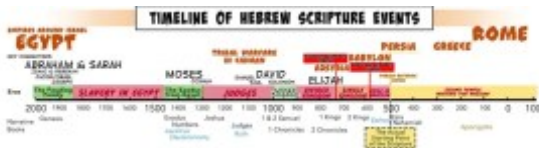


The Approaching End of the Age by H. Grattan Guinness – Part IV. Section II. The Law of Completion In Weeks. Chapter III. The Week In History. Part 1.



Continued from [Part IV. Section II. The Law of Completion In Weeks. Chapter II. The Week In Scripture.](#)

SCRIPTURE THE CHART OF HISTORY.—PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS AS TO HISTORIC AND PROPHETIC CHRONOLOGY.—THE AGE OF THE HUMAN RACE.—OLD TESTAMENT CHRONOLOGY.—THE HEBREW AND THE SEPTUAGINT CHRONOLOGY COMPARED.—HOW ARE WE TO INTERPRET THE SYMBOLIC PERIODS OF PROPHETIC CHRONOLOGY?—EXPOSITION AND DEFENCE OF THE YEAR-DAY SYSTEM.—MORAL FEATURES DISTINGUISHING THE THREE GREAT DISPENSATIONS—THE PATRIARCHAL—THE JEWISH—THE CHRISTIAN.—CHRONOLOGICAL MEASURES OF THESE DISPENSATIONS.—THE PERIOD OF “SEVEN TIMES” SHOWN TO BE THE DURATION OF THE LAST OR GENTILE DISPENSATION, AND ALSO OF THE TWO EARLIER.

THE Bible is the only book in the world that gives us a view of human history as a whole, that carries us from the lost Paradise of Eden, to the restored Paradise of the Apocalypse, traces the course of the human race through every stage of its intermediate existence on earth, and on beyond the limits of time, into the boundless regions of eternity.

In it, and in it alone therefore, are we likely to find the key, if key there be, to the periodicity of history,—the underlying principle bringing the labyrinth of inharmonious periods and chronological irregularities which the annals of the human race at first sight present, into harmony with each other, and with the periods of nature and revealed religion.

The histories of Scripture reach back to the farthest past, and its prophecies extend to the most distant future; taken together, as they are presented in the Bible, the two afford a panoramic view of the whole course of events, from the creation and fall of man, to the final judgment, and the inauguration of the new heavens and the new earth.

The Bible is therefore the chart of all history, and it gives us, not events only, but their moral character, tracing the motives that influenced the various actors in the drama, as well as the results of their action. Events are shown in connection with their causes and their effects, and the judgment of God as to their character is revealed. Without the Bible, history would be a spectacle of “rivers flowing from unknown sources, to unknown seas;” but under its guidance we can trace the complex currents to their springs, and see the end, from the beginning.

The entire story of mankind as presented in Scripture being composed of two parts, the historic and the prophetic, it is clear that the periods into which the history of man as a whole is divided, cannot be discerned, without taking both historic and prophetic *chronology* into account, and as *both* are subjects on which different views have been entertained, our examination of the periodicity of human history as a whole, must be preceded by a careful though necessarily brief investigation, of the questions connected with these controverted points,

1. What, according to Scripture, is the age of the human race? in other words,—how long is it since the creation?

2, What periods are intended by the expressions of time used in Daniel and the Apocalypse in defining the duration of events which were future when predicted by these prophets?

These questions we must now therefore consider, taking first that of

OLD TESTAMENT CHRONOLOGY.

The highest point of antiquity to which authentic profane history carries us, is the occupation of Babylon by an army of Medes in 2233 B.C., that is about 250 years after the flood. *

* "Fasti Melleni": Clinton, p. 296.

For our knowledge of the dates and durations of all previous events, we are indebted exclusively to the Hebrew Scriptures, and very full and explicit are the chronological data of this remote period, which the Bible supplies. "The history contained in the Hebrew Scriptures presents a remarkable and pleasing contrast to the early accounts of the Greeks. In the latter, we trace with difficulty a few obscure facts, preserved to us by the poets, who transmitted, with all the embellishments of poetry and fable, what they had received from oral tradition. In the annals of the Hebrew nation, we have authentic narratives, written by *co contemporaries*, under the guidance of inspiration. What they have delivered to us, comes accordingly under a double sanction, They were aided by *Divine inspiration* in recording facts, upon which as *mere human witnesses*, their evidence would be valid." *

* "Fasti Melleni": Clinton, p. 296.

