

The Year-Day System in Bible Prophecy

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The... question is, on what scale are these hieroglyphs [or symbols in Bible prophecy] constructed? What for instance is the proportion between the wild beast of #Dan 7:7, and the Roman Empire, of which it is the universally acknowledged symbol?

Evidently the reduction is on as enormous a scale as when our world is represented by a globe a foot in diameter. Reason then compels us to conclude that in the chronology of the wild beast, an equally enormous reduction will be found. Otherwise there would exist on the face of this prophecy, that incongruous mixture of some miniature and some life-sized features, that we dare not attribute to inspiration. The statement of time must, like the prophecy in which it occurs, be a symbolic miniature, intended to convey a reality immensely greater than itself. We do not assert that the words in which these Statements of time are made, are symbolic: that a "day" means anything but a day, or a "year," anything but a year, but that the ideas of time conveyed to the mind, by these words, are symbols, intended to suggest other ideas of time, just as much as the ideas conveyed by the other parts of the hieroglyphs, are intended to suggest something different from themselves.

If this be granted, the next question is, does Scripture prescribe any scale by which these miniature numbers are to be enlarged? For in order to be of any use, chronological revelations must be accurate. If we desire to ascertain from a map the distance between any two given points, we take the apparent space in a pair of compasses, and measuring it against the scale at the side of the map, we perceive the actual distance. So with a chart of history, every inch may represent a century, and be divided into a hundred parts to represent years. A short line of definite length, then accurately expresses the duration of an empire, or the life of an individual, because we can compare the length of that line with the scale, and thus learn the real period. Without such a scale or key, map and chart would be equally useless, the one would give us no idea of actual dimension or distance, nor would the other inform us, as to actual duration.

The above named prophetic periods, are, it will be observed, described under the five main divisions of time, "hours," "days," "weeks," "months," and "years." There are mentioned 3 days, 10 days, 1260 days, and 1335 days; a half-week, a week, seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and seventy weeks; five months and forty-two months; a "day, month, and year," and "time, times, and a half."

It is evident that in order to be intelligible, these measures of time must all be interpreted on one scale. What scale is it? Is it the grand Divine scale of "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years"? or is it an hour for a day? or a day for a month? or day for a year? or what is it?

The great answer to this important query is found in the fact, that one of these periods has been fulfilled; and therefore supplies the key to all the rest. The seventy weeks of Daniel ix. elapsed between the decree of Artaxerxes, and the advent of Messiah. That period was actually 490 years, the prophecy announced it as 490 days, or "seventy weeks," and we are therefore led to conclude, that in all the above analogous pages, where time is predicted in miniature and in mystery, in harmony with the miniature and mysterious nature of the symbols by which the prophecy is conveyed, a year is represented by a day, seven years by a week, thirty years by a month, 360 years by a "year," and so on.

This principle once admitted; the chronology of these prophecies becomes simple and accurate, and available for our present study of the periodicity of human history. The plan of times and seasons governing both past and future events is seen to be perfect, and marvellous in its comprehensiveness; in its harmony with other Scripture and with nature; and in its significance.

But if this system be rejected, the chronology of prophecy becomes a strangely unmeaning thing, and these magnificent harmonies entirely disappear. Chaos reigns where order reigned, and we look in vain for indications of Divine wisdom, in the plan of the ordering of the ages.

And yet, strange to say, this natural, simple, scriptural, "year-day system," of interpreting the mysterious dates connected with the symbolic prophecies, has been strongly opposed by Futurists, who maintain that statements of time should be taken as literally in Daniel and John as in Genesis and Exodus-be regarded as having precisely the same force, when connected with a mass of miniature symbols, as when associated with the plainest literal predictions.

