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BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

THE CRUCIFIXION ON THURSDAY — NOT FRIDAY.

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It is generally believed that our Saviour was crucified on Friday, the fifteenth day of the Jewish month Nisan. A careful examination of the subject has confirmed us in the opinion that the established theory is incorrect. We believe he was crucified on Thursday, for these reasons: 1. If he was crucified on Friday, his body could not have lain *three days* and *three nights* in the grave, and, in all probability, he must have risen on the *second*, and not the *third* day, according to the scriptures. 2. If he was crucified on Friday, there is a plain discrepancy between John and the other Evangelists. 3. His crucifixion on Thursday, removes both these difficulties.

1. On the assumption that Christ was crucified on Friday, he lay in the grave but *two nights* and a part of three days, whereas it is said that he should be three days and *three nights* in the heart of the earth (Matt. xii. 40). The language here is specific, and it was uttered by the Saviour, who by reason of his divinity was omniscient. He foreknew the controversy that would arise in regard to the interval between his death and resurrection; that the term "three days and three nights" would be understood literally, and that if the period between his death and resurrection did not correspond

it would produce scepticism and caviling among the enemies of the truth. Moreover, he was the living embodiment of the truth, and we believe that with reference to so important an event, he would not have used language which was evidently liable to mislead. When he said three days and three nights, the Jews, no doubt, understood him to mean precisely that which the language is naturally intended to convey. The efforts made by commentators to explain it differently are to get over a difficulty — square it to a particular theory. Their explanations are unnatural and forced.

Assuming that he was crucified on Friday, the common statement is, that "he was in the grave but two nights, and a part of three days," since the first day of the week was the day of his resurrection. In advocating this theory, they say: "This computation is, however, strictly in accordance with the Jewish mode of reckoning. If it had not been the Jews would have understood it, and would have charged our Saviour with being a false prophet, for it was well known to them that he had spoken this prophecy. Such a charge, however, was never made; and it is plain therefore, that what was meant by the prediction was accomplished." No attempt is here made to prove that Christ was crucified on Friday. That which should have been proved, being taken for granted, is made the basis of the argument. The inference is, that there must be some way of reconciling the assertion with the assumed fact; that it must have been understood, according to the Jewish reckoning, to mean, not as it says, "three days and three nights," but two nights and a part of three days, or else "the Jews would have charged our Saviour with being a false prophet." A theory is set up, and the argument founded upon it. But the premise is wrong, and it leads to a false conclusion.

Again, it is said, that "It was a maxim among the Jews in computing time, that a part of a day was to be received as the whole"; and in proof of this we are referred to 2 Chron. x. 5, 12; Gen. xlii. 17, 18; Est. iv. 16, compared

with Est. v. 1. In 2 Chron. x. 5, Rehoboam said to the people of Israel: "Come again to me after three days," and in the twelfth verse, we read that "Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king bade, saying, 'Come to me on the third day.'" In Gen. xlii. 17 Joseph is represented as putting his brethren in prison, when they had come down into Egypt to buy corn. "And he put them altogether into ward three days." And in the eighteenth verse, "Joseph said to them, the third day, this do and live," and this, taken with the context, is proof that he then released them. In Est. iv. 16 Queen Esther desires that the Jews in Shushan, should "neither eat nor drink three days, night or day," and declares that she and her maidens would fast likewise, and so would she go in unto the king. And in the fifth chapter and first verse we learn that she did this on the third day. These are all the passages; and what do they prove? Only that the expressions "after three days," and "on the third day," are equivalent. So that when our Saviour taught his disciples, that "after three days he should rise again" (Mark viii. 31), and again, that "the third day" he should rise again (Mark x. 34), the passages are found to be in harmony, and by his resurrection on the third day his declaration was fulfilled. But it in no sense proves that the expression three nights, as used by our Saviour, is to be interpreted to mean but two.

It is said again, that "the term 'three days and three nights' is a round number according to the popular mode of Hebrew reckoning, although Christ lay only one day and two nights in the grave." It is claimed that if it be necessary to make good the three days and nights, it must be done by having recourse to the Jewish method of computing time, and that in the Jerusalem Talmud (cited by Lightfoot) it is said that a day and night together make a *νυχθήμερον*, and that any part of such period is counted as the whole. But unfortunately for this argument, the expression is not *νυχθήμερον*, as in 2 Cor. xi. 25, where Paul says, "a night and a day have I been in the deep," but *τρεῖς ἡμέρας* and *τρεῖς*

νύκτας, three days and three nights. Instead of resorting to these expedients, why not take the passage literally as it reads, when the Bible, as we purpose to show, admits clearly of this interpretation.

But were we to admit all that is claimed, that "three days and three nights," according to the Hebrew mode of reckoning, does signify but two nights and a part of three days, we should still labor under a difficulty. If Christ was crucified on Friday, we have no evidence even that he lay in the grave a part of three days. His death did not take place until after the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon (Matt. xxvii. 46–50). After that the Jews besought Pilate that the legs of the crucified might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The permission of Pilate was obtained, and word was brought to the soldiers. "Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John xix. 33–35).

