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1906.

ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING.*

THEOPHILUS G. PINCHES, ESQ., LL.D., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read and confirmed.

The following paper was read by the author :

THE MORNING STAR IN THE GOSPELS.

By Lieut.-Colonel GEORGE MACKINLAY, R.A. (Ret.)

THE sun, and specially the rising sun, was an object of interest and admiration to all the great nations of antiquity: the records of Scripture as well as those of Babylon, Assyria, Egypt and Greece all bear witness to this fact.

These same ancient records† also testify to the habit of early rising, which is still prevalent in the modern East, where artificial lights are not nearly so good or so general as with us; thus we read at the present time "at the earliest signs of dawn all India is awake and stirring long before sunrise."[‡]

USES OF THE MORNING STAR.

Consequently we can well understand that the herald of dawn, the planet Venus, the morning star, was eagerly looked for and was readily recognised by the Hebrews and ancient Easterns in general, as they were unprovided with the time-keepers of

* Monday, May 21st, 1906.

† Gen. xlv, 3; 1 Sam. ix, 26, xxix, 10; Ps. cxix, 147; Prov. xxxi, 15; Mark i, 35; Luke xxii, 66; John xx, 1; Acts v, 21; see also Martial ix, 68, xii, 57; Juvenal vii, 222-6.

‡ *Indian Life in Town and Country*, p. 95. H. Compton.

modern Western civilisation. The East moves slowly, and hence we find the morning star still used there for this purpose. In Moab* labourers go out to work in the fields when it rises. In India officers on the march are not unfrequently called very early, while it is still dark, by being told that the morning star has risen.† In Turkey “rising by the morning star, if one is to do early work . . . is common.”‡ Hence the planet became a type of a herald, and Dr. Pinches tells us that the Assyrian name for the morning star, “*Dilbat*,” means “she who proclaims”; at the present time modern Persians still allude to it as a type of a forerunner.§

These obviously practical uses of the planet invested it with importance, and when the worship of the sun and moon spread over the heathen world, the planet came in for a large share of adoration, being specially identified with the goddess of love. In Babylon, under the name of *Ištar*, it was a chief object of worship, at one time a rival to the greater divinities of the sun and moon. Babylonian boundary stones still exist (several of them being in the British Museum), and on them the sun, moon, and *Ištar* are depicted, each orb being represented of the same size; they are accompanied by inscriptions containing the curses of the divinities represented by these figures on anyone who should dare to move the stones. Babylonian and Accadian hymns to the goddess exist; in one of them she is styled “Queen of the gods and princess of heaven and earth.” Consequently Layard and Dr. Pinches|| have both identified *Ištar* with the “queen of heaven.” (Jer. vii, 18; xlv, 17 25.) So much was Babylon identified with the worship of this planet, that the nation is spoken of by the prophet, Isaiah xiv, 12, under the name of Lucifer, a son of the morning or the day star. The name *Ashtaroth*, etc., which is found some eighteen times in the Old Testament, corresponds to *Ištar* of the Babylonian tablets. The meaning of *Ashtaroth-Karnaim*, the two-horned *Ashtaroth* (Gen. xiv, 5), is of special interest. Dr. Pinches suggests that it may point to the probability that the ancients were long ago aware that Venus assumes a crescent form at times; the supposition that they were aware of this appearance is strengthened by the fact that Layard found near Pterium a

* Letter from Mr. Harding, lately a missionary in Moab.

† Letter from Lieut.-Col. W. D. Forster, late R.A.

‡ Letter from the Rev. C. S. Sanders, Aintab, Turkey in Asia.

§ Letter, Rev. Newton Wright, D.D., Persia.

|| *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*. “Astronomy.” By Dr. Pinches.

representation of Hera, the Assyrian equivalent of Istar with a wand bearing a small crescent at its upper end in one hand, while she holds in her other hand a symbol similar to the present astronomical sign for the planet Venus. This circumstance, coupled with the finding of a rock crystal lens at Nimroud by Layard, caused Proctor* to suppose that the ancient Chaldeans had some artificial means of assisting vision, as it is generally considered to be impossible to see the crescent form of Venus with the naked eye.† It is interesting to note as witness to the importance of Istar among the ancients that our word star is derived from the Greek *αστηρ*, which is said to be akin to the ancient Babylonian name.‡

According to the Sinaitic inscriptions, the Arabs worshipped the planet§ under the name of 'uzzā until the rise of Mahomet; men's names, such as Abd-al-'uzzā (servant of 'uzzā), were common amongst them, just as Arad Istar (servant of Istar) had been in use among the more ancient Babylonians. An Arabic love song to the planet|| still lingers in Morocco.

The planet played its part in astrology, and at the present time the Hindu divinities have a couplet in Tamil which infers that¶ the powers of the Evil Spirit, which they profess to enchant, ceases when the morning star rises, presumably because day will soon come, when the powers of darkness will have to depart.

The Rev. Dr. Jessup, of Beyrūt, says that the morning star is spoken of among the Christian population as a type of Christ; and in many parts of the East, including India, it is no uncommon thing to hear of farmers and others who have noticed the planet in broad daylight.**

We thus find, from various sources, that the planet Venus was a far more familiar object to ordinary people under the conditions of Bible times than it is to the majority of us at the present moment in England; and, consequently, any figurative allusions to the planet would come with far more force

* *Saturn and its System*. Appendix, "Chaldean Astronomy." R. A. Proctor.

† For a discussion of the possibility of seeing the horns of Venus with the naked eye, see *Knowledge*, 1903.

‡ *The Crit. and Ex. Bible Cyclopadia*, p. 55. Rev. A. R. Fausset, D.D.

§ Letter from Syed Ali Bilgrāmi, Professor of Marathi, Cambridge.

|| Letter from Mr. Cuthbert Nairn, S. Morocco Mission, Marrakesh.