This system of interpretation originated, as we before mentioned, with Bossuet and other Jesuit writers, who, anxious to turn off from the Papacy the tremendous arguments against it, furnished by the application to it of the predictions of God's word about Antichrist, and Babylon, were driven to propose some alternative. They could not admit that the dynasty of the Popes had fulfilled the prophecies respecting the "man of sin," or that the Roman Catholic Church was, as the Reformers boldly asserted, "BABYLON THE GREAT ;" yet it was clear, on other power and system that had ever existed, so well answered the description. Lest this fact should strike the minds of men, they maintained that all these prophecies were still unfulfilled; and insisted upon the duty of literal interpretation, especially of the prophetic times. The fact that it has been held and taught by reformers and martyrs, who resisted unto blood the errors of Popery, and that it has been opposed by the champions of that corrupt and evil system, is itself a plea for the truth of the year-day interpretation. The solid and unanswerable arguments in its favour, adduced by the great Protestant expositors, gave currency to it, in spite of Jesuit opposition, and the system of prophetic interpretation with which it is connected, was soon so generally held in the Reformed Churches, as to be commonly known as the "Protestant" view.

During the last half century Futurist views have however gained ground even among Protestants; and in a good deal of current prophetic exposition, they are quietly assumed; and dogmatically taught to many who have never studied the subject, or clearly understood what the Protestant view is. We believe the Futurist view to be an erroneous and mischievous one; it precludes any adequate conception of the majestic range of the predictions of Scripture, it deprives the church of the guidance of Divine prophecy, as to the character and doom of the great Apostasy; and of the stimulus to faith and hope, afforded by the true interpretation. We must therefore be excused for dwelling a little more at length on the subject, which is not only important in itself but fundamental to our present inquiry into the periodicity of history.

An exhaustive and masterly treatise on the year-day system, from the pen of the Rev. T. R. Birks (Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, Professor of Moral Philosophy), appeared about thirty years ago, in his work entitled "First Elements of Sacred Prophecy," a work which it is now difficult to procure. To the arguments and reasoning adduced by this cautious and candid writer, little can be added. Every student of the prophetic word, who wishes to arrive at the truth on the subject, should carefully ponder this elaborate and thorough examination of it. Recast, so as to adapt it to the present day, the reproduction of this work would be of immense service to the church. We give some extracts, and a brief summary of the general scope of the argument.

"The year-day theory," says Professor Birks, " may be summed up in these maxims

1. That the church after the ascension of Christ was intended of God to be kept in the lively expectation of his speedy return in glory.
2. That in the Divine counsels a long period, of nearly two thousand years, was to intervene between the first and the second advent; and to be marked by a dispensation of grace to the Gentiles.
3. That in order to strengthen the faith and hope of the church under the long delay, a large part of the whole interval was prophetically announced, but in such a manner that its true length might not be understood, until its own close seemed to be drawing near.
4. That in the symbolic prophecies of Daniel and St. John, other "times" were revealed along with this, and included under one common maxim of interpretation.
5. That the periods thus figuratively revealed are exclusively those of Daniel and St. John, which relate to the general history of the church, between the time of the prophet and the second advent.
6. That in these predictions each day represents a natural year, as in the vision of Ezekiel; that a month denotes thirty, and a "time" or year, three hundred and sixty years.

The first of these maxims is plain 'from the statements of Scripture, and the second from the actual history of the world. The third is, on a priori grounds, a natural and reasonable inference from the two former, and is the true basis of the year-day theory viewed in its final cause. The three following present the theory itself under its true limits. Perhaps no simpler method could be suggested in which such a partial and half-veiled revelation could be made, than that which the Holy Spirit is thus supposed to adopt, resting as it does on a plain analogy of natural times.

Now the mere statement of these axioms removes at once several main difficulties which have been used to perplex and embarrass the inquiry.

First it has been urged, that this larger interpretation of the prophetic times is inconsistent with the repeated commands of our Saviour, that the church should always be watching for his return. How could this be possible, it is asked, if it were revealed from the first, that 1260 years must elapse before that advent should arrive?