All this, which occurred subsequently to Christ's death, the going of the Jews to Pilate, the obtaining of his permission, and the carrying of the information to the soldiers, must have occupied some time, so that Christ could not, to say the least, have been taken down from the cross until very nearly the close of the day. But before he was taken down, Joseph went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. "When the even was come there came a rich man of Arimathea named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple. He went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus" (Matt. xxvii. 57, 58). "And now when the even was come" etc. (Mark xv. 42). The original word in both these instances, translated "even," is ὀψίας. This, in its proper or literal sense, Robinson says signifies "late evening."[1] The Jews reckoned two evenings, one commencing at three o'clock,

[1] New Testament Greek Lexicon.

and the other, it is believed, at five. The word sometimes, we admit, is used to denote the former evening, but it cannot in this instance, since Christ did not die until after the first evening had commenced. Luke also specifies the time of Joseph's coming to Pilate: "And that day was the preparation day, and the Sabbath drew on, and behold there was a man named Joseph" etc. (Luke xxiii. 50, 51). In Lange's Commentary[1] it is said: "In all probability we have to understand the late Friday afternoon, between five and six o'clock. Ἐπέφωσκε (the word translated 'drew on') signifies here the dawning, not of the natural, but of the legal Saturday." Joseph then could not have gone to Pilate until five o'clock, or after. In going to Pilate in all probability they went to the praetorium, or governor's house, and whether this was the palace of Herod, or more probably the fortress Antonia, and whether the place of Christ's crucifixion was that assigned by Christian tradition or not, since it was without the walls of the city, it must have been some distance between the two places. And as Pilate before giving permission called to him (sent for) the centurion, to ascertain if Christ was already dead, this distance must have been travelled over four times, twice by Joseph, in going and returning, once by the messenger sent by Pilate, and once by the centurion. The time thus occupied, and in taking down the body of Jesus, wrapping it in linen with the spices, and laying it in the sepulchre, could not reasonably be supposed to have been less than an hour, and this would bring it to six o'clock, which would have been the beginning of Saturday. The Jews reckoned their day from evening to evening, and the legal day in the time of our Saviour commenced evidently at six o'clock in the afternoon. The night at that time among the Jews was divided into four watches; a fourth watch having been introduced by the Romans. These watches are all distinctly mentioned in Mark xiii. 35: "At even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the

[1] Lange's Commentary on Luke, p. 383 of the American edition.

morning." Says Horne:[1] "The first watch was at even, and continued from six till nine; the second commenced at nine and ended at twelve, or midnight; the third watch lasted from twelve till three; and the morning watch closed at six." Now as the first watch began at six, that was the beginning of their night, and, as the Jews reckoned their day from evening to evening, of course of their legal day.

The same is seen, also, from the Jews dividing their day into hours. Thus seven o'clock was the first hour, eight the second, nine the third, and so on; and six was always the twelfth hour, showing that six o'clock ended the legal day, and, of course, began the next.[2] The natural day of the Jews varied in length according to the season, but not the civil. The earliest mention of hours in the sacred writings is in Daniel; hence it is believed that the Jews derived this method of dividing the time from the Babylonians during the captivity; and as the Babylonians reckoned the natural day from sunrise to sunset, so, probably, did the Jews. But while the Jews, like the Babylonians, reckoned their natural day from sunrise to sunset, their civil or legal day, as we have seen, which we must follow in our reckoning, was from six o'clock in the afternoon of one day to six o'clock in the afternoon of the next, and was either longer or shorter than the natural day, according to the season.

We have shown that the body of our Saviour cannot reasonably be supposed to have been laid in the sepulchre before six o'clock, and this, on the assumption that he was crucified on Friday, would have been the beginning of Saturday. So that, as he rose on the morning of the first day, his body could have lain in the grave only on Saturday and a part of Sunday, and hence he must have risen on the second, and not on the third, according to the scripture. We do not get even the parts of three days which have been claimed. And, even admitting the unreasonable idea that

[1] Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, Vol. ii. chap. iv. p. 73.

[2] See Horne's Introduction, Vol. ii. p. 72.

he was laid in the sepulchre before six o'clock, we know it could have been but a few minutes before six, as Joseph did not go to Pilate to solicit his body until after five; and how unreasonable to suppose that the fraction of an hour would be regarded in Jewish reckoning as a day! Evidently, he was not put into the sepulchre until six o'clock, or after, which, according to Jewish reckoning, was the day after he was crucified.

But it may be objected that, according to the Jewish law, the person hanged was to be taken down the same day: "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day" (Deut. xxi. 23). And again, it is said: "The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day (for that Sabbath-day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away" (Luke xix. 31). We answer that Josephus, who is good authority for the customs of the Jews in his day, which was but a few years after Christ, has taught us, by inference from the Jewish practice, that this had reference, not to the civil, but to the natural, day; that the bodies of such were to be buried before sunset. Thus he says: "So great care did the Jews take respecting sepulture, that even the bodies of those condemned to be crucified they took down and buried before sunset."[1] Now, as our Saviour was crucified on the fourteenth of the month Nisan, answering to about the first of our April, the sun did not set in Palestine until about a quarter past six; hence, though not buried until six o'clock, or after, he would still have been buried before sunset; after the beginning of the legal day, and yet before the close of the natural.

2. If Christ was crucified on Friday, then there is a discrepancy between John and the other evangelists. The synoptists say: "Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?" (Matt. xxvi. 17.)

[1] Wars of the Jews, Book iv. chap. 5. sec. 2.

"And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, His disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?" (Mark xiv. 12.) "Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare?" (Luke xxii. 7, 8, 9.)