¶ Letter Rev. Canon Margöschis, Tinnevely, S. India.

** Letter C. Campbell, Esq., I.C.S.

to the early readers of the Bible than to us. Hence the readiness with which all Eastern readers would understand the allusion to Christ as "the day star" arising in your hearts (2 Pet. i, 19), presumably because His coming to our hearts now is the sure herald of the manifestation of His future glory. Christ is also referred to in the book of the Revelation as the morning star (Rev. ii, 28, xxii, 16), apparently in both cases in connection with His government, which will precede His delivering all over to God the Father (1 Cor. xv, 28).

Simile of John the Baptist to the Morning Star.

But a much fuller and more sustained figure is the likening of John the Baptist to the morning star, in connection with the grand simile of the Lord Jesus to the sun; this has hitherto attracted little or no attention.

The employment of this figure is evident from the prophecy about John the Baptist, Mal. iii, 1. "My messenger and he shall prepare the way before Me," because the same figure of speech is supported by Mal. iv, 2, when Christ is spoken of as the Sun of righteousness, who shall arise with healing in His wings; that this *is* the association of ideas is proved by the reference which Zacharias Luke i, 76, made to these passages in the Old Testament at the birth of his son the Baptist, when he said of him "thou shalt go before the face of the Lord," and when (two verses later on) he likened the coming Christ to "the day spring (sun rising) from on high" which shall visit us. This same passage from Malachi with reference to the Baptist was also quoted by the evangelist Mark i, 2, by the angel before John's birth, Luke i, 17, by Christ during His ministry, Matt. xi, 10, Luke vii, 27, and by Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, Acts xiii, 24.

The evangelist St. John wrote of the Baptist "the same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe. He was not the Light, but came that he might bear witness of the Light," John i, 7, 8. *The* light par excellence is the sun, and the morning star which reflects its light is not the light itself, but is a witness of the coming great luminary.

On three memorable occasions did the Baptist precede and also testify to the Lord, viz., some months before His birth, Luke i, 26, 41, 44; shortly before His ministry, Matt. iii, 11, John i, 29, 30; and by his death about a year before the Crucifixion of the Lord, Matt. xiv, 10; xvii, 12, 13.

The figure of the Baptist as the morning star is thus most suitable.

Method in Scripture Metaphors.

There is always difficulty in translating from one language to another, but when one is an Eastern, and the other a Western one, the difficulties are much increased, because the former are so much richer in metaphor and figure than the latter; and of all Eastern languages Hebrew probably excels in this characteristic. The strict monotheism of the Israelites discouraged the arts of the sculptor and the artist, which flourished among the Egyptians, Babylonians and Greeks. But there can be no doubt that an artistic feeling existed among the ancient Hebrews; the expression of it, however, was chiefly confined to the use made of language; hence we find word-pictures, metaphor, illustration, and symbol employed very freely in the Hebrew scriptures, and to an extent far beyond our experience in ordinary Latin or Greek. The free use of symbolic language, however, exactly suited the genius and the temperament of the first readers of the Scriptures.

We may notice a probable method in the employment of metaphors in Scripture.

Sir Isaac Newton* drew attention to a special feature in the Bible—that figurative language was very generally employed, while the circumstances to which the figure referred were actually occurring. He says:—

“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, &c. . . . By such types the prophets loved to speak. And Christ, being endued with a nobler prophetic spirit than the rest, excelled also in this kind of speaking, yet so as not to speak by His own actions—that would have been 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,

* *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel*, p. 148. Sir Isaac Newton.

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 its branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh,' Matt. xxiv, 32; Luke xxi, 29."

We may add to Sir Isaac Newton's list the following, which relate to events taking place at known seasons of the year:

Texts.	References.	Approximate Month.	Remarks.
(a) "Lambs in the midst of wolves."	} Luke x, 3 ...	February	} Before sending out the seventy, Luke x, 1; probably some little time before the last Passover, to allow for their mission and return, Luke x 17. About the lambing season.
(b) "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard."			
(c) "Son, go, work to-day in the vineyard."	} John xv, 2 ...		
(d) "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He taketh it away, and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bear more fruit."		} Be-ginning of April	} Just before feeding the 5,000, Matt. xv, 32-39, which was about Passover, John vi, 4, 11. Tares were separated at harvest, Matt. xiii, 30, which was shortly to come.
(e) "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."	Matt. xv, 13		

Texts.	References.	Approximate Month.	Remarks.
(f) "I am the Light of the world."	} John viii, 12	September	{ Reference to lamps at the Feast of Tabernacles, John vii, 2. See <i>The Temple: its Ministry, etc.</i> , A. Edersheim.
(g) "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep . . . I am the door of the sheep."	} John x, 2, 7	November	{ After the Feast of Tabernacles, John vii, 2, and before the Feast of Dedication, which was winter, John x, 22, early December—a time of year when sheep were folded every night.

Hence we see that allusions were made to things actually present; consequently, if we find other allusions, such, for instance, as the comparison of the Baptist to the shining of the morning star, we may reasonably conclude that the planet was then to be seen in the early morning before sunrise. If this is so, we shall find an indication of the dates of the ministries of Christ and of John, and consequently of the Crucifixion.

Explanation of the Diagram.

Mr. Wickham, F.R.A.S., 1st Assist. Radcliffe Observatory, Oxford, and Mr. Crommelin, F.R.A.S., Assist. Observer, Royal Observatory, Greenwich, have calculated data about Venus as the morning star, A.D. 23–34, from which the diagram (p. 266) has been constructed; in it, the periods, when the planet was the morning star rising an hour or more before daybreak, are indicated by heavy black lines on the *right* of the central line; to complete the diagram the periods when the planet was the evening star, setting an hour or more *after* the sun, are indicated by corresponding dotted lines on the *left* of the same central straight line. The horizontal cross lines indicate the solstices, and the crosses in the straight line the equinoxes, and the bracket the period of the Lord's ministry.