This objection disappears in a moment, when the facts and the hypothesis are simply compared together. The very reason for which the times are asserted to have been given in this unusual form is, that they might not be understood too early, when they would have interfered with the earnestness of continual expectation. The only way to sustain this objection is to assume that the fact of such a revelation being given, made it the duty of the church to understand at once its true meaning. Two duties would then seem to contradict each other, -the obligation of continual watchfulness, and the duty of understanding the message, that more than twelve centuries would intervene before the advent. But the contradiction is not real . . . there could be no obligation to understand the times from the first.

2. Again it has often been argued, that the mystical interpretation would compel us to lengthen the millennium to 360,000 years. But the principle on which the theory has just now been founded, removes this objection also. The millennium is not included in that time of waiting, which made it desirable to conceal the times under a symbolic veil. . . . It has been further objected that the year-day interpretation was totally unknown for twelve centuries. This was a natural and necessary consequence of the principle on which it depends. Instead therefore of being a valid objection, it forms a remarkable presumption in favour of its truth. In fact this exposition appeared first, at the very time when it must have appeared, if the principles on which it is founded had a real existence." As a presumption in favour of the mystical meaning of these dates, it must be observed, that they either occur in the midst of the symbols, or else "bear plain marks of a singular, uncommon, and peculiar phraseology, or are prefaced by word importing concealment." In the case of several of them, the unit of time being left undefined, "days" is not more literal than "years." The fact also that they occur exclusively in two books of symbolical and mysterious character, suggests the idea, that they have a covert and mystical meaning; especially when we recall the words of our Lord, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons." It should also be borne in mind, that these dates (with the exception of the seventy weeks of Daniel, which has been fulfilled, on the scale of a year to a day) all pertain to the times of the Christian dispensation. Peter tells us that it was not for the prophets themselves, but for the Christian church that these "times" were revealed. (#Dan 12, #1Pet 1:10-12,) Now the Christian dispensation throughout is one of antitypical realities, instead of one of types and shadows and symbols, and it is harmonious with its character to suppose, that there is a typical analogy between the "day" of these predictions, and the "year" of their fulfilment.

Another strong presumption in favour of the same view arises, from the singular impressiveness and solemnity which accompanies the announcement of these periods, a special and almost awful solemnity, which is hard to explain, if the periods be -the brief ones apparently suggested by the expressions used. "They are not given in passing, nor as matters of subordinate importance; . . . it is in connection with one of these dates that our Lord receives the title of 'the Wonderful Numberer.' . . . The time, times and 'a half' are twice revealed to Daniel, in two visions at an interval of twenty years; in the second of these the words are introduced with peculiar solemnity. Two saints are exhibited as speakers; one of them inquires the duration of the predicted wonders, the reply is given by our Lord Himself; with all the solemnity of a direct appeal to God. 'I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when He lifted up his hand to heaven and swore by Him that liveth for ever, that it shall be for time and times and the dividing of a time.' No words could well be more expressive of deep mystery, and of the special importance to the church of the period thus revealed." That there was a mystery in these numbers was recognised in the church long before its true nature could be guessed. The strange and unusual adjuncts forbade expositors to rest in the simple literal meaning of the language employed. The Jews themselves supposed the time times and a half "to have a century for its unit, and denote three hundred and fifty years."

When we turn from presumption, to direct evidence in favour of the year-day system, the prophecy of the seventy weeks occupies the first place, and is indeed by itself an almost conclusive argument in its support. The only way in which its force can be evaded) is by saying that the word employed in the original (shabua) is ambiguous, meaning a hebdomad or seven, not necessarily of days; that the event has shown that in this case it meant years, and that consequently the passage affords no ground for the year-day view. The answer to this is simple and conclusive. It is perfectly true that the original word does not define the unit, and might mean seven of any measure of time; but it is also a fact, that in Scripture, where it occurs about ten times, it is invariably used to denote seven days; we are therefore bound to suppose it is used in the same sense in Dan. ix., and thus the argument retains all its force. Seventy sevens of days was the symbol employed to denote seventy sevens of years.