It will be noticed here that the day in which Christ sent his disciples to prepare for him the passover was the first day of unleavened bread, and the day in which the passover or paschal lamb was killed, that is, the first day of the passover (which was called also the feast of unleavened bread), and the fourteenth of the month Nisan, for that was the day in which the passover was killed (Ex. xii. 6): "And ye shall keep it up (the lamb) until the fourteenth day of the same month, and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening" (between the evenings, as is the marginal reading from the Hebrew), that is, between three and five o'clock in the afternoon, or near the close of the fourteenth. In regard to this, there is no question. "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover" (Lev. xxiii. 5). "In the fourteenth day of this month at even [marginal reading from the Hebrew, in our version, between the two evenings], ye shall keep it in his appointed season. And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even, in the wilderness of Sinai" (Num. ix. 3, 5). And in Deut. xvi. 6, it is said: "Thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun." It must, therefore, have been killed near the close of the fourteenth day. With this commentators agree. Says Dr. Robinson: "The true time of killing the passover in our Lord's day was between the ninth and eleventh hour," i.e. between three and five o'clock, or "towards sunset."[1] Says Horne: "The Jews reckoned two evenings; the former began at the ninth

[1] English Harmony, p. 193.

hour of the natural day, or three o'clock in the afternoon, and the latter at the eleventh hour. Thus the paschal lamb was required to be sacrificed between the evenings, which Josephus tells us "the Jews in his time did from the ninth hour until the eleventh."[1]

But, while the passover was to be killed between the two evenings on the fourteenth day, it was to be eaten on the night of the fifteenth. Thus Ex. xii. 8: "And they shall eat the flesh in that night [the night after it had been killed], roast with fire, and unleavened bread." As they killed it between the evenings of the fourteenth, it could not have been prepared and roasted before six o'clock, which, as we have shown, was the commencement of their legal day; and hence it could not have been eaten until the fifteenth. The Jews reckoned their day from evening to evening (Lev. xxiii. 32). But the proof is positive. The Jews left Egypt the same night (Ex. xii. 29–37), after midnight, evidently toward morning. But in Num. xxxiii. 3 it is said that "They departed from Rameses on the fifteenth day of the first month"; and as they ate the passover on the day that they departed, they must have eaten it on the fifteenth. Accordingly, we are told: "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread" (Lev. xxiii. 5, 6). Also: "And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the Lord, and in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast" (Num. xxviii. 16, 17). Dr. Robinson says: "The paschal lamb was killed on the fourteenth of Nisan, towards sunset, and was eaten the same evening, after the fifteenth day of Nisan had begun."[2] This, as we have seen, accords with the scripture narrative, and on this point, also, commentators are agreed.

Christ, then, according to the synoptists, must have sent his disciples to prepare for him the passover on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan; for that was the day in

[1] Introduction, Vol. ii. Part ii. chap. 4. See War of Jews, iv. chap. 9. § 3.
[2] Greek Harmony, p. 207.

which the passover must be killed, and this, if he was crucified on Friday, must have been Thursday. He ate the passover with them the evening after, which, according to the Jewish law, as we have seen, must have been the beginning of the fifteenth, with us Thursday evening, but with them the evening of Friday. This is according to the synoptists.

But John (xiii. 1, 2, 4) speaks of Christ's supper with his disciples as being before the passover: "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own, he loved them unto the end; and supper being ended, ... he riseth from supper" etc. In xviii. 28 he says: "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas into the hall of judgment, and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover;" implying that the Jews were expecting to partake of the paschal supper the ensuing evening, and of course had not already eaten it. But the ensuing evening would have been the sixteenth, and hence, on this supposition, the Jews in the Saviour's time must have broken the Mosaic law. That they did not break it is evident, for Josephus says,[1] that in his time (and he was born but about seven years after), the Jews sacrificed the passover on the fourteenth, and observed the day of unleavened bread on the fifteenth. Again, John (xix. 14) speaks of the day in which Christ was crucified as being the day of the preparation of the passover: "And it was the preparation of the passover, about the sixth hour." The preparation of the passover evidently was the day on which the passover was to be killed, or on which it was prepared to be eaten, and this was on the fourteenth; but Friday was the fifteenth, and if Christ was crucified on that day, then this, and not the fourteenth, must have been the day of preparation. On the assumption, therefore, that Christ was crucified on Friday, there is a plain discrepancy between John and the other evangelists.

[1] Josephus, Antiq. Book iii. chap. 10. sec. 5.

Robinson, in common with other commentators, claims that Christ ate the passover, with his disciples, on Thursday evening, according to our reckoning, but on the beginning of Friday, the fifteenth, according to the Jewish, whereas, if this theory be correct, the plain inference according to John is, that the Jews did not eat the passover until the sixteenth. Dr. Scott believed this, for he says: "Christ was crucified on this day of holy convocation," that is, on the day in which they eat the passover, the day of unleavened bread, the fifteenth, for that was the day of holy convocation. "In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work therein" (Lev. xxiii. 7). Not the day called elsewhere the first day of unleavened bread, for that was the day of preparation, the fourteenth, but the first of the seven that succeeded it, as will be seen by taking the passage in its connection. "Seven days must ye eat unleavened bread," commencing with the *fifteenth*, "In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation." "Christ was crucified on this day of holy convocation," says Dr. Scott; "yet, whether the Jews calculated the days in another manner or not, it seems not to have been thus observed, but the next, being the Sabbath, was a high day, and probably was kept as the day of holy convocation." Dr. Scott would not have reasoned thus if he had not been attempting to reconcile John's statement with that of the other evangelists; and to do this on the assumption that Christ was crucified on Friday, he saw apparently no other way. And hence he inferred that for some reason that year the Jews did not obey the commandment.

Says Tholuck: "This difference [between John and the other evangelists] is one of the most litigated questions in the criticism of the Gospels." "John designates the day on which the passover should have been eaten as the day on which Christ was crucified. The contrary date fixed by the synoptists, which would make the crucifixion fall on the fifteenth of Nisan, that is, on the first day of the feast, is encumbered with great difficulties. The larger portion of

the modern critics have been led by this subject to the ultimate result that there must be a mistake on one or other side, either on the part of John, or on that of the first three evangelists." These assertions, with others that might be cited, especially when taken in connection with the facts, are sufficient to show that with the present understanding that Christ was crucified on Friday, and that Friday was the fifteenth of the Jewish month Nisan, there is not only an apparent, but a real discrepancy, between John and the other evangelists.