On reference to the diagram we learn that the morning star continuously shines for about seven and a half months at the

end of each night, giving at least an hour's notice of sunrise ; but if we include the period when it is still visible but gives shorter notice, the time of shining may be lengthened to about nine lunar months.

An eight years' cycle, containing five periods of the shining of the morning star—useful for practical purposes—exists between the apparent movements of the sun and Venus, correct to within a trifle over two days. For instance, it will be noticed that the morning star began to shine at about the Vernal equinox, A.D. 25, and eight years afterwards, viz., in A.D. 33, it again began its period of shining at the same season of the year ; and so generally at all years, separated from each other by eight years, the shinings of the morning star were during the same months.

Hence the use of the numerals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, opposite the shinings of the morning star in the diagram, to draw attention to those which occurred in the same months.

Reference to the diagram informs us that nearly a year elapses after the end of one period of shining of the morning star until the beginning of the next period ; as time goes on, further warning is given by the evening star, which gradually attains to the maximum brilliancy of any of the orbs of heaven (except the sun and moon), and thus claims universal attention some six weeks or so before the return of the morning star ; the evening star then continues to shine with lessened light for some two or three weeks, till it disappears in the brightness of the sunset. This must have been useful information, and was doubtless common knowledge to people who had to get up early, and who consequently made all the use they could of the indications of the morning star, as they were unprovided with watches and clocks.

Our diagram also gives the probable dates of various events and utterances connected with the Baptist, when he is referred to under the figure of the morning star. The arrangement enables us to see at a glance whether the planet was shining at the end of the night on each of the times under consideration.

We shall at present assume the ministry of the Lord to have lasted between three and four years, and leave the consideration of a shorter period to the end of this article.

It is very generally admitted from the historical data available that the Crucifixion took place between the years A.D. 28-33 ; the ministry must therefore have begun in one of the years A.D. 24-29.

Examination of texts referring to the Baptist as the Morning Star.

We now proceed to examine the passages in the Gospels referring to the Baptist as the morning star in more detail; see diagram.

(a) At the very beginning of his ministry the Baptist referred to the prophecy in Mal. iii, 1, when he was likened to the morning star, when he said "He that cometh after me is mightier than I," Matt. iii, 11, Mark i, 7, John i, 15; see also Luke iii, 16, John i, 27, 30, Acts xiii, 25. According to the principle we are adopting of figures from things actually present, the morning star was shining when the Baptist began his ministry, and thus the witness in the sky and the human messenger each gave a prolonged heralding of the One who was to come.

If we refer to Matt. iii, 8, 10, 12, we find the Baptist using three figures of speech at the beginning of his ministry.

1. "Bring forth fruit."
2. "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees." Presumably marking the unfruitful trees for cutting down.
3. "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly cleanse His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire."

These three figures all refer to the time of harvest, which must have taken place within the month after the Passover, as the place where John began his ministry was the deep depression "round about Jordan," Luke iii, 3, where the harvest is far earlier than on the Judæan hills.

If we refer to the diagram we see that the morning star was shining during the month after Passover (say April) only in the years A.D. 24, 25 and 27. Hence we conclude that John began his ministry on one of those three years.

(b) John bore a similar witness at the beginning of the Lord's ministry, and cried, saying, "This was He of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me," John i, 15, *parce qu'il est plus grand que moi* (French translation), repeating the phrase on the morrow, John i, 30; again bearing out the simile of the morning star and the rising sun.

At what time of year was this? It was, of course, a good deal later than the beginning of John's own ministry, probably at least four or five months, to allow time for the Baptist to be known and to attract great public attention. It could not therefore have been earlier than the latter part of August; it

must also have been long before the following Passover, for several events in the Lord's ministry, including the forty days' temptation, occurred before that date. Further, Christ most likely began his public ministry before November, because it is probable that there were leaves on the fig-tree when Nathaniel came from under it, John i, 48.

Consequently our choice of years for the beginning of the two ministries is again narrowed, and we must reject A.D. 24, for the morning star was certainly not shining in August of that year; A.D. 27 may fulfil this condition, but we shall find it cast out a little later on, *see note on (g)*, p. 254. There remains only A.D. 25, which, however, answers admirably, and we therefore assume this year as the beginning of Christ's ministry. We shall find this assumption confirmed by further inferences as we proceed.

(c) The next reference to the Baptist under the figure we are considering is, "He must increase, but I must decrease," John iii, 30. These words were uttered after the Passover, which took place in A.D. 26, most probably on 22nd March, but before John was cast into prison, John iii, 24 (they may have foreshadowed his imprisonment); we may consequently assume that John spoke them about the beginning of April. The figure may allude to—

- (1) The increasing power of the sun as the days lengthen, and the heat becomes greater between mid-winter and mid-summer; the increase of both combined being most rapid shortly after the equinox; and the decreasing of the morning star may refer to its non-appearance in the sky at the end of each night.
- (2) Or the figure may describe the daily appearance when the morning star is shining, when the increasing brilliancy of the rising sun causes the light of its herald to decrease and fade away, as is suggested by *Mimpriss*.*

Which of these two allusions is more probable? The seeming destruction of the stars caused by the rising of the sun was an ancient figure of speech which was generally employed, and it is probably used in 2 Thess. ii, 8. "The lawless one . . . whom the Lord . . . shall . . . bring to nought with the manifestation (forth shining [Gk.]) of His coming." The same idea seems to be carried out in Nahum iii, 16-17: "the

* *Mimpriss' Gospel Treasury*, Section xii, p. 132. John iii, 30.

stars . . . when the sun ariseth they flee away"—if it is allowable for the verb to refer to the stars as well as to the locusts; and both refer to the great men of Nineveh. We thus see that the figure of the rising sun extinguishing the light of the stars is associated with conflict, punishment and judgment, which certainly did not represent the relationship between Christ and his forerunner John. Hence we conclude that the explanation of the figure suggested by Mimpriss, which we have called (2), is not a probable one. But no objection can be brought against the other, which we have called (1). Our diagram tells us that the first and more probable of the two explanations is fulfilled in the circumstance under consideration.

