of the middle estimate that the Ministry lasted two years and a half. Besides the much debated question of the number of Pass-overs that occurred during the Ministry, he also discusses the number of Feasts of Tabernacles. In regard to the former question there is, of course, nothing new to be said. The arguments have all been already drawn out to endless length ; and the Author passes over them in a brief paragraph of seven lines. The latter question opens up a topic of considerable extent, on which the author has much that is quite novel to say, and which he insists upon a great deal

¹ See the article on *Days, Months, Hours* in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. v.

² Clement of Alexandria and Origen both said so.

in other chapters also. He points out that the reading of Isaiah lxi. by Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth must have taken place at the beginning of a year, at the beginning of a Sabbath year, and at the Feast of Tabernacles. His reasoning on this subject is extremely ingenious and interesting, and merits the most serious consideration. Chronologically, this would settle the question, if it finally stands scrutiny. My own impression is that it will establish itself; but I may be prejudiced, as it confirms my own chronological views in all except one point, which is of merely speculative interest, viz., the year of Christ's birth. The length of Christ's Ministry and the year of His death are matters of the utmost importance for the right understanding and for the historical value of the Gospels; but it makes little difference in those respects whether He was born in any year between 9 and 5 B.C. Colonel Mackinlay has maintained that the Birth was in 8 B.C. at the Feast of Tabernacles; and he has advanced distinctly stronger arguments for this view than can be brought forward in favour of any other year. A date later than 5 B.C. would be fatal to the historicity of Matthew and Luke; beyond that the date is a matter only of chronological importance.

It is a consequence of the very early date that the residence of the Holy Family in Egypt would have to be longer than is usually supposed; but there is absolutely no ground in the words of Matthew to support any argument that the residence in Egypt could not have been so long as five and a third years, which is the period assigned by the Author.

The Sabbatical year necessarily began in the autumn. If it had begun in the spring, the beginning would have occurred after corn had been sowed, and the land could not have lain fallow for the year. It was necessarily implied in the idea of a Sabbatical year that it should begin at the

end of the annual cycle of agriculture and before the next annual cycle opened ; i.e. it must begin near the autumn equinox at the Feast of Tabernacles. This was fixed by the Law of Moses, whereas the ordinary conception of the year in the South-Syrian lands regarded it as beginning in spring.

The Author maintains that the Sabbatical year began at the Feast of Tabernacles in the autumn of A.D. 26.¹ This then was the time when the scene in the Synagogue at Nazareth occurred ; and Christ had been speaking in public previously for some time. The conclusion which I have reached as to the beginning of the Ministry (*Christ Born at Bethlehem*, p. 201) is that "in the later months of that year A.D. 25, John appeared announcing the coming of Christ, and very shortly thereafter Jesus came and was baptized by John in the river Jordan. Some months² thereafter occurred the Passover on 21 March, A.D. 26." Colonel Mackinlay would place these events earlier by a few months. He leaves a longer interval between the appearance of John and of Jesus, viz. about four to five months ; and places the Baptism about 45 days before the Feast of Tabernacles A.D. 25. I see no objection to this, though the evidence is too slender to demonstrate it. Thus he finds the first two occurrences of this Feast within the Ministry.

The third Feast he places at the time of Matthew xii. 18-21 ; the Sabbatic year was now ended, and the period "of special invitation to the Jewish nation" was past. Now begins a new period ; and in the words quoted from Isaiah in this passage of Matthew Christ is twice described as the Saviour of the Gentiles.

¹ There is some controversy as to the exact series of Sabbatical years ; but the view which Colonel Mackinlay takes seems to be the right one.

² In the original text I printed "one or two months thereafter," but this was too precise, and I would substitute the vaguer expression.

The fourth Feast of Tabernacles, in the Author's scheme, synchronized with the Transfiguration, and this suggested to Peter's mind the idea of making the three tabernacles. The Transfiguration occurred "after the Passover of A.D. 28 (compare Matthew xiv. 14-21 and John vi. 4-13 with Matthew xvii. 2), but before the visit to the borders of Judæa beyond Jordan (Matthew xix. 1, John x. 40), which was probably about the beginning of January, A.D. 29 (see p. 54)." Now Jesus spent part of this Feast at Jerusalem (John vii. 14); but it is mentioned that He would not go up at the beginning of the Feast, but remained some days in Galilee, and appeared in Jerusalem, "when it was now the middle of the Feast," probably the fourth day.

If this dating, for which Colonel Mackinlay argues very plausibly, be accepted, several very interesting results follow, which he has not neglected to observe, and probably many more which fall outside the scope of his book. One topographical inference would be that the Mount of the Transfiguration could not be Mount Hermon (which always seemed to me very improbable and incongruous with ancient habits and ideas), but some mountain further south and nearer Jerusalem.