Four ways have been devised in the attempt to reconcile it: The first is, that Christ did not eat the passover with his disciples on the evening before his crucifixion. The second, that he *did* eat it, and that the Jews ate it also, at the same time. The third, that he did eat *a* passover, but one of his own institution, different from that eaten by the Jews. The fourth, that he did eat the passover, but anticipated the time by eating it the day before.

The first argument is, that Christ did not eat the passover, but merely a supper with his disciples. In proof of this it is said that John does not call the supper which Christ ate with his disciples, a passover supper, but on the contrary says it was before the feast of the passover; that he makes the next day to be the day of the passover when he says, in speaking of the morning of the next day, "The Jews would not go into the judgment hall lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover" (John xviii. 28), implying that they had not then eaten it. And in xix. 14, speaking of Friday noon, he says: "It was the preparation of the passover." And again, it is said that, among all the expressions used, there is no mention of any lamb. These arguments we think are evasive.

That our Saviour did eat the passover with his disciples is evident. 1. He sent his disciples to make ready the passover — not a supper, but the passover. 2. It was the proper time — the first day of unleavened bread — when the passover must be killed. 3. "He said unto them, With

desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Luke xxii. 15). 4. He ate it at that hour in the evening in which it was to be eaten. "And when the *hour* was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him" (Luke xxii. 14).

In regard to there being no mention of a lamb, it was unnecessary; the term "passover" defined it. The day on which the passover must be killed was the day on which the paschal lamb was to be killed. That was the passover, by synecdoche. When Peter and John had received their Lord's command to go and prepare the passover, it is said: "They went and found as he had said unto them, and they made ready the passover" (Luke xxii. 13), that is, got a lamb, and prepared it for the purpose, according to the law. That Christ ate the passover with his disciples is as plain as language can make it. The second opinion is, that he did eat the passover at the same time with the Jews. And to prove this, the attempt is made to explain away the passages in John. Thus, it is said that the expression "before the feast of the passover" (John xiii. 1) has reference, not to the paschal supper, but to the entire festival of unleavened bread, which continued seven days. To this there is one fatal objection. Not only does the expression "before the passover" seem to imply the paschal or passover supper, which gave the name to the entire festival, but that supper was the beginning of the festival; and therefore, as Christ and his disciples were then eating it, if the Jews also were eating it at the same time, it could not be said to be "before the feast [or festival] of unleavened bread." That cannot be before a thing which occurs after it has commenced.

The expression "And they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover" (John xviii. 28), is interpreted, by the supporters of this theory, to mean, again, not that they might eat the paschal or passover supper, but that they might keep or celebrate the passover festival, or eat the passover sacrifices throughout the remaining days. It is

plain that this explanation would not have been thought of, if it had not have been to relieve them of a difficulty. But that this theory is inadmissible, will be seen from the remarks of Benson, which Townsend quotes and endorses.[1] He says: "No critical distortion appears to me capable of giving to xviii. 28—*καὶ αὐτοῦ οὐχ εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὸ πραιτώριον ἵνα μὴ μιανθῶσιν, ἀλλ' ἵνα φάγωσι τὸ Πάσχα*—any other meaning or translation than this. 'And they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the paschal offering,' the sacrifice of the passover. The word *Πάσχα*, when alone, is not always used exclusively for the paschal lamb, but often in a more enlarged and extended sense, for the whole feast of unleavened bread; but the phrase *φαγεῖν τὸ Πάσχα*, though used by each of the first three evangelists, and more than once, is never applied except to the eating of the paschal offering itself, at the time appointed, in remembrance of the Lord's passover in Egypt." The inference, therefore, from the words of John above quoted is, that Christ and his disciples did not eat the passover at the same time with the rest of the Jews.

Still another passage: "And it was the preparation of the passover, about the sixth hour" (John xix. 14), referring to the day of his crucifixion, which would lead any unbiassed reader to suppose, on the face of it, that it was the preparation for the passover festival, by the putting away of the leaven out of their houses, the killing of the paschal lamb, etc., which occurred the day before the passover was eaten, it is attempted to explain away, by saying that it was not the preparation, literally, of the passover, but of the paschal Sabbath, that is, the Jewish Sabbath, or Saturday, that occurred in the passover week. But the fatal objection to this is that that Sabbath was not the paschal Sabbath, but, as we shall prove hereafter, the paschal Sabbath was the day of holy convocation, the first of the seven days of the feast, succeeding the day of preparation, in which un-

[1] Notes on the Gospels, p. 156.

leavened bread was eaten; and hence, admitting that the preparation of the passover really meant the day before the paschal Sabbath, it would be in exact accordance with the literal interpretation.

The third opinion is that Christ ate a passover with his disciples, but not the prescribed passover.

We answer first, that there is no intimation that this was not the regular passover. Second, it is not consistent with the character of Christ, to suppose that he would observe a passover different from that which had been commanded by Jehovah. Third, and here we quote the argument of Dr. Newcombe, Archbishop of Armagh, on Luke xxii. 15: "And he said unto them with desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." He says: "It is to be noted that they had now sat down to eat that passover, which had been before prepared, and that every word which is spoken is peculiarly proper to the occasion. 'With desire,' says our Lord, 'have I desired (*τοῦτο τὸ Πάσχα φαγεῖν*), to eat this very passover;' not *ἐσθίειν τὸ Πάσχα*, 'to eat the passover' or something commemorative of it, but *τοῦτο τὸ Πάσχα*, 'this very passover,' and it is no mean proof that they were then in the act of eating the flesh of the paschal lamb, from the use of the word *φαγεῖν*, which is most proper to the eating of flesh; as *ἐσθίειν* signifies eating in general," or eating bread, pulse, etc. The same word in reference to the same act of eating the passover, not to the bread and wine of the holy supper, is used in verse 16: "For I say unto you, that I will not any more eat thereof (*οὐ μὴ φάγω ἐξ αὐτοῦ*, 'I will not eat of *him* or *it*'; viz. the paschal lamb) 'until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God;' i.e. this shall be the last passover I shall celebrate on earth." We claim, therefore, that Christ did eat, not a different passover, but the veritable passover, appointed under the Mosaic legislation.