(d) The imprisonment of John took place soon after the last utterance, if, as the Rev. Dr. Sanday* thinks, the events of John ii, 13-iv, 45, did not occupy more than three or four weeks, because when the Lord arrived in Galilee the impression of His public acts at Jerusalem was still fresh, John iv, 45 (this would lead us to explain the ambiguous latter half of John iv, 35, the description of "the field white for harvest" as actually existing, and, "Say ye not, etc.," as a proverb). The estimate that the imprisonment of the Baptist took place very soon after the Passover is somewhat strengthened by the fact that the synoptic gospels record no events in the Lord's ministry before John was delivered up, except the temptation, Matt. iv, 12, Mark i, 14, see also Luke iv, 14; and because the apostle Paul said that "as John was fulfilling his course ["towards the end of his career," Weymouth's translation], he said, 'What suppose ye that I am? I am not He. But behold, there cometh One after me the shoes of whose feet I am not worthy to unloose,'" Acts xiii, 25—words which tend to place the end of John's career as early as is allowable, because the message referred to was uttered by the Baptist when he announced Christ, John i, 26-27. We therefore estimate that John was imprisoned about the middle or end of April, when we see from the diagram that the morning star appropriately was not shining.

(e) The next reference to the Baptist under this simile is a very striking one. Christ speaks of him as "the lamp that burneth and shineth; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light," John v, 35. Though he was in prison, Christ said of him at this time, "You sent to John, and he both was and

* *Outlines from the Life of Christ*, p. 49. Rev. W. Sanday, D.D.

still is a witness to the truth," John v, 33 (Weymouth's translation). A name for the planet Venus as "lamp" or "light," was used in Sanscrit and also in Arabic, and this is very natural; long before he had any thought that this passage of Scripture refers to the morning star the author of this article described the setting of the evening star at sea (it is just similar in appearance to the morning star rising), as resembling a lighthouse near at hand*; and in Scripture, the translation of "helel," Is. xiv, 12, (A.V.), is Lucifer, which means "light bearer," indicating the morning star. (Compare Is. lxii, 1, when "the brightness" and "a lamp that burneth" may refer to the sun and to the morning star respectively.)

Regarding the phrase "to rejoice for a season in his light" it is a custom, still sometimes observed in Egypt, India, and Palestine, for travellers by night—and night travelling is usual in hot climates—to sing songs† on the rising of the morning star, because it announces that the darkness and dangers of the night are coming to an end. An astronomical friend who had never heard of this custom, could not understand how anyone could possibly rejoice in the light of Venus; the abundance of his instruments and clocks had prevented him from realizing the use which Easterns still make of the planet to foretell day; probably most astronomers would have spoken in the same way.

The argument used by our Lord in the passage under consideration seems to be—you were willing to rejoice in the light of the herald of day, which only shines by reflecting the light of the coming sun; the inference to be drawn is, much more should you rejoice when the sun itself has actually risen, when I, the Light of the World, have actually come. This interpretation harmonises with His statement just afterwards (verse 39), that "ye search the Scriptures . . . which bear witness of Me," the inference again being, now that I am come, you ought to receive Me. All through the conversation, the subject is that of witness-bearing—by His own works, by the Father, by John, by the Scriptures, and by Moses; the whole sentence pointing to the necessity of receiving the One to whom such abundant witness had been borne.

The time of this utterance was just after the unnamed feast of John v, 1, and before the Passover of John vi, 1. If, as is often

* "The Transit of Venus, 1882." *Pro. R.A. Institution*, vol. xii, No. 7.

† According to letters received from Dr. Harpur, C.M.S., Egypt, Moulvie Mahomed Nizamuddin, B.A., Prime Minister, Bhopal, and Mr. Forder, of Jerusalem.

assumed, the unnamed feast was Passover A.D. 27, our diagram tells us that the morning star was appropriately shining, as would also have been the case had it been Purim (Feby.) or the feast of weeks at the beginning of June.

(f) Though John was still in prison he was nevertheless bearing witness to Christ, when he sent messengers to Christ, and when the Lord said, Matt. xi, 10, that the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of Mal. iii, 1, as he was the messenger before the face of the Lord. We have already seen (p. 245) that this prophecy refers to the Baptist under the figure of the morning star, which was shining when this scripture was quoted by Christ when it was harvest time, A.D. 27, for it was spoken *after* the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. v, etc., which was probably at harvest time from its allusions to the lilies of the fields, and the filling of barns; and the quotation was made *before* the plucking of the ears of corn, Matt. xii, 1, which was at the latter part of the same harvest.

(g) From a comparison of Matt. xiv, 1, 10, 16-21, with John vi, 4-13, it appears that the death of the Baptist took place at about the time of Passover, A.D. 28—the last one before the Crucifixion. We see from the diagram that appropriately the morning star was not then shining.

NOTE.—If we had assumed A.D. 27 (see p. 251) for the date of the beginning of the ministry, this would have involved the utterance referred to in (e) and the quotation in (f) being spoken in spring, A.D. 29, when the morning star was *not* shining; and the death of John would have occurred in spring, A.D. 30, when the morning star *was* shining—all three being inharmonious; we therefore definitely cast out A.D. 27 as a possible date for the beginning of the Lord's ministry.