And that this important passage affords the true key to the scale on which all these miniature symbols ought to be enlarged, appears the more likely when we consider two other passages in which God Himself declares that He adopts this scale. The first is the sentence on Israel in the desert: "after the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years." The twelve men who searched the land were representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel; they were not symbols of them, but they were types-representatives-a few men representing a great many. So the forty days during which they searched the land,

are made typical of the forty years, during which they should wander in the wilderness..

Now here, it is not as in Daniel, the fulfilment which proves the prediction to have been on this scale; but the scale is fixed and adopted by God before the event.

And it is the same in [#Ezek 4:4](#), where the prophet is commanded to enact a type, to become himself a living emblem of the house of Israel, by lying first on his left side for three hundred and ninety days, and then on his right side for forty days. Ezekiel here, like the spies before, was a type or representative of the nation; his recumbent position, a type of their degradation and debasement by national sin, and the period during which he was to maintain that position, divinely fixed beforehand, represented the period to be completed prior to the end of the judgment which was to fall on that nation. And as Ezekiel was a small emblem of a large nation, so the days were a brief emblem of a long period. "I have appointed thee a day for a year, a day for a year." In each of these periods a day, in the enacted prophetic type, represented a year in the subsequent history. When therefore in Daniel and the Apocalypse, we find a variety of enacted prophetic symbols of subsequent history, associated with the announcement of periods in days, why should we doubt, that the same scale is to be applied for their enlargement and adaptation to the reality? The word of God furnishes no single instance of the employment of any other.

Besides these three clear Old Testament instances of the employment of a year-day scale, there is one New Testament incident, in which it is almost impossible to avoid the conclusion that our Lord Jesus Christ adopts the same symbolic phraseology, and that for the identical reason for which it is employed in prophecy, -to reveal while concealing, and to conceal while revealing, the future.

It is in his message to Herod, when informed by the Pharisees of that monarch's intention to kill Him. "Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."

There is a peculiar precision in this twice-repeated statement -of time, which forbids the thought that it was a mere indefinite substitute for "a little longer;" as if He had said, "I must continue a little longer my works of mercy." He twice over mentions a definite period of three days. But a much longer period than three literal days elapsed between the utterance of these words and the death and resurrection of Christ, so the expression cannot be taken literally. It is an admitted fact on the other hand, that the ministry of Christ lasted three complete years, the- period which elapsed between that first passover at which He cleansed the temple at the commencement of his public ministry, and that fourth passover, which He eat with his disciples the night before He suffered. The sentence in question, would therefore exactly describe the appointed duration of his ministry, on the year-day principle and would point out his Divine foreknowledge of the time when He was to be delivered by the Jews into the hands of the Gentiles, crucified, and raised again, or "perfected." It was as though, hearing of

Herod's crafty intentions to kill Him, He had sent him word, "You have no power against me, till I reach the time and the place predetermined for my death and resurrection. My ministry must last for three years, and terminate as it began, at the passover at Jerusalem."

There are thus three plain cases in the Old Testament, and one scarcely less clear in the New, in which the year-day system is divinely employed, and we have consequently substantial scriptural grounds on which to base it. And in addition to these presumptions in its favour, and to these scriptural instances of its employment, it must be observed that each of the above-mentioned fourteen prophetic statements of time, which the Protestant system interprets on

this year-day scale, affords internal evidence when carefully examined, that it is not intended to be interpreted literally.

1. The leading one—the "time, times, and dividing of a time," is, to begin with, a most peculiar form of expression by which to designate a brief period of three and a half years. "If the short reckoning were the true one, no reason can be given why the times should not be expressed in the most customary form. On the other hand, the year-day theory requires that a shorter term should be merely suggested, in such a way as to hinder us from resting in the typical phrase, as the true meaning. Now such exactly is the term before us. It doubtless suggests to the mind by comparison with other texts, three years and a half. But it is not the usual or literal expression for that period. Twice alone does that interval occur elsewhere (#Luke 6:25, #Jas 5:7), and in both it is expressed by the natural phrase, three years and six months. The same is true in every similar case. Paul abode at Corinth "one year and six months" (#Acts 18:2), David reigned in Hebron "seven years and six months" (#2Sam 2:2). He was with the Philistines "a year and four months" (#1Sam 27:7). The form in which the periods of time are expressed, is thus invariably the same.