The fourth opinion set forth in the effort to reconcile the statement of John with that of the other evangelists, is that our Lord did eat the passover this year, but not at the same

time with the Jews. To this opinion also we are unable to assent.

Christ ate the passover with his disciples the evening before his crucifixion, which on the assumption that he was crucified on Friday, must have been Thursday evening; and this is the general belief. In that case the disciples, Peter and John, were sent by Jesus to prepare for him the passover, some time in the day of Thursday. This, by general consent, is believed to have been the fourteenth of the month Nisan.[1] Now if the Jews did not kill the passover until Friday and ate it on Friday evening, then they violated the Jewish law, which was that they should kill it on the fourteenth. Instead of eating it on the beginning of the fifteenth, the day of unleavened bread, they must, on this hypothesis, have eaten it on the beginning of the sixteenth. Now we know that in the time of Josephus, who lived but a few years after, they killed the passover on the fourteenth, as they were commanded. How then are we to account for such violation at the time of Christ's crucifixion? Moreover, such a violation is not in keeping with the Jewish character. They were strict in observing the very letter of the law. That Christ observed the passover at the proper time is evident, for the time that he sent Peter and John to make preparation is said to have been "The first day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed." These various opinions therefore do not fully clear up the difficulty.

We are presented with the incontrovertible fact, that Christ ate the passover with his disciples before the time of its being eaten by the Jews; that they did not eat it until after his crucifixion. Now if we can find any way of showing that Christ and the Jews, though keeping the passover at different times, both observed it on what might be regarded as the proper day; that the same day might properly be called the preparation of the passover, and the preparation for the Sabbath, in accordance with this idea, and that every

[1] See Dr. Robinson and others.

passage in John bearing upon this subject may thus be made to correspond with the assertions of the other evangelists, it will satisfy all the conditions of the problem, and, by reconciling this apparent discrepancy, will furnish a yet stronger proof that the scriptures have been written by divine inspiration.

If Christ was crucified as we believe on Thursday, such an explanation can readily be given.

If he was crucified on Thursday, then he ate the passover with his disciples on Wednesday evening, and must have sent Peter and John some time in the day of Wednesday to prepare it. But it is distinctly said that this was "the first day of unleavened bread," that is, the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, "when the passover must be killed," reckoned as one of the days of the festival, because it was the day of preparation (Matt. xxvi. 17; Mark xiv. 12; Luke xxii. 7). And as the passover was to be killed between the two evenings, on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan (Ex. xii. 6; Lev. xxiii. 5; Num. ix. 3), it (Wednesday), must have been the fourteenth. Now it is believed that Christ was crucified in the thirty-fourth year of his age; and the Christian era, according to Archbishop Usher, and the modern chronologers generally, commences four years after the birth of Christ.[1] This then would make the date of his crucifixion to have been A.D. 30, according to the generally received opinion. And it is a remarkable fact that Roger Bacon, Mann and Scaliger, Dodwell and Ferguson, who have calculated the passover full moons, which determine the fourteenth of Nisan, from A.D. 26 to A.D. 36, a period of ten years; all agree that in A.D. 30 it fell on Wednesday, while in every year, with that exception, they differ, some claiming that it fell on one day of the week and some on another. To say the least, this is strong presumptive evidence, that the fourteenth of Nisan, in the year that our Saviour was crucified, was Wednesday. And hence, being the first day of unleavened bread when the passover must be killed, it

[1] See Religious Encyclopaedia, p. 44.

was the day when Christ sent Peter and John to prepare for him the passover. And as he ate the passover with his disciples that evening (Wednesday evening), he would eat it, according to the commandment, on the beginning of the fifteenth, the day of unleavened bread (Lev. xxiii. 6; Num. xxviii. 17), since the Jews reckoned their days from evening to evening (Lev. xxiii. 32).

That Christ ate the passover the evening before the Jews, coincides not only with the testimony of John, as we have seen, but was the general opinion of the ancients. Tertullian, Clement, Origen, Chrysostom, Apollinarius, Euthymius, and others; of various members also of the church of Rome, as Lamy, Calmet; and of the Protestant theologians Cappellus, Lampe, Deyling, Gude, and indeed of almost all theologians until the last century,[1] though they believed that Christ anticipated the passover by eating it before the time. The explanation which we have given, however, agrees with the statement of the evangelists — makes him to have eaten it on the fifteenth of the month Nisan, the day of unleavened bread.

But now the question arises: Why did not the Jews observe the passover at the same time? In answer to this we refer to Townsend's Notes on the Gospels, where he says: "The learned Cudworth in his admirable treatise on the Jewish passover, has proved from the Talmud, Mishna, and some of the most reputable of the Jewish rabbins, that the Jews, in ancient times, reckoned the new moons, not according to astronomical exactness but according to the φάσις, or moon's appearance; and as this appearance might happen a day later than the real time, consequently there might have been a whole day of difference in the time of celebrating one of these feasts which depended on a particular day of the month, the days of the month being counted from the appearance of the new moon."[2] Townsend further says: "As he describes the manner of doing this, both from the Babylonish Talmud and from Maimonides, I shall give an

[1] See Tholuck on John, p. 306. [2] Townsend's Notes on the Gospels, p. 158.