(h) After the death of John, and before the Crucifixion, there came another period of the shining of the morning star during the Lord's ministry in the second half of A.D. 28 (see diagram). At the Feast of Tabernacles, John vii, 2, in the autumn of that year, the Lord called Himself "the Light of the World," John viii, 12 (see also ix, 5), when there can be no doubt He compared Himself to the sun, and which therefore carried on the figure of the Baptist being the morning star.

The Jews apparently recognised the similitude, and their minds must have gone back to John, when they addressed to the Lord at this time (John viii, 25, see also 53) the identical question they put to the Baptist some three years before, "Who art Thou?" John i, 19. On the later occasion they dared to say to the Lord, "Thou bearest witness of Thyself, Thy witness

is not true," John viii, 13, most likely because the Baptist was no longer alive to give his witness.

(i) Looking again at our diagram, we notice that the morning star was still visible in the early winter, at the beginning of December, A.D. 28, at the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple, John x, 22; at that time there were still some echoes of the old question to John, and doubtless remembrance of his witness, when the Jews said to the Lord, "How long dost Thou hold us in suspense? If Thou art the Christ tell us plainly," John x, 24.

(j) Though the figure of the morning star is not mentioned, the dead Baptist still witnessed at a time of the shining of the herald of the day, just after the Feast of Dedication, when the Lord went to the place where John was at the first baptizing, when the people confessed "All things whatsoever John spake of this man were true. And many believed on Him there," John x, 41, 42. As Bishop Ellicott remarks on this passage, "the enthusiasm which John had kindled still burns."

The arrival at Bethabara must most probably have been very soon after the Feast of Dedication in order to allow time for Christ to abide there, John x, 40, and also to tarry at Ephraim, John xi, 54, before the approaching final Passover.

(k) But when we come to the last Passover in the year A.D. 29, the herald of dawn had just disappeared (see diagram). This harmonises with the following record of the complete isolation of the Lord at His Crucifixion, which we reverently notice.

- (i) The disappearance of the witness John by death, Matt. xiv, 10.
- (ii) The forsaking of Him by all His disciples, Matt. xxvi, 56, Ps. xxxviii, 11.
- (iii) The absence of any record of a ministry of angels, as after the temptation, Matt. iv, 11.
- (iv) The hiding of God's face, when Christ uttered the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Matt. xxvii, 46; Ps. xxii, 1.
- (v) In nature, the sun's light failed, Luke xxiii, 45.
- (vi) Being day time, the Paschal full moon was of course below the horizon.

We have thus seen that if we assume a three and a half years' ministry beginning autumn A.D. 25, and consequently necessitating Passover A.D. 29 as the date for the Crucifixion, that all references to the Baptist as the morning star harmonise with the actual shining or non-shining of the herald of dawn in

the heavens; we have also shown that no other date which is historically possible will fulfil these harmonies. Hence we conclude that we have obtained an almost independent confirmation of the date A.D. 29 for the Crucifixion.

We will now briefly consider how a length of ministry of between two and three years, as advocated by some,* will satisfy the harmonies. If we assume as before, that historical data force us to place the Crucifixion between the dates A.D. 28–33, this shortened ministry might have begun any year A.D. 25–30. We have already shown that A.D. 26, 28, 29, must be excluded, because the morning star was not shining at the times of year when the Baptist and the Lord began their ministries. There remain, therefore, to investigate A.D. 25, 27, and 30, for the beginning of the Lord's ministry. We have not space to go into details, but it is readily seen by reference to the diagram, that on each of these suppositions there would be failure in the harmonies in at least (*h*), (*i*) and (*j*) conditions. Hence we conclude that our line of investigation does not favour a ministry of less length than three years and some months.

Conclusion.

It must be confessed that we have not adduced strong evidence, but only inferences, which are, however, valuable, because they point to harmonies long hidden, but which were probably quite apparent to the first readers, to whom the periods of the appearance of the morning star must have been far more generally known than they are to us at the present time.

Some readers, on first thoughts, may be inclined to think the foregoing deductions fanciful and unreal, because they involve a train of thought with which they are unfamiliar; some may say it would be quite another thing if it were distinctly stated in the Bible that the Baptist was like the morning star, which will always be shining when he is so alluded to. If that had been written, it would have been in accord with our modern blunt manner of expression, but the special characteristic of the subtle Bible methods, which so generally need some search in order to appreciate their full meaning, would have been utterly lost. Reflection and a fuller acquaintance with Eastern, and specially with Biblical, methods of expression

* See *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*. "Chronology of the Gospels." C. H. Turner, M.A. Also *Outlines of the Life of Christ*. Rev. W. Sanday, D.D.

in which symbolism, harmonies and figures of all kinds are very freely employed will, it is believed, prevent any thoughtful reader from hastily rejecting the conclusions which have been drawn, when he remembers that some harmonies akin to those we have investigated actually do exist in Scripture. No one, for instance, would suggest mere coincidence, but rather harmonious design, in the facts that Christ died at the Passover, Matt. xxvi, 18; xxvii, 46, 50; 1 Cor. v, 7; that He rose from the grave on the day when the sheaf of first-fruits was waved before the Lord, on the morrow after the Sabbath after the Passover, Lev. xxiii, 11; John xx, 1; 1 Cor. xv, 20; and that the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples on the day of Pentecost, Lev. xxiii, 15, 16; Acts ii, 1.