The Nativity also is placed by the Author at the Feast of Tabernacles. This seems highly probable, and may even, I think, be regarded as approximating to certainty. It has been pointed out frequently that the circumstances of the Birth are inconsistent with a winter date, for the sheep are folded at night in winter, whereas they were feeding out on the upland plains near Bethlehem on the night when Christ was born: that is the custom only during the hot season of the year. Considerable part of the summer is required for the operations of harvest and thrashing in various parts of Palestine, which take place earlier or later according to the elevation above the sea; and it would have been impossible

to order any movement of the people until those operations were fully completed. Accordingly the conclusion has been drawn, "we may say with considerable confidence that August to October is the period within which the numbering would be fixed" (*Christ Born at Bethlehem*, p. 193). Now at the Feast of Tabernacles there was always a considerable movement of the Jews from the northern parts towards Jerusalem; and it was natural that the king should avoid the disturbance caused by two movements near the same time, and make the numbering coincide with the Feast, only requiring that all should go up on this occasion to the town of Judæa, which was their original home. I have pointed out how necessary it was that the prejudices and customs of the Jews should not be interfered with; an Oriental despot may be extremely cruel without offending public feeling, and indeed may be all the more successful by virtue of his cruelty; but he must not run counter to the national genius and customs, and this Herod seems to have carefully refrained from doing. The journey to Jerusalem which many were undertaking at the autumn Feast could be combined with the enforced repairing of each to his own city, for it must be remembered that these northern Jews at this period were of the two tribes, not of the ten.

An interesting discovery has been made in Egypt bearing on this point: an order dated A.D. 104 that every Egyptian must repair to his own home in preparation for the numbering of the households. Mr. Kenyon and Mr. Bell append the following note to this document. "It is a rescript from the Prefect requiring all persons who were residing out of their own homes to return to their homes in view of the approaching census. The analogy between this order and Luke ii. 1-3 is obvious."¹

¹ *British Museum Papyri*, iii. p. 124. I am indebted to Professor J. H. Moulton in the *Expository Times*, October, 1907, p. 41, for directing

This may be taken as a parallel to the similar order at the first numbering in Palestine ; and it tends to show that when Herod issued his command, he was acting under Roman orders, and had no choice but to obey. It was not a device which he had chosen himself with his skill in kingcraft ; it was one that was forced on him, and which he had to carry into effect.

It is an unfortunate circumstance for the convincingness of the Author's argument that he states "harmonies" as if they were arguments. They are in his estimation and from his point of view arguments ; but in the modern view they have no value as proof. It would have been a wiser plan to separate the "harmonies" from the evidence. The harmonies are in some cases interesting, but, in view of the feeling in the Bible, what value could it have (even if proved) that Christ was 'baptized at a Full Moon? Such "harmonies" are valueless coincidences.

The very idea of "harmonies," as Colonel Mackinlay works them out, will be found repellent by many minds. But his system of chronology rests, as I am strongly inclined to think, on a thoroughly sound basis of reasoning. One cannot yet say that the basis is certain. The subject is still too obscure and the evidence too scanty. But, in the words of Professor J. H. Moulton (in the passage just quoted), "We are getting on. One of the census papers of the Nativity year will turn up next." When the chronology is settled, the "harmonies" come in as very noteworthy coincidences, in which there may be more than can be yet comprehended: the whole structure may be

my attention to this important document. Previously I had been inclined to think that the method of carrying out the enumeration on the principle that each man should be counted in his own city might have originated from Herod. This possibility is now definitely eliminated. The method was Roman, and the origin may therefore be assigned with perfect confidence, as Luke assigns it, to the Emperor.

compared to that of the great Pyramid, in the construction of which astronomical facts certainly played a part, though it is not easy to determine where design ends and coincidence begins.

It becomes only more clear to the reader of this book that the Gospels are a remarkable structure, resting on fact and observation, and full of the sort of detail which can originate only in reality. The first two chapters of Luke stand the test which the Author has been unconsciously applying much better than the first two chapters of Matthew, as furnishing far more of the illustrations which he collects. The last chapter of the book, however, does not add to its effect as a whole.

W. M. RAMSAY.

THE TEACHING OF EDWARD IRVING,

ON the far horizon of early life lie the facts which connect me personally with Edward Irving. Memory preserves the form and features of three persons intimately connected with the early days of that movement, which issued in what by a bewildered clerk in tabulating the returns of the last religious census was first called the Catholic Apostolic Church. This name was a mistake. The members themselves, desired only to be known as belonging to "a congregation of the Catholic and Apostolic Church worshipping in Newman Street." None of the three I have mentioned ever joined that congregation. One of them, my own grandmother, sat regularly under Irving both at Hatton Garden and in Regent Square, my grandfather having been one of the committee who called the young helper from St. John's, Glasgow, to preside over the Scots congregation in London. Of her my recollections are peculiarly vivid. I was but seven when she died, yet the