extract from this part of his work, that my readers may have the whole argument before them."[1] And then follows this extract. "In the great or outer court there was a house called *Beth Yazek*, where the Senate sat all the thirtieth day of every month to receive the witnesses of the moon's appearance, and to examine them. If there came approved witnesses on the thirtieth day, who could state they had seen the new moon, the chief man of the Senate stood up, and cried *mekuddash*, 'it is sanctified,' and the people standing by caught the word from him, and cried '*mekuddash, mekuddash.*' But if when the consistory had sat all the day, there came no approved witnesses of the φάσις or appearance of the new moon, then they made an intercalation of one day in the former month, and decreed the following one-and-thirtieth day to be the calends. But if after the fourth or fifth day, or even before the end of the month, respectable witnesses came from far, and testified they had seen the new moon, in its due time, the Senate were bound to alter the beginning of the month, and reckon it a day sooner; viz. from the thirtieth day." "As the Senate were very unwilling to be at the trouble of a second consecration, when they had even fixed on a wrong day, and received very reluctantly the testimony of such witnesses, as these last mentioned, they afterward made a statute to this effect, "That whatever time the Senate should conclude on for the calends of the month, though it were certain that they were in the wrong, yet all were bound to order their feasts according to it."[2] "This," says Townsend, "Dr. Cudworth supposes actually took place in the time of our Lord; and that, as it is not likely our Lord would submit to this perversion of the original custom, following the true φάσις or appearance of the new moon, confirmed by sufficient witnesses, he and his disciples ate the passover on that day; but the Jews following the pertinacious decree of the Sanhedrim, did not eat it till the day following." He adds: "Dr. Cudworth further shows from Epiphanius, that there was contention (θόρυβος),

[1] Townsend's Notes on the Gospels, p. 158. [2] Ibid. p. 158.

a tumult among the Jews, about the passover that very year." Hence it is probable that the real paschal day observed by our Lord and his disciples, who adopted the true φάσις, was only the prepartion or antecedent evening to that observed by the Jews, who acted on the decree of the Sanhedrim.

Adopting this view, which comes to us on high authority, we can readily perceive that the account of John harmonizes with that of the other evangelists. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, following the true appearance of the moon, as did the Saviour and his disciples, speak of the day before the Saviour's crucifixion, or the time of sending Peter and John to prepare the passover, as being the first day of the feast, and the day when the passover should be killed. While John, speaking in accordance with the reckoning of the Sanhedrim, which had been adopted by the Jewish nation, calls the day on which Christ was crucified, "the day of the preparation of the passover," that is, the day on which they put the leaven out of their houses, and on which the passover was killed — that, as we have seen, being the day that year which the Jews actually thus observed.

This accounts, also, for John's speaking of the time when Christ was eating the passover with his disciples as being before the feast of the passover (John xiii. 1). It was before the time appointed by the Sanhedrim, that year, when the Jews observed it. It serves, also, to explain his assertion that, on the day in which Christ was crucified, the Jews would not go into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the passover (John xviii. 28).

Further, this view — that Christ observed the passover with his disciples on Wednesday evening, the beginning of the fifteenth of Nisan, according to the true appearance of the moon — not only allows of his strict compliance with the law, but also fulfils the requirement in regard to the passover sacrifice. The paschal lamb was a type of Christ. It pointed to him as our Passover. That lamb, as has been shown, was to be sacrificed between the evenings, that is, between three and five o'clock on the fourteenth day of the

month Nisan (Ex. xii. 6; Lev. xxiii. 5; Num. ix. 3, 5). As the paschal lamb, the type of Christ, was sacrificed on the fourteenth of the month Nisan, between three and five o'clock, what more reasonable than that Christ the great Antitype should give up his life at that time, which would have been between three and five o'clock on Thursday afternoon, and which, according to the explanation given, was the day observed that year by the Jews as the fourteenth of Nisan, and hence regarded by them as the proper time for killing the paschal lamb. And as confirmatory of this, we learn from Matthew that Christ's death did not take place until after the ninth hour, or three o'clock in the afternoon (Matt. xxvii. 46–50). As the hour coincides with the requirement, why not also the day?

It is no objection that it was not the day for killing the passover according to the true appearance of the moon; for, if our explanation be correct, it was the day observed that year by the Jews as the fourteenth of the month Nisan, by the appointment of the Sanhedrim; and it was necessary that he should be crucified on that day, the day recognized by the Jews, in order to convince them that, as the great Antitype of the passover, the law with respect to him had been fulfilled. Again, it was necessary that he should eat the passover with his disciples before his death, that he might institute in place of it the Lord's supper; and yet, as a Jew made under the law, it does not seem proper for him to have violated the divine command by observing it before the time appointed. One necessity appears to have been antagonistic to the other; and yet, upon the explanation that Christ observed the passover on the fifteenth of the month Nisan, according to the true appearance of the moon, and that the Jews observed it on the next day, according to the appointment of the Sanhedrim, as shown by Dr. Cudworth, they are both accomplished, and it would seem as if Jehovah that year had instituted that particular arrangement to obviate this difficulty.

We see, also, why there should be an apparent discrepancy

between John and the other evangelists, or why they should speak of the time of Christ's eating the passover with his disciples according to the true appearance of the moon, while John speaks of it according to the then popular acceptation. The reason is furnished in John's design in writing his Gospel. Matthew's design was to write a genuine and authentic history of the Saviour's life. Mark's design was the same; but, from internal evidence, he appears to have written principally for the Gentiles. Luke also wrote his Gospel, apparently, for the Gentiles, and as supplementary to the other two, to supply facts and circumstances omitted in the others, as he has himself expressed it: "To set forth in order from the beginning a declaration of those things believed among them" (Luke i. 1–14), that is, to deliver a true and genuine account of the life, doctrines, miracles, death, and resurrection of our Saviour. This being the design of the first three evangelists, it would be natural for them to use language inferring that the time of Christ's eating the passover with his disciples was the time appointed, for it was the time according to the true appearance of the moon, and so Christ and his disciples regarded it. But John was writing to Jews, and his design was not merely to give an authentic account of the life of Christ. That had been done already; but, as he tells us, "that they might believe that Jesus was the Christ, and that believing they might have life through his name" (John xx. 31).

