

Our Chronology.

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ON the first of January, 1900, Emperor William, of Germany, on the occasion of dedicating the military banners, referred to the day as the first day of the new century (the 20th), and only a short time before the Holy Father had expressly declared that the first day of January, 1901, was the opening day of the twentieth century.

These different statements gave rise to a repetition of the vexed question of our chronology. The question itself dates back to Charlemagne, and was discussed anew as often as a century came near its end. It might therefore prove interesting to our readers to hear the reasons upon which each party rests its claim to be right in its calculations.

Here we have to say at once, that there are also different views of the age of the world since Christ. For in the year 525 a Scythian monk, Dionysius Exiguus (Dion the Short), who at the time was Abbot in Rome, calculated the time that elapsed since the birth of Christ, and his figures were adopted by the Catholic Church and the governments. Now there are a good many scholars who wish to convince us that his calculation is at fault, and Christ was born not in the year 1 but the year 4 before Christ, so that at present we should not write 1900 but 1904.

The arguments and reasons adduced for this figure are, however, not conclusive, and different scholars have repeatedly changed their opinions in the matter. Besides, possession is nine points of the law, and we may therefore be pardoned when, until positive

proof to the contrary is forthcoming, we not only follow the customary chronology practically, but also consider it the only correct one, for we know the frantic efforts made by infidel scholars to disprove anything and everything the Catholic Church holds.

The next question is: From what day do we commence counting? The Latin phrase is: *Post Christum natum*—after the birth of Christ, but we find also the expression: *Anno Incarnationis Dominicæ*—"in the year of the Incarnation of Our Lord," and incidentally we are asked: Are the days of the Incarnation or Nativity of Our Lord fixed beyond cavil or arbitrary days of commemorating a mystery of faith?

Not a few patrons of the latter opinion maintain that Christmas on the 25th of December was but a substitute for the pagan Saturnalia, which last from December 17-25, just as the Feast of the Annunciation (25th of March) took the place of the Feasts of the Equinox and the beginning of Spring. This, however, is a gratuitous assertion, for 1st, in this case Christmas with its octave should have commenced on December 17th, and 2nd, there is a prevailing tradition in Rome that the 25th of December is the historical day of the Nativity.

In the first centuries of the Church Christmas did not hold the prominent rank it holds now, and the Eastern churches especially celebrated the Nativity of Our Lord and the adoration of the Magi together on the 6th of January. St. John Chrysostom says in a Christmas sermon, delivered in the year 386: "Not ten years have