And hence though three years and a half are suggested to the mind by this phrase, there is nothing in the words which fixes it to this sense. This has not in truth any more claim to be the literal meaning than one thousand two hundred and sixty years.

2.-But secondly, the fundamental term, a time implies, rather than excludes, the wider sense. The natural series of words of time, consists of a day, a week, a month, and a year. The first three are retained in the prophetic calendar; but the last of them is replaced by this general expression—a time—which takes the lead of all the others. It occurs in the first of these dates, and in two or rather three others on which the rest chiefly depend. Now this substitution could not be without meaning. It leaves the analogy among the different periods unbroken; but at the same time, it sets loose this fundamental period, so as to be at liberty even by the common rules of language, to receive a larger signification.

This argument becomes much stronger, when we consider the actual use of the same term in other passages. It is of frequent recurrence in the Old Testament, and is employed to denote periods of various lengths, and even extending to many years. It meets us first in the narrative of the creation: "Let them (the sun and moon) be for signs and, for seasons," where it is distinguished alike from days and years. It is frequently used to denote the appointed time of all the feasts of the law. (#Lev 23:2, #Lev 23:4, #Lev 23:37, #Lev 23:44; #Num 9:2-3, #Num 9:7, #Num 9:13, #Num 10:10, #Num 15:3.) It is employed with regard to the fall of Pharaoh Hophra, and the restoration of Israel. "Pharaoh hath passed the time appointed" (#Jer 46:17).—"The time to favour Zion, the set time is come" (#Ps 102:13). "The vision (of the coming of Christ) is yet for an appointed time" (#Hab 2). In these and several other passages—an extensive interval is clearly implied: and the fundamental idea is one, which has no respect to the length or shortness of the period, but simply to its fixed and determinate character. It is plain how completely these two marks, that it is at once indefinite, and determinate, make it a suitable term to form the basis of a prophetic chronology, on the year-day system.. The different terms used to denote the same period, are a further proof that it cannot denote three natural years and a half. The same interval occurs seven times over. Twice it is mentioned as 'time, times, and a dividing of a time'; once as 'time, times, and a half'; twice as 'forty and two months'; and twice as 'twelve hundred and sixty days.'. A comparison of these passages will show that they all relate to the same period. Yet the expression is varied in this remarkable manner, and in all these variations is never once expressed by the natural and literal phrase. How can we explain this remarkable feature, but by supposing it to indicate a mysterious and hidden sense? The Holy Spirit seems in a manner to exhaust all the phrases by which the interval could be expressed, excluding always that one form, which would be used of course in ordinary writing, and which is used invariably in Scripture on other occasions, to denote the literal period. The variation is most significant if we accept the year-day system, but quite inexplicable on the other view.

Two arguments in favour of the extended view of these dates, may be drawn from the history of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its fulfilment, one connected with the word "times," the other dependent on the typical character of the monarch. Nebuchadnezzar beheld in vision a lofty tree, interpreted to denote the king himself; he heard a watcher, even a Holy one, proclaim a remarkable sentence on the tree, that it should be hewn down and stripped. "Let his heart be changed from a man's heart, and let a beast's heart be given unto him, and let seven times pass over him." This sentence on the tree, was fulfilled in the period of the insanity of the king, which though nowhere stated to have lasted seven years, is by general consent allowed to have done so. Now at first sight this seems to afford an argument against the year-day interpretation, for here "seven times" clearly denoted seven literal years; on closer examination, however, it will be found to do the reverse. The expression "time" does not, as we have seen, imply any particular period; any definite season, a day, a week, a month, a year, or a century, would be equally well expressed by it. The conclusion that the king's insanity lasted seven years, is not based therefore on the force of the word, but on the context and the nature of the case. We cannot suppose that seven days, weeks, or even months, would have sufficed to teach the monarch the great lesson he had to learn and teach to others; the duration of his life excludes the thought that seven centuries, or seven of any longer measure of time, were meant, and all things considered, seven real years, seems the only period that can have been intended. But when the same expression "times" occurs in connection with an empire whose' duration is 2000 years, every reason which has led us to conclude that in the case of the individual king it meant years of days, now leads us to conclude that in the case of the empire it means years of years. If an insanity of seven weeks would seem an event unworthy of such solemn prediction, or of such a prominent place in the life of an individual, how much more so, an apostasy of three and a half years, in the history of an empire which extends over twenty centuries.