The length of the lives of the early patriarchs, often bordering on a thousand years, made oral tradition a comparatively safe guide: but one link intervened between Adam and Noah, from whom the story of antediluvian events would be handed down in the line of Shem to Abraham and Moses. This latter, though not an eyewitness of many of the facts he narrated, is yet an authentic reporter; and in the subsequent history of Israel, from the Exodus to the rebuilding of the temple, the writers were, strictly speaking, witnesses.

The chronology of the Pentateuch is gathered, not from *dates*, as in ordinary history, but from accurate genealogical records; it is measured and marked out, not by centuries, but by generations. The brief chronology of the

antediluvian world, is all contained in the fifth of Genesis; the age of the human race at the time of the flood, that is to say, the interval that had elapsed between the creation and the deluge, is ascertained by adding together the ages of the patriarchs at the birth of the sons, in whom the line from Adam to Noah is traced. These were not invariably the *eldest* sons; Seth, the second link in the chain, was we know the third son of Adam, and the figures given make it very improbable that either Enos, Enoch, or Lamech, were eldest sons. Younger sons, are often throughout Scripture the heirs of promise, as witness Shem and Abram, Jacob, and Judah, David, and Solomon. "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." Barren wives caused to become joyful mothers, and younger sons chosen to be heirs of promise, often intimated in the older economy, that purpose of God unfolded in the New, to bring life out of death, and to substitute for the first and natural order of things, a second and spiritual order; to replace by a new creation, under the headship of a second Adam—the Lord from heaven—that creation which fell in the first Adam.

An examination of the fifth of Genesis will show that the flood, dating from the creation, took place in the year 1656 A.M. (Anno Mundi – "year of the world") , which was the 600th year of Noah's life.*

* $130+105+90+70+65+162+65+187+182+600=1656$. Gen. v.

The correctness of this date however, as well as of that of the birth of Abram (which is derived in a similar way from the postdiluvian generations), has been called in question, because there exist important variations between the Hebrew Bible, and some of its most ancient versions, as regards these very genealogical statements. The Samaritan Pentateuch, the Septuagint version into Greek, some other ancient translations, and the writings of Josephus, make many of the generations, both before and after the flood, *longer* than they are represented in the Hebrew Scriptures, and in our authorized version which follows the Hebrew. Nor is the discrepancy a trivial one; the Septuagint places the birth of Abram, *thirteen hundred years later* than does the Hebrew Pentateuch, making the present age of the human family to be between seven and eight thousand years, instead of about six thousand years.

Note:: Dr. Phil Stringer believes what is called the Septuagint today was *not* the one used by Christ and the Apostles. See: [The Truth About the LXX Septuagint](#).

It is evident therefore that in our consideration, of the measures of the dispensations into which human history has been divided, it will not do to overlook this great chronological question and controversy. We must ascertain which of these rival chronologies is the true one, since a difference bearing so large a proportion to the whole duration of history, must be material to our inquiry.

The writings of Josephus favour the longer system; but as they mainly follow the Septuagint, their evidence is not of independent importance. The

Samaritan Pentateuch has been *proved* unreliable in other respects, and cannot therefore be accepted as an authority on this point. The real issue lies between the chronology of the *Hebrew* Pentateuch and the Greek translation of it, made B.C. 280, at Alexandria in Egypt, by order of Ptolemy Soter, for the great Alexandrian Library. This ancient version, commonly called the Septuagint, or translation of "the seventy," was in common use among the Jews in our Lord's time, and was universally employed by the fathers of the early church, who entertained for it, an almost superstitious reverence, and even considered it as inspired. Absurd fables about its origin (the true story of which is, as regards *its details*, lost in obscurity) were invented, to give colour to this notion, and the reverence which existed for it was so great, that its chronology seems to have been generally accepted, save by Jerome, Origen, and a few others, whose familiarity with the original Hebrew led them to reject it.

(**Note:** According to Dr. Phil Stringer, the Greek translation of that time is not same as what is in use today. He says "Jerome understood that the Septuagint of his day was developed by Origen." Origen lived from 181 to 253 A.D.)