Bishop Bloomfield, in speaking of this difference between John and the other evangelists, says: "The real difference between them is, that they wrote a history of our Saviour's life, but St. John of his person and office." John's design, then, was to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ; and to do this, it was necessary that they should be made to see that Jesus was himself their Passover; and hence he represents the crucifixion of Christ as taking place on the day observed by them that year as the day of preparation; that being the time when the passover should be killed. This would be to the Jewish mind a remarkable circum-

stance in proof that he was the Messiah — the fact that, as the great Antitype of the passover, he was slain at the appointed time. This would seem, also, to account for John's expression, with reference to a previous occasion: "No man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come" (John viii. 20).

We now pass to notice other objections. Both John and the other evangelists speak of the day on which Christ was crucified as being the preparation for the Sabbath: "And now, when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath" (Mark xv. 42). "And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on" (Luke xxiii. 54). "The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath-day (for that Sabbath-day was a high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away" (John xix. 31). Now, it may perhaps be said, that Thursday could not have been the day of Christ's crucifixion, because the Jewish Sabbath was not until Saturday, and hence Thursday could not have been "the day before" it, nor the day of "preparation" for it.

We answer, while John speaks of it as being the preparation for the Sabbath, he also speaks of it as the "preparation of the passover" (John xix. 14), and the term "passover" here must apply to the passover supper, and not to the Jewish Sabbath that occurred during the passover festival. When John speaks of the same day as being the preparation of the passover, and the preparation for the Sabbath, we are not to understand that he contradicts himself. The whole difficulty appears to lie in a misunderstanding of the term "Sabbath." It has been thought to signify the Jewish Sabbath, or Saturday; and hence Friday has naturally been regarded as the day of preparation. But the Sabbath referred to was not the Jewish Sabbath, but the day of unleavened bread. The first day was to be a day of holy convocation. They were to do no servile work therein (Lev. xxiii. 7). That this was the fifteenth of Nisan, the

day of unleavened bread, is evident, by taking it in connection with the preceding verse: "On the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord: Seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation." Not the first day of the passover, for that was the fourteenth, but the first day of the seven days, the fifteenth, the day of unleavened bread. That this day was regarded as a Sabbath is evident, from the thirty-ninth verse of the same chapter, where, in speaking of the feast of tabernacles, it is said: "In the first day shall be a Sabbath, and on the eighth [the last day] shall be a Sabbath," that is, days of holy convocation, like the day of unleavened bread.

That the Sabbaths here mentioned were not the Jewish Sabbath, is clear, since the Jews reckoned their time by lunar months, which were determined by the moon's appearance; and therefore the first and eighth days did not always occur on the same day of the week, and hence these days could not always come on the Jewish Sabbath, or Saturday. Moreover, John explains it, when he says (xix. 31): "For that Sabbath was a high day" (*μεγάλη*, a great day). He uses the same term, *μεγάλη*, in speaking of the last day of the feast of tabernacles, to which we have already referred, though in itself it was not more sacred than the first day, and in Lev. xxiii. 39 is called, with the first day, a Sabbath. Thus he says: "In the last day, that great day of the feast" (John vii. 37). So the calling of assemblies (Isa. i. 13) is translated "a great day," by the Seventy, implying that, in their estimation, any day of solemn convocation was a great day.[1]

We see, therefore, that Thursday, the day on which Christ was crucified, was the day of preparation, not only of the passover, but also of the Sabbath, the day of holy convocation. So that both John's assertions completely harmonize, and the fact is seen to be in accordance, also, with the assertions of the other evangelists.

[1] See Robinson's English Harmony of the Gospels, pp. 203, 204.

Another seeming objection is found in the following passages: "After the women had beheld his sepulchre, and how his body was laid, they returned, and prepared spices and ointments, and rested the Sabbath-day, according to the commandment" (Luke xxiii. 56). "And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him" (Mark xvi. 1). Now, we know that they came for this purpose "very early in the morning, on the first day of the week" (Mark xvi. 2). If Christ was crucified on Thursday, then they must have rested Friday and Saturday, two days. How shall we consistently explain it?

We answer: Friday, the fifteenth, as we have shown already, was a Sabbath, or day of holy convocation, and Saturday, the seventh day of the week, was the regular Jewish Sabbath; and hence, both being Sabbaths, the time throughout was as one continued Sabbath; and in the expressions referred to, they seem to have been regarded as one. But Matthew has removed the difficulty: "In the end of the Sabbath [or, more correctly, after the Sabbath], as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre" (Matt. xxviii. 1). "In the end of the Sabbath." Here the translation is in the singular number; but the original is in the plural: *Ὀψὲ δὲ σαββάτων*, "the end of the Sabbaths," which certainly is consistent with the idea that between Christ's crucifixion and the first day of the week there were two Sabbaths. We do not deny, however, that the plural *σαββάτα* may mean a Sabbath. or Sabbaths, or a week.

We have shown, we think, conclusively, that Christ was crucified on Thursday; since this harmonizes the account of John with that of the other evangelists; gives Thursday night, Friday night, and Saturday night for the body of Jesus to lie in the grave; thus making the words of the Saviour literally true, that the Son of Man should be three nights in the heart of the earth, and allows of his resurrection on the third day. But this calculation is based, as we have seen,

on the idea that he was crucified 30 A.D., according to the general opinion.

That he was crucified that year is evident: 1. It is the general opinion. A thing established by common consent is presumed to be correct, until it is proved to the contrary. 2. It incidentally confirms the argument in regard to Thursday as being the day of Christ's crucifixion, so essential in reconciling the scripture narrative. 3. There is strong circumstantial evidence in its favor. 4. The most critical commentators confirm it.