But Nebuchadnezzar was a typical, representative man. Not only was he the golden head of the great fourfold image, but he stands as its representative, as the representative of the long succession of Gentile rulers, who were to succeed him, till the coming of the Son of man. The two characteristic marks of these Gentile rulers have been idolatry and persecution of God's saints; these two things are represented as characterizing Nebuchadnezzar. His image making, and image worshipping, typified the idolatry (Pagan and Papal), which has been so indelibly stamped on all the four great empires; his "burning fiery furnace" for the faithful witnesses, typified the persecution which has been inflicted on the people of God, by each of the four great ruling empires in turn, especially by the modern spiritual Babylon. These two characters of idolatrous debasement and fierce cruelty, are those which render the symbol of wild beasts, suitable to represent these empires; and thus Nebuchadnezzar too is presented as a beast; his degradation to a bestial condition, typified the moral degradation of the Gentile kingdoms, through idolatry, pride, and self-exaltation; his restoration to reason, prefigured the yet future day when the empires of earth shall own that "the heavens do rule." Now, over this typical man, passed a period of insanity, which was doubtless equally typical; and which is the only clue we have to the appointed duration of the "times of the Gentiles," for neither in connection with the fourfold image, or with the four wild beasts, have we any hint of the length of this interval.

But the image, the king himself, and the wild beasts, are three types of one and the same thing under different aspects; and thus the duration of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity becomes typical of the duration of the times of the Gentiles, the times during which supreme power in the earth, is by God committed to Gentile rulers, instead of to the seed of David. Now these "times" have already lasted more than 2400 years since the days of Nebuchadnezzar, and thus we see that the seven years of days, during which the king was insane, were intended to prefigure seven years of years (2520 years) during which the moral and spiritual degradation and debasement of the kingdoms of this world, dating from himself are destined to endure. Now the oft-repeated interval of "time times and a half" "forty-two months," "1260 days," all refer to the second half of this period, ; and must therefore be fulfilled on the same scale as the whole period. They are part; not of the type, but of the antitype, and they must be interpreted not on the scale of the type, but on the scale of the antitype, that is on the scale of a day for a year.

This inference is strengthened by one further remark. If the whole interval from Nebuchadnezzar's reign be divided into two equal portions, . . . the latter half falls exclusively within the times of the fourth or Roman empire, and soon after the time when its division into separate kingdoms was first completed. This is a pointed coincidence with the

broader features of the prophecy, for in the vision also the "time times and a half" are all included in the period which follows after the ten horns have arisen.

The vision of Daniel viii. gives the prophetic date of two thousand three hundred days as the duration of the restored daily sacrifice, and of the subsequent desolations.

Now if we take this literally, it makes a period of between six and seven years, analogous to nothing else in Scripture, and incomprehensible in connection with the question to which it is an answer. Besides, if this were the time intended it would have been far more natural to have described it in years than in days. No motive of concealment could exist, to require a veil of mystery; nor indeed is any veil of mystery used, for it is a simple question of arithmetical reduction to resolve these days into years. That it is not to be taken literally, however, is proved by the constant usage of Scripture. Not a passage can be found in the Bible in which a period exceeding a year is stated in days-and only two, in which a period exceeding two months is so mentioned (except of course those in which these symbolic dates occur).