Now it is especially to be noted, that the difference between the two, is unquestionably, from its very nature, *an intentional alteration*. It is not the effect of accident, but the result of deliberate design. *An entire century is, twelve limes over, added to the age of the patriarch, at the time of the birth of the son, in whom the genealogy continues; while the same period is deducted from the residue of the life, so as to leave the whole unchanged.* The Hebrew Bible for instance states, that Adam was 130 years old at the birth of Seth, that he lived 800 years after, and died at 930. The Septuagint on the contrary gives him as 230 at the time of Seth's birth, says he lived only 700 years after, but agrees that he died at 930. The following table presents the discrepancy both as to its nature, and as to its amount; it will be observed that it affects the lives of six antediluvian, and six postdiluvian patriarchs:—

	Hebrew	Septuagint
Adam	130	230
Seth	105	205
Enos	90	190
Cainan	70	170
Mahalaleel	65	165
Enoch	65	165
Arphaxad	35	135
Salah	30	130
Eber	34	134
Peleg	30	130
Reu	32	132
Serug	30	130

Nothing but *design* can account for this uniform and repeated alteration; it

is too systematic to be the result of accident, and is clearly an intentional and deliberate corruption in one document or the other; an increase or decrease of these periods, made with some ulterior object in view.

It has been a warmly disputed point among chronologers, which of the two was most likely to be correct, whether the Jews had falsified the Hebrew, or whether the seventy Egyptian translators, are to be credited with having distorted in this manner the chronology of the Septuagint.

Many arguments have been adduced on either side of the controversy, which space forbids our reproducing here. Not only Josephus, but most of the Fathers adopted the chronology of the Septuagint, as was natural, seeing it was the version with which they were familiar, while very few of them were acquainted with the Hebrew, Jerome, who made the Vulgate translation into Latin, however, and Origen, and some others, adhered to the Hebrew. The revival of learning which preceded and accompanied the Reformation, led to a more extensive use of the Hebrew original, and more deference was thenceforth shown to the Hebrew chronology. Archbishop Usher's great chronological work, published in the middle of the seventeenth century, recognised the Hebrew dates as the true; in 1834 the profoundly learned work of Mr. Fynes Clinton showed that the judgment of this most accurate and discriminating scholar was in favour of the Hebrew chronology: and in 1847, Browne's "Ordo Saeculorum" followed, and threw its weight into the same scale. Thus the upholders of the Septuagint version are found principally among those who were unfamiliar with the Hebrew, and a large proportion, if not the majority of those who have most fully examined and compared the two, believe the Hebrew to be the true text.

But common sense without learning seems almost sufficient to settle the question. The Hebrew is the original, and dates from the time of Moses; the Septuagint is a mere Egyptian translation, dating from B.C. 286. Which is most likely to be correct?

The Jews held their own sacred writings in profound and indeed superstitious veneration; they worshipped the letter, and would have been the last people in the world to tamper with it. The Egyptians had no such reverence for the Old Testament, and would not have hesitated to corrupt the text, supposing any sufficient motive made the doing so seem desirable.

It is hard to assign any motive which could have induced the Jews to alter the genealogies of their Pentateuch. It has been suggested indeed that they did so in the hope of invalidating the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to be their Messiah. But such a change in the chronology of their *early* history could in no wise have done this. Had it been possible for them to have lengthened or shortened the chronology of the period between their restoration from Babylon, and the first advent, such a step would indeed have had an important bearing on the question. But to prolong the days before the birth of Abraham, could apparently serve no such purpose.

On the other hand it is by no means difficult to conjecture why its Egyptian authors, whether Jewish or Gentile, may have falsified the original, which by the king's command they were to reproduce in Greek. "The Chaldeans and

Egyptians, whose histories were about that time published by Berosus and Manetho, laid claim to a remote antiquity. Hence the translators of the Pentateuch might be led to augment the amount of the generations, by the centenary additions, and by the interpolation of a second Cainan, in order to carry back the epoch of the creation and the flood, to a period more conformable with the high pretensions of the Egyptians and the Chaldeans." *

* "Fasti Hellenici": Clinton, p. 297.

The arguments alleged in favour of the longer chronology prove, when closely examined, to tell even more strongly in favour of the shorter; and it must be remembered that while differing from the Hebrew as to the age of the patriarchs, at the birth of their sons, the Septuagint *agrees* with it, as to the age ultimately attained by each; a strong confirmation of the authentic character of the chronology of the Pentateuch. There is no valid reason for assuming that the inspired original has been corrupted, and that the Greek translation deserves more confidence. On the contrary the former must be regarded as possessing on every ground the strongest claim to our belief, and the chronology given in our authorized version, may be relied on as correct.