A confirmation of this method of harmonies is furnished by the fact that references to the Sabbatic year, A.D. 26-27, in the Gospels also indicate the same date, A.D. 29, for the Crucifixion. Harmonies connected with the Sabbatic year and other harmonies connected with the figure of the Baptist as the morning star combine in indicating B.C. 8 as the date of the Nativity. This year satisfies the scanty historical date perfectly; it is true it involves that Christ must have been thirty-two years' old when He began His ministry, but scholars* tell us that the Greek of Luke iii, 23, "about thirty years of age," will fully and readily include any age between twenty-eight and thirty-two. Want of space prevents any further mention of these two lines of investigation, but they are alluded to in order to show that inferences, similar to the main subject of this article, will also lead to other definite and highly probable results.

If, as we fully believe, the harmonies which have been pointed out really exist, not only do they furnish interesting chronological evidence, but, better far, they bear witness to the utter truthfulness of the Divinely inspired record in the gospels; as the existence of the harmonies would have been impossible in a mere made-up story.

DISCUSSION.

Commander W. F. CABORNE, C.B., R.N.R.I.—My thanks are due to the Victoria Institute for the privilege of listening to another interesting paper from Colonel Mackinlay, and also for the opportunity of taking part in its discussion.

* *Was Christ born in Bethlehem?* p. 197. Professor W. M. Ramsay.

However, I only intend dealing with one point submitted to me by the gallant Lecturer, and that is in connection with the origin of the device displayed on the Turkish ensign, namely, a crescent and star. In a note sent me, Colonel Mackinlay says: "I cannot help thinking it may be due to the morning star—it seems possible the ancients knew it was sometimes horned—as it appears in the telescope, and that the origin of the Turkish emblem is not the moon; but I have no proof of this supposition."

Having consulted various works of reference, it would seem that the emblem in question was instituted in honour of Hecate, a Greek moon-goddess. At the siege of Byzantium by Philip of Macedon, in the fourth century B.C., it is stated that the Byzantines were saved from a night surprise by a flash of light which revealed their approaching enemies. According to one authority, this light was a new moon which suddenly appeared in the heavens. If a moon did appear, probably it was the crescent of an ordinary moon which showed itself unexpectedly between dark, heavy clouds on a dirty night—the sort of night that would be chosen for a surprise attack. Anyhow, out of gratitude to Hecate for their escape, the Byzantines erected an altar in her honour and stamped a crescent on their coins. A star was added then or subsequently, but whether in recognition of the morning star or of Hecate's alleged female parent, Asteria, the starry sky of night, I have not been able to ascertain.

Thus the crescent became and remained the official emblem of Byzantium, and afterwards of its successor, Constantinople, when that city was founded by Constantine the Great, A.D. 324; and when Constantinople was taken by Mahomet II., in 1453, the Sultan assumed the badge by right of conquest, and it has ever since been the distinguishing sign of the Turks.

It is noteworthy that the national flags of other Mohammedan States, such as Morocco, Muscat, Zanzibar, and one or two independent colonies of Arabs, although red like the Ottoman ensign, are innocent of any device; while the Persian emblem is the Lion and the Sun.

We have seen that the crescent, pagan in its origin, was the recognised mark of a great Christian city for upwards of eleven hundred years, and it is nonsense to say that when Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks the Cross was replaced by the

Crescent. What really happened was that the cross was removed and the crescent remained. In the same way, it is manifestly incorrect to talk about the Crusades having been conflicts between the Crescent and the Cross, because the former was probably not even known to the great majority of the Saracen hosts.

Charles I., King of Naples and Sicily, a son of Louis VIII., of France, in 1268 founded a Christian Order of Knighthood named the Crescent. This Order died out, and was re-instituted, at Algiers, by René Duke of Anjou, brother and heir of Louis III., King of Naples, in 1464. The badge was a crescent of gold, on which was the word "Loz," enamelled in red letters, the import being "Loz (laus) en Croissant"—Praise by Increasing. This semi-religious and semi-military Order had for its objects the honour of God, the defence of the Church, the encouragement of noble actions, and the glory of the founder; but it did not survive the death of its rescuator.

We may claim that in length of time since it was first used the crescent has been more of a Christian than a Mohammedan badge; and I may add that the crescent, generally surmounted by the cross, is to be seen on some churches in Russia, this being considered a proof of the Byzantine origin of the national Church of that empire.

Mr. ROUSE.—I should like to ask Colonel Mackinlay for the allusions to the Sabbath year which he spoke of.

I should also suggest a different way in which to read the passage in Peter. Speaking of the inspired revelation of God, Peter says: "Whereunto ye do well if ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts." This is the way we read it—with the emphasis given by this punctuation. But, if it were read in the way I propose, there would not be the difficulty of the appearance of the star seeming to be confined to our hearts. The teaching is that we ought to be guided by the Bible as a lamp until Christ—a far greater light—again appears. But if it be read this way—"Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed," then, in parenthesis ("as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn and the day star arise"), and then, resuming the main clause, "in your hearts"—the meaning would be "Unto which ye do well to take heed in your hearts, until the day dawn and the day star arise." That I think is truly the meaning.

The exceedingly interesting account that we have just heard from Commander Caborne as to the origin of the Crescent must have informed all of us greatly. It has given us an entirely new view of that emblem, which we now find to be rather a Christian than a Mahommedan one. That does not affect the exceedingly curious fact which Colonel Mackinlay brought before us that the crescent was used by the ancient pagans of the East as an emblem of Venus, and his inference that they had probably seen this planet in its crescent phase.

As to the meaning of Ashtaroth-Karnaim, that is a very striking Canaanite place-name, occurring so early as it does in the Bible record. It seems to point to the knowledge of Ashtaroth as bearing horns; and, if Ashtaroth be the same as Venus, whom certainly the intermediate name Istar denotes, and be also (as it conceivably is) the origin of the Greek word *astēr*, we may conclude that the ancients did know that Venus could assume the form of a crescent. But certainly Ashtaroth (or Astarte, as the Greeks called her in her Phenician worship) has hitherto been regarded as the goddess of the moon.