But the word days is not used; the real form of the expression indicates more mystery, and suggests on critical grounds, the idea that no unit of time is given at all, and, that consequently "days" is no more literal than years. "Unto evenings and mornings, or unto evening morning, two thousand three hundred." That a long period is intended appears, from the angel's words, "shut up the vision, for it shall be for many days." Now six or seven years is but a brief period in our estimation, how much less in an angel's? Gabriel would not thus have spoken of so short an interval. But if the period intended were twenty-three centuries, his words have an appropriate dignity. If we interpret this date on the year-day principle, it reaches from the time of Daniel to the future restoration of Israel, and is a clear and satisfactory answer to the double question.* It marks the duration of the restored daily sacrifice, and of the subsequent desolation; the five centuries between Cyrus and Titus during which Jewish sacrifices were daily offered in the restored temple being its first portion; while the second and longer portion comprehends the final destruction of the city and temple, the treading down of Jerusalem by the Gentiles, and the dispersion of her people; and stretches onward to the future advent when the sanctuary shall be finally cleansed. The period being so long, and the greater part of it being occupied by this gospel dispensation, its length is purposely veiled, under an enigmatical yet deeply significant form of expression, and was evidently not intended to be understood at first. "Shut thou up the vision, for it shall be for many days." It included a declaration of the long duration of that economy of grace to the Gentiles, whose occurrence at all, was for five hundred years afterwards, a hidden mystery. "The mystery which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men . . . that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ, by the gospel." Here is a reason for the enigmatical form of the chronological announcement; they who take it literally and refer it to a distant future, make a mystery without a meaning.

"The strangeness of the expression being once proved, our choice lies between a mystery which means nothing, and a mystery which has a plain and definite cause in God's providence, and a key not less plain and definite, and three times repeated in God's holy word. Who would hesitate which alternative to choose?"

It is the same with three dates given in [Dan 12](#); they form one group, the last two being merely extensions of the great period "time, times, and a half;" and they must of course be interpreted on the same principle. The interval covered by this last prophecy (which begins with chapter xi.), clearly extends from the time then present, to the resurrection; it commences with, "Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia," and reaches on in unbroken sequence, to that time when "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." A solemn importance is thrown around the announcement of the times, "I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever, that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy

people, all these things shall be finished." Now it seems incongruous to suppose that this singularly impressive oath applies to a brief period, not one six-hundredth part of the whole interval revealed.

We turn now to the book of Revelation, to discover whether its testimony confirms the evidence afforded by the prophecies of Daniel, that the principle on which these sacred dates are to be interpreted, is that of a year for a day.

As to the ten days' persecution of the church at Smyrna, a literal fulfilment is unknown to history, though this is of course no proof that it did not take place. But if Smyrna be only one phase; moral and chronological, of the whole Christian Church, that of the closing days of Paganism, prior to the entrance of gross corruption, as seems probable, the ten years of Diocletian's last great persecution, would evidently be meant by the expression. The passage does not however tell strongly either way, though it is almost absurd to suppose that persecution of ten literal days would be made a subject of prophetic revelation at all.

In the case of the locust woe (#Rev 9:5), the miniature symbol again demands a miniature period, and the one selected is that of the ordinary ravages of locusts, but it evidently requires the year-day system to make it commensurate with the events predicted to take place during its course. In the case of the Euphratean horsemen, the very peculiarity of the phrase (#Rev 9:15) suggests as before a mystic meaning. Why, if the period intended were literal, should an hour be mentioned at all? and why should the ordinary way of mentioning the larger period first, be completely reversed? But an improved reading (given by Matthiei and found in seven or eight of the best manuscripts) would give the words thus, "the angels prepared for that hour and that day, were loosed both a month and a year," i.e., 390 days. Now this was the exact period during which Ezekiel was commanded to lie on his side, to represent the 390 years of the judgment of Israel.. Mr Birks truly remarks, "this has not the air of a casual resemblance it is rather an express mark supplied to us by the Holy Spirit, and directing us to the true key by which to interpret these prophetic periods." The 390 years was in each case marked as one of stubborn unrepenting idolatry, closed by decisive overthrow and judgment, and the period occurs nowhere else in Scripture.