There is no other disputed point in Biblical chronology that involves any material difference, or renders questionable any *considerable* interval. The whole period from Adam to Christ may be traced step by step from Scripture statements. We meet indeed two breaks in the chain, two brief chasms, which no ingenuity can bridge over. They have been allowed to recur in the wisdom of God, for some good and sufficient reason, and the result is that it is impossible for any one to accurately ascertain to within a few years, the age of the world, the exact period that has elapsed since the creation of Adam.

1. We are not informed what was the duration of the government of Joshua and the elders, and of the interregnum or anarchy which followed. The interval between the death of Moses and servitude under the Midianites, can from Scripture statements be calculated with tolerable certainty, but not with actual precision. The years assigned to it must rest more or less on conjecture, not on testimony; it is the period spoken of in Josh. xxiv. 31. "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, which had known all the works of the Lord that He had done for Israel." Joshua was probably about the same age as Caleb, forty at the time of the spies; he wandered with Israel in the wilderness for thirty-eight years subsequently, before he took command of their armies on the death of Moses. He was therefore about seventy-eight when his government began, and he was 110 at his death (Josh. xxiv. 29), so that the above expression, "all the days of Joshua," must apparently include about thirty-two years; it is impossible to fix the period more closely, and it may well vary ten years in either direction. Clinton puts it at twenty-seven years,

2. The second chasm occurs between the death of Samson, and the election of Saul, and was occupied by the governments of Eli and Samuel, Josephus makes this interval fifty-two years. Clinton, for reasons which appear satisfactory, considers that the nearest approximation to the truth which scripture statements permit, is thirty-two years.*

* "Fasti Hellenici": Clinton, pp. 304-320.

We have not space to enlarge on the point, as our object in alluding here to these chronological chasms, is less to investigate their limits, than to show that *those limits are very narrow*. From forty to sixty years comprises, in all probability, the range of the uncertain, in the whole extent of Bible chronology. The various statements of Scripture given in the subjoined table leave little doubt that the creation took place about 4138 B.C. instead of 4004, as is commonly supposed.+

+ The appended table is from Biott's *Horse Apocalyptica*," brought down to the present date, 1878.

3522	Zedekian	unto	to the Captivity	11	..	—xxxvi. 11. "(Zedekiah) reigned 11 years in Jerusalem."
3522	The Captivity	.	to the proclamation of Cyrus	70	..	Jer. xxv. 11. "These nations shall serve the king of Babylon 7 years." (See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22.)
3592	The Decree of Cyrus	.	to the birth of Christ.	536	..	} According to the commonly received chronology.
4128*	The Christian era	.	to the present year	1878	..	
6006	The present year A.D. 1878.					6006 years, since the Creation of man.

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* The date of the Nativity, according to Clinton, is A.M. 4138.

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* It is interesting to note that Cuvier asserts that "one of the most certain, though least expected results, of sound geological pursuits, is the opinion that the last revolution which disturbed the surface of the globe is not very ancient; and the date cannot go back much farther than five or six thousand years." "The Chinese date for the Deluge is A.M. 1713 (Anno Mundi – "year of the world"), and for the seven years famine in the days of Joseph, B.C. 1729." –See Elliot, vol. iv. p. 236, 237.

THE SCRIPTURE CHRONOLOGY OF THE WORLD.