The proof claimed under the first and second is self-evident; and the following facts, we think, establish the third:

1. Christ was crucified when Pontius Pilate was governor; and it is known that he was governor ten years, from 25 A.D. to 35 A.D. Luke informs us (iii. 1–3) that when John the Baptist began his ministry Pontius Pilate was governor. Now, as we must allow at least four years for the preaching of John and the ministry of Jesus, he could not have been crucified before 29 A.D.; since John could not have commenced preaching before 25 A.D. His crucifixion, therefore, must have taken place between 29 A.D. and 35 A.D.; for after that Pilate was no longer governor. But 30 A.D. is the only year, as we have seen, between these dates, in which Roger Bacon, Mann and Scaliger, Dodwell, and Ferguson, who have given their attention to a critical investigation of this subject, agree that the passover full moon, which determined the fourteenth of the month Nisan, fell on the same day of the week; and that day they decide to have been Wednesday, which answers fully, as we have shown, all the conditions of the scripture narrative, providing that our Saviour was crucified on Thursday.

We are aware that Sir Isaac Newton and some others have thought that Christ was crucified 33 A.D. But against this there lies the fatal objection, that he would have been at that time, in all probability, thirty-seven years old, and it would have given seven years and a half for his public

ministry. We are told that he came to John to be baptized when he was about thirty years of age, which was the beginning of his public ministry. As the great High Priest he then entered upon his priestly office. And this accords with the Mosaic legislation, that the priests should minister in their office from thirty years old and upward (Num. iv. 3). Though David afterward changed it to twenty years, we have no evidence that he did it with authority. It is well known that Christ attended but three passovers, at least we have no mention of more than three, and we have no reason to infer from the scripture narrative that there were others; and hence there could have been but three years and a half of his public ministry. It is known, also, that the Christian era, fixed by Dionysius Exiguus, in the sixth century, does not, in reality, date from the birth of Christ, but some years later. The general opinion is, that it is about four years, though some think it two years, and others five. Taking the least date, two years, if our Lord had been crucified in 33 A.D., he would have been at least thirty-five years old, and his public ministry must have continued at least five years; and according to the correct date, thirty-seven, giving seven years as the time of his public ministry.

We see, therefore, that he could not have been crucified in 33 A.D.

Again, according to Daniel (ix. 24, 25): "Seventy weeks were determined. ..... From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince should be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks." And Dan. ix. 27: "In the midst of the week the sacrifice and oblation should cease." The sacrifice ceased, under the law, when Christ the great Sacrifice was offered. Seven weeks and threescore and two weeks are sixty-nine weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three days, which (a day in prophecy denoting a year) is four hundred and eighty-three years. Now, according to the Hebrew chronology, the commission of Artaxerxes Longimanus to Ezra was given four hundred and fifty-seven years before the com-

mencement of the Christian era. Four hundred and fifty-seven from four hundred and eighty-three gives 26 A.D., the time when our Lord began his ministry; and, as it is generally admitted that he was born about four years before the commencement of our era (twenty-six and four being thirty), it would agree in time with the scripture narrative, that "he began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke iii. 23). The Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge says: "Dr. Prideaux, who discourses very copiously and with great learning on this prophecy, maintains that the decree mentioned in it for the restoring and rebuilding of Jerusalem cannot be understood of that granted to Nehemiah in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, but of that granted to Ezra by the same Artaxerxes in the seventh year of his reign." We know that ancient chronology is not reliable; but in this instance we think we have strong circumstantial evidence. Artaxerxes Longimanus was the son of Xerxes, and succeeded him in the kingdom. Xerxes was assassinated 465 B.C. Adding to this the seven years of the reign of Artaxerxes before giving the commission, and we have 458 B.C., a difference of only one year from the time, according to the Hebrew chronology, of issuing the decree; and this may be accounted for from the fact that the Jews began their civil year in the autumn, and not in the spring. Hence, if Artaxerxes began his reign after the autumnal equinox, it would be really 465 B.C., according to the common reckoning, but 464 B.C., after the manner of the Hebrews. And this, with the seven years of the reign of Artaxerxes before issuing the decree, corresponds exactly with the statement, according to the Hebrew chronology, that it was in the year 457.

The sacrifice was to cease in the midst of the week, that is, in the midst of the seventieth week, as seventy weeks were determined. Seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, making sixty-nine weeks, had passed before the beginning of Christ's public ministry. A week in prophecy representing seven years, the midst of it would be three years and a half, which was the time of Christ's public ministry. Now, as he

was crucified in the spring, he must have come to John to be baptized in the autumn of 26 A.D., and three years and a half added would bring his crucifixion in the spring of 30 A.D. The most critical commentators, also, as we have said, confirm this opinion. Wieseler (p. 386 sq.) claims that he was crucified in the year 30 A.D., or 783 from the foundation of Rome.

The birth of Christ was in the autumn of 749 A.U.[1] He began to be about thirty years of age when he came to John to be baptized, which would bring it to the autumn of 779 A.U. And three years and a half, the duration of his public ministry, would bring his crucifixion at the time of the passover, in the spring of the year 783 A.U. And reckoning the Christian era, as we have shown, to begin four years after the birth of Christ, or 753 A.U., 783 A.U. would be 30 A.D. That he was crucified 30 A.D. is also the opinion of Friedlieb, Tischendorf, Greswell, Andrews, Ellicott, Lange, and many others. We conclude, for these reasons, that our Saviour was crucified 30 A.D., on Thursday, the day observed that year by the Jews as the fourteenth day of the month Nisan.

[1] See discussions upon this subject by Robinson, and others.