I should like to say further that it is quite clear that the Lord's ministry lasted three and a half years. Having "returned" from "His forty days' temptation in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," He made disciples at Bethabara, worked a miracle at Cana, and sojourned "not many days" at Capernaum (Luke iv, 14, John i, 28, 35-51, ii, 1-12). He then went up to keep the Passover at Jerusalem, thus closing a considerable part of a year. Then He repaired with His disciples to a place on the Jordan, where they baptized and made many converts. They were there some length of time—some months we may presume,—but when He learnt that the Jews had heard that He was making more disciples than John, wishing not to eclipse John's reputation, He went northward to Galilee. That the Lord should have been quite eight months teaching and His disciples baptizing ere this step became needful would be only natural in view of the tremendous popularity of John.

Professor ORCHARD.—We have to thank the author for a paper marked by much thoughtfulness and originality. He says himself, with characteristic modesty, that he has not brought forward strong evidences, but merely inferences. That of course is true. The main supports of his theory we may say are the remarkable facts

that the eastern name for the Morning Star is, as Dr. Pinches has pointed out, "She who proclaims"—the idea of a herald; and Sir Isaac Newton's remark that the parabolic language used by the Lord and John the Baptist generally referred—though not always—to things then actually present.

I think we must recognise that although the argument is very probable only, the author has made out a very good case for his conclusions.

It is very interesting to notice that our common word "star" is connected with the Babylonian name of the Queen planet. The rock crystal lens found by Layard is not by any means the sole evidence that the ancients understood artificial aid to vision. They were also acquainted with the use of long tubes and very possibly with some kind of telescope.

I cannot concur with the author in his interpretation of John iii, 30, on p. 25. He gives two explanations, one of them by Mimpriss,—but he prefers the other one. I certainly think that by Mimpriss is more correct. The idea that the wicked one in 2 Thess. ii, is represented by a star, appears altogether improbable.

Again, the author truly says, "if it is allowable for the verb to refer to the stars as well." But it is not allowable, and as it appears to me, the argument in favour of the interpretation No. 1 collapses. But naturally we should take the passage as that suggested by Mimpriss, that the Baptist preceded Christ in the same sort of way as the Morning Star precedes the Sun, and as the Sun increases in brilliance of course the star would decrease. To suggest that non-appearance in the sky is decrease appears to me altogether untenable.

We have to thank the author very much for this valuable paper. He has succeeded in deducing Gospel harmonies from "the music of the spheres," and enlisting the rays of the beautiful planet in attestation to the sacred truth of the Bible. We shall thoroughly agree with him that these harmonies bear witness to the utter truthfulness of the divinely inspired records in the Gospels, as the existence of the harmonies would have been impossible in a mere made-up story.

A MEMBER.—I would like to ask, are we to give up the chronology stated in our Authorised Version of the Bible? There we are told that our Lord was born four years before the period

called A.D., and we read that He was thirty years of age when He began His ministry—that would make Him about thirty-four years old. Then we add the $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, and make His life $37\frac{1}{2}$ years. Are we to reckon the chronology of the Authorised Version as being altogether out of date?

Mr. ROUSE.—The idea of Christ being born 4 B.C. is utterly untenable, inasmuch as Herod died just before the Passover in 4 B.C. (cp. Josephus War, I, xxxiii, 8; II, i, 3; Ant. XV, xiv, 5; XVII, vi, 4, Whiston's Notes); and Christ must have been over a year old when Herod ordered that all children should be destroyed "from two years old and under," which in all likelihood was before the final illness began which took about two months to carry him off. Moreover, since the census in the course of which Christ was born could not have been held at Passover time, when the whole population of Palestine was shifting to and fro and Jerusalem was filled with Jews from other countries, and since the last previous season when flocks graze at night and so are watched by their shepherds is from August to September, it was in one of those months, at least a year and a half before Herod's death, or at least in 6 B.C., that the Lord was born (Lewin and Ramsay prove). The chronology, therefore, that appears in the margin of our Authorised Version is palpably wrong.

Dr. PINCHES.—I am sure we are all very glad to hear anything which has any bearing upon the chronology of the New Testament. We are always looking to see where we stand and how far the records are trustworthy. I think there is no doubt from what I have heard that Colonel Mackinlay's paper has contributed very materially upon that point; but naturally there is one thing which we will have to consider and our chronologists in general will have to consider, the question of the revision of the date generally assigned to the birth of Our Lord. Upon the chronological point it is not my intention to make any remarks. Chronology is my weak point, and I will leave that alone; but there are one or two notes upon the Morning Star which have occurred to me and which may be of interest.

Colonel Mackinlay has pointed out in his remarks that the name of the planet Venus among the Babylonians was Dilbat; the Greek form of which, I remember, is *Delephat*, pointing rather to the form *Delebat*, and that is explained by *Nabat*, meaning "She who

proclaims," the feminine of the third person of *nabá*, "to proclaim." Therefore the Babylonian Venus was apparently a planet and was regarded as "a proclaimer." I say apparently, because there is a possibility that Venus was identified with other heavenly bodies which were regarded as proclaimers, but at the same time the planet Venus was a proclaimer. I will not touch upon the point as to whether the word "star" comes from *Ištar* or not. I am a little doubtful. It is not certain until we can get more information.