A.M.			
1	Creation of Adam . . .	to the birth of Seth . . .	130 years. Gen. v. 3. "Adam lived 130 years, and begat a son, . . . and called his name Seth."
130	Seth born . . .	Enos . . .	105 " — v. 6. "Seth lived 105 years, and begat Enos."
235	Enos born . . .	Cainan . . .	90 " — v. 9. "Enos lived 90 years, and begat Cainan."
325	Cainan born . . .	Mahalaleel . . .	70 " — v. 12. "Cainan lived 70 years, and begat Mahalaleel."
395	Mahalaleel born . . .	Jared . . .	65 " — v. 15. "Mahalaleel lived 65 years, and begat Jared."
460	Jared born . . .	Enoch . . .	162 " — v. 18. "Jared lived 162 years, and begat Enoch."
622	Enoch born . . .	Methuselah . . .	65 " — v. 21. "Enoch lived 65 years, and begat Methuselah."
687	Methuselah born . . .	Lamech . . .	187 " — v. 25. "Methuselah lived 187 years, and begat Lamech."
874	Lamech born . . .	Noah . . .	182 " — v. 28, 29. "Lamech lived 182 years, and begat a son, and he called his name Noah."
1056	Noah born . . .	to the Flood . . .	600 " — vii. 6. "Noah was 600 years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth."
1656	The Flood . . .	to the birth of Arphaxad . . .	2 " — xi. 10. "Shem begat Arphaxad 2 years after the Flood."
1658	Arphaxad born . . .	Salah . . .	35 " — xi. 12. "Arphaxad lived 35 years, and begat Salah."
1693	Salah born . . .	Eber . . .	30 " — xi. 14. "Salah lived 30 years, and begat Eber."
1723	Eber born . . .	Peleg . . .	34 " — xi. 16. "Eber lived 34 years, and begat Peleg."
1757	Peleg born . . .	Reu . . .	30 " — xi. 18. "Peleg lived 30 years, and begat Reu."
1787	Reu born . . .	Serug . . .	32 " — xi. 20. "Reu lived 32 years, and begat Serug."
1819	Serug born . . .	Nahor . . .	30 " — xi. 22. "Serug lived 30 years, and begat Nahor."
1849	Nahor born . . .	Terah . . .	29 " — xi. 24. "Nahor lived 29 years, and begat Terah."
1878	Terah born . . .	to his death . . .	205 " — xi. 32. "The days of Terah were 205 years: and Terah died." (xii. 1.) "Now the Lord," &c.
2083	The Covenant made with Abram to the giving of the Law	430 " Gal. iii. 17.	"The Covenant . . . the Law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul."
2513	The Giving of the Law . . .	to the return of the Spies . . .	45 " Josh. xiv. 10. "These 45 years, ever since the Lord spake this word unto Moses."
2514	The promise to Caleb on the return of the Spies to the division of the Land . . .	45 " Acts xiii. 20.	"After that, He gave unto them Judges, about the space of 450 years, until Samuel."
2559	The division of the Land . . .	to Samuel the Prophet . . .	450 " — xiii. 21. "Afterward . . . God gave unto them Saul . . . by the space of 40 years."
3009	Saul anointed . . .	to the death of Saul . . .	40 " 1 Kings ii. 11. "The days that David reigned over all Israel were 40 years."
3049	David began to reign . . .	to his death . . .	40 " 2 Chr. ix. 30. "Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel 40 years."
3089	Solomon ditto . . .	ditto . . .	40 " — xii. 13. "He reigned 17 years in Jerusalem."
3129	Rehoboam ditto . . .	ditto . . .	17 " — xiii. 2. "He reigned 3 years in Jerusalem."
3146	Abijah ditto . . .	ditto . . .	3 " — xvi. 13. "Asa . . . died in the 41st year of his reign."
3149	Asa ditto . . .	ditto . . .	41 " — xx. 31. "He reigned 25 years in Jerusalem."
3190	Jehoshaphat ditto . . .	ditto . . .	25 " — xxi. 20. "He reigned in Jerusalem 8 years."
3215	Jehoram ditto . . .	ditto . . .	8 " — xxii. 2. "He reigned 1 year in Jerusalem."
3223	Ahaziah ditto . . .	ditto . . .	1 " — xxii. 12. "He (Joash) was with them hid in the house of God 6 years: and Athaliah reigned."
3224	Athaliah's usurpation . . .	to her death . . .	6 " — xxiv. 1. "He reigned 40 years in Jerusalem."
3230	Joash began to reign . . .	to his death . . .	40 " — xxv. 1. "He reigned 29 years in Jerusalem."
3270	Amaziah ditto . . .	ditto . . .	29 " — xxvi. 3. "He reigned 52 years in Jerusalem."
3299	Uzziah ditto . . .	ditto . . .	52 " — xxvii. 1. "He reigned 16 years in Jerusalem."
3351	Jotham ditto . . .	ditto . . .	16 " — xxviii. 1. "He reigned 16 years in Jerusalem."
3367	Ahaz ditto . . .	ditto . . .	16 " — xxix. 1. "He reigned 29 years in Jerusalem."
3383	Hezekiah ditto . . .	ditto . . .	29 " — xxxiii. 1. "He reigned 55 years in Jerusalem."
3412	Manasseh ditto . . .	ditto . . .	55 " — xxxiii. 21. "(Amon) reigned 2 years in Jerusalem."
3467	Amon ditto . . .	ditto . . .	2 " — xxxiv. 1. "He reigned in Jerusalem 31 years."
3469	Josiah ditto . . .	ditto . . .	31 " — xxxvi. 2. "He reigned 3 months in Jerusalem."
3500	Jehoahaz ditto . . .	to his deposition . . .	0 " — xxxvi. 5. "He reigned 11 years in Jerusalem."
3500	Jehoiakim ditto . . .	to his death . . .	11 " — xxxvi. 9. "He reigned 3 months and 10 days in Jerusalem."
3511	Jehoiachin ditto . . .	to his deposition . . .	0 " — xxxvi. 11. "(Zedekiah) reigned 11 years in Jerusalem."
3511	Zedekiah ditto . . .	to the Captivity . . .	11 " Jer. xxv. 11. "These nations shall serve the king of Babylon 70 years." (See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22.)
3522	The Captivity . . .	to the proclamation of Cyrus	70 " }
3592	The Decree of Cyrus . . .	to the birth of Christ . . .	536 " }
4128*	The Christian era . . .	to the present year . . .	1878 " }
6006	The present year A.D. 1878.		6006 years, since the Creation of man.