The forty-two months of the treading down of the holy city (#Rev 11:2), if taken literally, seems strangely unmeaning. Jerusalem has already been trodden down of the Gentiles 1800 years, and it will, as we know from our Lord's own words, continue to be so till the close of the times of the Gentiles. In what sense can this period be defined by "forty and two months"? And why if the Period designed, were really as brief a one, as that in which the heavens were shut up by Elias (alluded to in the passage), why was not the same expression used to designate it, "three years and six months"?

That the "three days and a half" during which the witnesses lie unburied (#Rev 11:9) is symbolic, is proved by the fact that "we have about thirty passages in Scripture where three days are mentioned to define an interval, and four where four days occur; but nowhere else is the fraction of a day introduced into such a measurement of time. . . . If the Holy Spirit had intended natural days only, would He have used a preciseness in the statement of time, which is nowhere else employed in nearly forty examples, not even in that most important of all facts, the resurrection of our Lord "?

The previous remarks as to the congruity of miniature dates with miniature symbols, and as to the mystery indicated by the unusual phraseology, apply equally to the two chronological periods in Rev. xii. The sun-clad star-crowned woman is evidently a symbol of the true or spiritual Israel, and her flight into the wilderness, where she is nourished for x 260 days, of some period of the church's history. Now the natural Israel of old fled also from the persecution of a tyrant king, into the wilderness, where they were nourished with bread from heaven, and water from the rock; and we know their' wilderness history to have been typical to the highest degree. There is not a point in the type, for which we cannot perceive a corresponding antitype, and it is natural to expect some analogy in the periods of the

two sojourns in the wilderness. Now the duration of Israel's wanderings in the desert, was unquestionably fixed and announced by God, on the year-day principle; "after the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years." Can we escape the conviction that the same principle is to be applied to the 1260 days here specified, as marking the abode of the antitypical Israel in the wilderness?

The period of the domination of "the beast" is fixed (#Rev 13:5) as "forty and two months." This is the last of the mystic dates we have to consider. It must be compared with the explanation (#Rev 17:9-11):-" The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings ; five have fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet .come; and when he cometh he must continue a short space ; and the beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." The argument in favour of the year-day interpretation yielded by this passage is of the following character:-Prior to the days of John, five forms of government had succeeded each other in Rome. These were the five fallen heads; a sixth was then in being, a seventh was to follow, and occupy a short space, and the beast who was to continue forty and two months was to be the eighth. Thus the whole interval from AD. 96, the date of the Apocalypse, to the still future destruction of the beast, is divided into three parts, -the remainder of the sixth head, the "short space" of the seventh, and the forty-two months of the eighth head, or "the beast."

Now since the first is only a remainder, and the second expressly predicted as short, we should naturally expect the third to be the longest in duration. The whole interval is already nearly 1800 years: how, then, is it possible to suppose this third to be only three years and a half? The second must, of course, in that case be still less, and the fractional first part would have to be extended over 1770 years! On the year-day principle all is harmonious: the forty-two months of the beast occupy 260 years out of the whole period, leaving 516 years to be divided between the fraction of the sixth, and the "short space" of the seventh head.

Mr. Birks thus sums up his masterly argument, of which the foregoing is a mere outline:-" The year-day theory rests on a surprising combination of scriptural arguments, some of which, it is true, are indirect, and some doubtful; but the great majority are full, clear, and unambiguous. First of all there are four or five distinct presumptions of a general kind, that the dates have some secret meaning. There are, then, three plain and certain, and one more disputable passage, which supply an express rule of interpretation, and a key at once simple and comprehensive, the direct appointment of God Himself. When we further proceed to examine the passages in detail, we find that every one, without exception, yields some peculiar argument, in support of this same view; and several of them furnish us with two or three distinct proofs. And besides all these internal evidences for the system, it is found to have a basis in the heavenly revolutions themselves, and to be confirmed by its manifest harmony with the most exact elements of natural science."