Another question which has arisen in the course of this paper and the discussion, is the visibility of the crescent form of the planet Venus. There is a very interesting list of gods in the British Museum which contains the name of Merodach and describes him as being attended by four dogs, whose names are given. The question is whether these dogs were to be identified with the four satellites of Jupiter. At a meeting of the French Astronomical Society some months ago one of the gentlemen present said that in his opinion it was possible to see the satellites of Jupiter with the naked eye; and if the satellites of Jupiter could be seen with the naked eye, it seems to me that in a country like that, where the atmosphere is so clear and the stars are so much more visible than with us, it is very probable that the phases of Venus were visible likewise to the more sharp-sighted of the star-gazers of that ancient time. In connection with this it is not only to be noted what Colonel Mackinlay has instanced, namely, that the stars as time-keepers and time-givers have very much greater importance in the East than with us; but it is also a fact that, in ancient times, especially among the heathen and semi-heathen nations, there were people who wished to find out things from the stars, and who were always observing them. As you know, we have a proverb which says, "Practice makes perfect," and their vision was in all probability perfected by practice to a much greater extent than the natives of that country at the present time. Notwithstanding the existence of a piece of crystal roughly shaped somewhat as a plano-convex lens, I do not think, myself, that we can say that the Babylonians or any other nation of antiquity had attained to the invention of the telescope.

An interesting question is, whether Ashtaroth-Karnaim was the moon-goddess or not. Of course the general opinion is that Ashtaroth-Karnaim is the moon-goddess, but if the word Ashtaroth

is the same as Istar (and we find the form Ashtara in the Babylonian tablets at the beginning of the second millennium before Christ, as a kind of intermediate form), I think there is no doubt that originally it must have meant the planet Venus; but I cannot bring forward any proof that the general opinion that Ashtaroth was the moon-goddess is wrong. We can only say that, at least in the Babylonian records, there is no proof that Istar (who is the prototype of Ashtaroth) was the moon-goddess. But in one case—perhaps more than one—the descent of Istar into Hades, as it is called—she is described as the daughter of Sin; that is, the daughter of the Moon, one of the great gods of the Babylonians. Sin was the light-giver. But in the descent of the Istar into Hades we have to bear in mind the purpose for which she went down to Hades. It was to seek Tammuz, her husband. Now Tammuz is regarded as a Sun-god, and she, therefore, went as his attendant. Descending to the underworld as the winter-sun, she went down to Hades with him accompanying him on his return as the sun renewing its strength at spring-time. It is on this account that she was regarded as the attendant of the sun. I do not know whether there is any bearing, in that view of the planet Venus and the goddess who was identified with her, upon the theory advanced by Colonel Mackinlay, but perhaps he will give us his views when he replies to the remarks which have been made. I am sure we are all most thankful to him for this very interesting paper.

Lieut.-Colonel MACKINLAY.—I thank all the speakers in the discussion for their kind appreciation of the paper, and in addition I am much obliged to Commander Caborne for his interesting information about the origin of the Turkish crescent.

Mr. Rouse asks what is the line of inference in connection with the Sabbatic year; briefly it is this—there are historical reasons for believing that the year beginning at the Feast of the Tabernacles (Deut. xxxi, 10), was a Sabbatic year. Some twelve probable references to facts (such as cessation from sowing, etc.) connected with the Sabbatic year can be detected in the Gospels; *e.g.*, if A.D. 29 was the date of the Crucifixion the four parables about sowing, Matt. xiii, 3-23, 24-30, 31-32, Mark iv, 26-29, were uttered soon after the end of the Sabbatic year. The resumption of sowing, which had not taken place for two years, would then arouse more than ordinary interest, and therefore the subject of sowing would

serve specially well for the groundwork of parables at that particular time. The harmonies connected with the Sabbatic year are all fulfilled if A.D. 29 is taken as the date of the Crucifixion ; but they are not fulfilled if any other date, historically possible, is assumed. May I add that these and other harmonies will be fully considered in a small book shortly to be published, which will be entitled, *Suggestive Gospel Harmonies*.

In reply to Professor Orchard, it was an ancient figure of speech for the non-setting stars to typify the powers of darkness destroyed by the shining of the rising sun—type of supreme power. I can see no objection to the wicked or lawless one (2 Thess. ii, 8) being spoken of under the figure of a star, since a star, in figurative language, is an emblem of one who is powerful, irrespective of goodness or badness, Jude 13, Rev. viii, 10, 11, etc. I leave scholars to say whether the meaning which I have suggested in Nahum iii, 16, 17, is possible or not. If it is not possible the general employment of this figure of speech by the ancients and the inferences found from the passage in the Epistle to the Thessalonians remains untouched. It is true, as the Professor says, that non-appearance is not the same as decrease, but an exact definition cannot be closely pressed when figurative language is considered ; the utterance is expressed in the dual method so common in Hebrew (*e.g.*, Prov. x, 1, xi, 5, etc.). *We* might have used the words “altogether absent,” instead of “decrease,” but then the Hebraic balance would have been lost. Though the morning star was absent, it may still have been said to have been decreasing at the time when John was speaking, as the planet was receding farther and farther away from its position as the morning star, and it was consequently increasing its angular distance from the sun as the evening star, until a little after the following midsummer.

The question as to whether the ancients saw the horns of Venus by aided or by unaided vision is full of interest ; but both assumptions point to the fact that the heavens were watched with care, and that very great attention had been bestowed on the planet by the easterners of old.

With reference to our chairman's observations, Venus is an interim planet and is never at a greater angular distance from the sun than about forty-three degrees ; it may consequently be said to accompany the sun as its attendant, in mythological language, to the under

world towards the seasons of autumn and winter, returning with it in the spring.

Dr. PINCHES.—It has just occurred to me, with regard to the descent of Ištar into Hades, that in other instances she is referred to as the daughter of Anu, but on this special occasion she is called the daughter of Sin. May this not be because, like the moon-god, she was horned? That is a point of special importance in considering whether the phases of Venus were visible to the unaided eyes of the Babylonians.

I am sure you will all join in the vote of thanks which I should like to give to the Lecturer for his very interesting communication.

THE MORNING STAR IN THE GOSPELS.

A.D.