We accept then as about the nearest possible approach to truth, and as probably a very near approach indeed, the following dates given by Mr. Fynes Clinton:—

Deluge	1656 AM
Birth of Abram	2008 AM
Call of Abram	2083 AM
Exodus	2515 AM
Death of Moses	2553 AM
First servitude	2580 AM
Death of Eli	3010 AM
Election of Saul	3042 AM
Accession of David	3082 AM
Solomon	3122 AM
Rehoboam	3162 AM
Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem, Temple burnt	3552 AM
The Nativity	4138 AM

PROPHETIC CHRONOLOGY

We turn now from the past to the future, to gather from the inspired Word of God, its prophetic revelations of the chronology of the closing events of the history of the world.

From the earliest days, statements of time have been an important element in Divine predictions. The hundred and twenty years that should elapse before the flood, the four hundred years' affliction of Abraham's seed, the forty years in the wilderness, the seventy years of the Babylonish captivity, all these and many other periods were announced beforehand to Israel, And similarly in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ foretold the period during which He would bow to the power of the grave, saying "the third day He shall rise again." These and other predictions, given *simply* to reveal the future, are accompanied by plain, literal, statements of time, such as those just quoted. But there is, as we have seen, another series of predictions, in which a *double object* may be distinctly traced, to reveal and yet to *conceal* the future.

The glory of God is declared by every prophecy. His foreknowledge is one of His highest attributes. His people are comforted, and their faith is strengthened, when they find, that the experiences through which they are passing, the troubles that are befalling them, or the difficulties that they encounter, have been foreseen and foretold by their God. But there are some things which it is better for God's people not to know beforehand; as for instance the true length of the present period of the absence of Christ from his church. Divine wisdom and love judged it best, as we have seen to conceal from the early church the foreordained duration of this Christian age, and to allow every generation of Christians to live in the expectation of the speedy return of their Lord. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." He of course knew that over eighteen centuries would elapse before the second coming of Christ, and could very easily have revealed this in plain words to the church. He did not do so, as is proved by the fact that the early generations of Christians expected the return of Christ in their own day. If then God, for the guidance of his people especially during its

later stages, wished to reveal *the events* of this period, without revealing *its duration*, He must needs adopt a style of prediction, which would reveal while concealing, and conceal while revealing, the truth.

This is exactly what He has done, The revelations granted to Daniel and John, relating to the events of this dispensation, are not couched in ordinary language, or made in plain terms, which admit of no second meaning. They are embodied in mysterious symbolic forms, which require to be translated before they can be understood. They are not incomprehensible; very far from that! Incomprehensible prophecy could answer no conceivable object. But prophecy which would be obscure for a time, and clear only after the lapse of ages, would answer the object supposed above, of concealing from one generation that which it would not be desirable for it to know, while revealing it to a succeeding one, to which the knowledge was indispensable.

Now as statements of time occur, in connection with these symbolic prophecies, as well as in connection with plain predictions, the question arises, are these statements to be taken, in a literal, or in a figurative sense? Does a day mean a day, or does it in these prophecies, mean a year? Does a year mean a year, or does it mean 360 years. Does "a thousand two hundred and threescore days" mean a period of three and a half years, or does it mean a period of 1260 of our years?

