

“The precession of 50" yearly has been supposed, this being the result of the comparison of the catalogue of Hipparchus with the modern catalogues. We have thus the advantage of round numbers, and a general accuracy that may be relied upon. The entire period is thus 25,920 years; the semiperiod, 12,960 years; the quarter period, 6480 years; the twelfth, or a sign, 2160 years.

“It is to be remarked, that the constellations leave empty spaces between them, and that sometimes they encroach upon each other. Thus, between the last star of Scorpio, and the first of Sagittarius, there is an interval of $6\frac{2}{3}$ degrees. On the other hand, the last of Capricorn is more advanced by 14° in longitude, than the first of Aquarius. Hence, even independently of the inequality of the sun's motion, the constellations would afford a very unequal and very erroneous measure of the year and its months. The signs of 30° furnish a more convenient and less defective one. But the signs are merely a geometrical conception; they can neither be distinguished nor observed; and they are continually changing place from the retrogradation of the equinoxial point.

“We have at all times been able to determine, in a rough manner, the equinoxes and solstices;