It is evident that a consideration of the periodicity of history in its widest extent, including the revealed *future* of man, as well as his *past*, requires a *previous investigation of this question*, since it is necessarily vital to the subject. Before we can discern their mutual proportions and relations, we must understand what all the periods with which we have to deal, really are, We must no more omit future periods than past ones, and must know the true length of the former, as well as of the latter. We must take *all* the portions of the dissected map into account, before we can even form a hypothesis as to its true configuration and dimensions, or discern the plan on which it has been divided. We must bear in mind for instance not only that the patriarchal and Jewish ages have *preceded* our own, but that Scripture foretells a millennial age to *succeed* it. We must be aware not merely that the Babylonish captivity lasted seventy years, but that the dominion of a certain power symbolised by "the little horn" was fixed at "time times and half a time," and we must know what period is meant by this strange unusual description. In a word, we must not only take into account the prophecies of Daniel and John, but we must seek by patient investigation to ascertain the sense in which their chronological statements are to be understood.

A moment's reflection will show the great importance of this investigation, not only to our present subject, but to a right understanding of the prophecies themselves.

The *duration assigned* to the events and powers represented by these symbols, must evidently determine to a large extent, our opinion as to what the symbols *themselves* signify. The "little horn" is to exercise dominion for "time times and the dividing of time," three years and a half. Now if this be literal years, the power predicted may be an individual, a personal

Antichrist, as the Futurists assert; but if on the other hand, it be symbolic language, signifying a period extending over twelve centuries, then the power predicted must needs be some *dynasty of rulers*, some succession of potentates, seeing no one man could live during so long a period. The chronology of these prophecies once made clear, research into their meaning becomes comparatively simple. On every account then the subject demands the earnest attention of those who desire to understand the oracles of God; and even if it be not so attractive as some others, it must not be lightly passed over.

We may say of *it*, what Mr. Birks says of his exposition of the two later visions of Daniel, "from the nature of the details of which it is composed, it may perhaps fail to interest general readers. But those who study it will find themselves repaid by a more deep and lively sense than ever, of the actual Providence of the Almighty in this fallen world. Why have we, in the Word of God itself, so many genealogies and lists of names, of offerings of princes, of journeys in the wilderness, and other passages, that seem dry and barren, but to teach us, that we *must stoop to details and individual names*, if we would rightly understand the condescension of our God, and the reality of his special oversight of the children of men? Those who are soon weary of these details, must pay the cost of their own impatient spirit, by a more loose, unreal and slippery faith. *The tree of faith must throw out ten thousand little roots, into the lowly soil of prophetic history, if it is to grow and expand into that noble confidence of hope, which no storms of temptation can uproot or destroy.*"

Here we have to deal with numbers and periods instead of with names, but these are perhaps even more unattractive to most people, as involving the mental effort of calculation; but we venture to assert that those who take the trouble to follow the investigation of this chapter, Bible in hand, will not fail to be at the close more profoundly convinced than ever before, of the inspiration of the sacred volume, of the all-embracing providence and foreknowledge of God, and of the near approach of the "end of the age."

On the judgment which we form as to the true meaning of the statements of time in symbolic chronological prophecy, depends also, we believe, to a great extent, the liveliness of our expectation of the Lord's speedy return. "That entire rejection of prophetic chronology which follows of course, on the denial of the year-day system of interpretation, is most of all to be deplored from its deadly and paralysing influence on the great hope of the church. No delusion can be greater than to expect, by excluding all reference to times and dates, to awaken Christians to a more lively expectation of their Lord's second coming. For in truth without reference to such dates, in an open or disguised form, not one solid reason can be given, why the church may not still have to wait two or three thousand years, before the promise is fulfilled.

The declaration 'the time is at hand,' was true and pertinent when the event was eighteen centuries removed. It and similar general promises, form no barrier to the supposition, that eighteen centuries more may still have to intervene. Every sign of the times, is either too vague to direct us, or in proportion as it becomes distinct, assumes practically all the characters of

a numerical date, and becomes exposed to the same objections.

The prophetic times indeed, when separated from the context, and viewed in themselves only, are a dry and worthless skeleton, but when taken in connection with the related events, clothed with historical facts, and joined with those spiritual affections, which should attend the study of God's providence, like the bones in the human frame, they give strength to what was feeble, and union to what was disjointed, and form and beauty and order, to the whole outline and substance of these sacred and Divine prophecies." *

* "Elements of Sacred Prophecy": Birks, p. 415

The questions, then, which we have to investigate are these. How are we to understand the statements of times and periods, which occur in the visions of Daniel and John? Are we to take them as literal, or as symbolic? And if the latter, on what principle are we to translate them into plain language? Is there a key to the hieroglyphic numbers? and if so, what is it? It must be borne in mind we are not speaking of prophetic numbers and periods *in general*, but exclusively of those which occur in the above named books, and which relate mainly to the events of this dispensation.

The times and periods in question are the following:—

IN DANIEL.

1. That of the domination of the "little horn" Dan. vii. 24.
2. That of the desolation of the "sanctuary". Dan. viii. 8.
3. The interval between the restoration from Babylon, and "Messiah the Prince". Dan. ix. 24.
4. Time, times, and a half Dan. xii. 5,9.
5. A period of 1290 days Dan. xii. 11.
6. A period of 1335 days. Dan. xii. 12.

In THE APOCALYPSE

1. The ten days' tribulation of the church at Smyrna, Rev. ii. 10.
2. The duration of the scorpion torment Rev. ix. 5.
3. The career of the Euphratean horsemen Rev. ix. 15.
4. The time of the down-treading of the Holy City Rev. xi. 2.
5. That of the prophesying of the two witnesses Rev. xi. 3.
6. The time they lay unburied Rev. xi. 9.
7. The sojourn of the woman in the wilderness Rev. xii. 6, 14.
8. The period of the domination of the beast. xiii. 6.

We believe that in all the above fourteen instances, the period of time mentioned is *a symbol of another and a larger period*, and we now proceed to give our reasons for this opinion.

If a geographer wish to represent the entire surface of our globe, on a sheet of paper, it is clear that he must do so on a miniature scale, and that the difference between the reality and the miniature must be enormous. He fixes his scale, 100 or 1000 miles to an inch, as the case may be, and if his delineation is to be correct, to that scale he must adhere throughout. He

must not reduce the latitude a little and the longitude more, or diminish the seas in one proportion and the continents in another; such a proceeding would destroy all the resemblance and utility of a map. If the drawing were a *portrait*, it would produce still more incongruous results. What possible resemblance to the original could be traced in a portrait, which should reduce to miniature all the features but one, and leave that one life-size? All must be reduced, or enlarged, in proportion.

The ancients in their hieroglyphic delineations observed this law of proportionate reduction. These were in fact miniature representations of the events and characters of history, and a certain uniform scale was adhered to in every hieroglyphic record. Apparent violations of the law of proportion, are in reality, the contrary. When for instance we see a Pharaoh represented as ten times as big as the slaves or captives in his train, it is still a proportionate representation, because the idea to be conveyed by the hieroglyph is *not* the literal size of the individual, but his *relative social importance*. Pharaoh was ten times more important than his slaves, a ten times greater man, in that sense.

Now the symbolic prophecies of Daniel and John are of this character, they are *verbal descriptions of hieroglyphs seen by the prophet*; and these hieroglyphs were themselves, *divinely designed miniature representations of future events*. We *read*, the description of what Daniel and John *saw*; and they saw, not certain events (as the rise and fall of empires), but miniature symbols or hieroglyphs of certain events. These were exhibited to them, by Him who knows the end from the beginning, and who wished to reveal to them and to others through them, long series of great events, to happen in ages to come on a wide theatre, and to interest and affect the entire human race. For obvious reasons, this had to be done in a very narrow compass, and in a mysterious though comprehensible form; a form which "the wise" only should understand, and that only after the lapse of ages. To do it, while observing these conditions, Divine wisdom selected as the most suitable medium, the universal language of symbols, the language that needs no intervention of sounds to make it significant; the language that represents *ideas* not *words*; *things* not their *names*, which appeals to the eye rather than to the ear, and which is equally comprehensible by every nation, people and tongue. As these hieroglyphs are historic, chronology is necessarily one of their most important features, and as duration cannot be expressed by symbolic *devices*, the time of the vision is given in *words*.

Continued in [Part IV. Section II. The Law of Completion In Weeks. Chapter III. The Week In History. Part 2.](#)