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I.

THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY ON EARTH.

HE would be a bold thinker who should undertake to foretell the fortunes and the state of an American Republic five or ten centuries hence:—who should attempt not only to describe the type or types of government which may then exist here, but also to delineate the personal characteristics of the men and women of that distant era, the social life of the period, the grade of development and of civilization which our humanity will then have attained on this broad and elect continent. How much bolder would he be who, in full view of the present medley of antagonistic elements, religious, political, social, in European society and life, should propose to tell us what Europe will have become, after the agitations and the mutations of the next thousand years! Bolder still would he be deemed who should attempt to prognosticate the future at that distant period, not of any single nation or continent, but of all the continents and all the races of mankind: who should assume to say what this world, in its controlling elements and tendencies, its prevailing spirit and principles and life, will be at the end of five or ten more centuries of activity and of growth. But would not he be boldest of all—daring beyond all comparison—who should venture to prophesy concerning the career and development of our humanity, not for any such given period however prolonged, but down to the last century and the last hour of recorded time: unfolding before our vision that ultimate issue in which the whole of human life on earth shall be consummated, in the decisive day

III.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

IT was a great idea of the Little Dionysius—a Roman monk of the sixth century—to date a new era from the birth of our Saviour, who is the turning point not only of chronology, but of all history. The incarnation of the Son of God marks the end of the old, and the beginning of the new world; it closes the ages of darkness, preparation and aspiration after the true religion, and opens the ages of light, fulfilment, and enjoyment.

But Dionysius made a mistake—we do not know how—of at least four years in putting the Nativity of Christ, which occurred during the lifetime of Herod, four years after Herod's death. The New Testament gives us no precise dates and leaves us to conjecture and calculation. But it gives hints enough to lead us to almost certain conclusions. It connects the life and death of Christ with the ruling powers of that age, with the Emperor Augustus, King Herod and his sons, the Emperor Tiberius, and Pontius Pilate. All these dates and hints go to prove the realness of the historical surroundings of the Gospel history and to establish its credibility. "Within a purely historical presentation," says Hausrath (in his "History of the New Testament Times," second ed. 1873, Vorrede, p. 9), "there is no room for the poetical world of the religious legend; its images fade away when thrown before a clear historical background. . . . Even that assumption which supposes that the concrete life of the New Testament history is only the mythical figure of the phantasy of a later time, does not find here any support."

There is a remarkable harmony between the life of our Lord as described by the evangelists, and His chronological, geographical, and historical environments as known to us from contemporary writers, especially from Josephus, and illus-

trated and confirmed by modern discovery and research. This harmony is a strong argument against the mythical and legendary theory of Strauss, Renan, and the author of "Supernatural Religion." The more we come to understand the age and country in which Jesus lived, the more we feel, in reading the Gospels, that we are treading on the solid ground of real history, illuminated by the highest revelation from heaven. The poetry of the canonical Gospels—if we may so call their prose, which is better than poetry—is not, like that of the apocryphal Gospels, the poetry of human fiction—

"No fable old, no mythic lore, nor dream of bards and seers."

It is the poetry of revealed truth, the poetry of the sublimest facts, the poetry of the infinite wisdom and love of God, which never before had entered the imagination of man, but which assumed human flesh and blood in Jesus of Nazareth, and solved through His life and work the deepest problem of our existence.

I.—THE YEAR OF THE NATIVITY.

To ascertain the year of Christ's birth, we have a number of indications in the Gospels which lead within two years to the same result.

1. *The Death of Herod.*—According to Matthew ii. 1 (comp. Luke i. 5, 26), Christ was born "in the days of King Herod" I., or the Great. We know from Josephus that he died at Jericho, A.U. 750, just before the Passover, being nearly seventy years of age, after a reign of thirty-seven years. This date has been verified by the astronomical calculation of the eclipse of the moon, which according to the same historian took place March 13, A.U. 750, a few days before Herod's death. Allowing two months or more for the events between the birth of Christ and the murder of the Innocents by Herod, the Nativity must be put back at least to February or January, A.U. 750 (or B.C. 4), if not earlier.

Some infer from the slaughter of the male children in Bethlehem, "from two years old and under," that Christ must have been born two years before Herod's death; but he counted from the time when the star was first seen by the

Magi (ii. 7), and wished to make sure of his object. There is no good reason to doubt the fact itself, and the flight of the holy family to Egypt, which is inseparably connected with it. For, although the horrible deed is ignored by Josephus, it is in keeping with the well-known cruelty of Herod, who from jealousy murdered Hyrcanus, the grandfather of his favorite wife, Mariamne; then Mariamne herself, to whom he was passionately attached; her two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, and, only five days before his death, his oldest son, Antipater; and who ordered all the nobles assembled around him in his last moments to be executed after his decease, so that at least his death might be attended by universal mourning. For such a monster the murder of one or two dozen infants in a little town was a very small matter, which might easily have been overlooked, or, owing to its connection with the Messiah, purposely ignored by the Jewish historian. But a confused remembrance of it is preserved in the anecdote related by Macrobius (a Roman grammarian, and probably a heathen, about A.D. 410), that Augustus, "on hearing of Herod's murder of boys under two years, and of his own son, remarked that it was better to be Herod's sow than his son." The cruel persecution of Herod and the flight into Egypt were a significant sign of the experience of the early Church, and a source of comfort in every period of martyrdom.

2. *The Star of the Magi.*—Another chronological hint of Matthew, ch. ii. 1-4, 9, which has likewise been verified by astronomy, is the Star of the Wise Men, which appeared before the death of Herod, and which would naturally attract the attention of the astrological sages of the East, in connection with the expectation of the advent of a great king among the Jews. Such a belief naturally arose from Balaam's prophecy of "the star that was to rise out of Jacob" (Num. xxiv. 17), and from the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel; and widely prevailed in the East since the dispersion of the Jews.

The older interpretation of that star made it either a passing meteor, or a strictly miraculous phenomenon, which lies beyond astronomical calculation, and was perhaps visible to the Magi alone. But Providence usually works through natural agen-

cies, and that God did so in this case is made at least very probable by a remarkable discovery in astronomy. The great and devout Kepler observed in the years 1603 and 1604 a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, which was made more rare and luminous by the addition of Mars, in the month of March, 1604. In the autumn of the same year (Oct. 10) he observed near the planets Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars a new (fixed) star of uncommon brilliancy, which appeared "in triumphal pomp, like some all-powerful monarch on a visit to the metropolis of his realm." It was blazing and glittering "like the most beautiful and glorious torch ever seen, when driven by a strong wind," and seemed to him to be "an exceedingly wonderful work of God." His genius perceived that this phenomenon must lead to the determination of the year of Christ's birth, and by careful calculation he ascertained that a similar conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, with the later addition of Mars, and probably some extraordinary star, took place repeatedly A.U. 747 and 748, in the sign of the Pisces.

It is worthy of note that Jewish astrologers ascribe a special signification to the conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn in the sign of the Pisces, and connect it with the advent of the Messiah.

The discovery of Kepler was almost forgotten till the nineteenth century, when it was independently confirmed by several eminent astronomers, Schubert of Petersburg, Ideler and Encke of Berlin, and Pritchard of London. It is pronounced by Pritchard to be "as certain as any celestial phenomenon of ancient date;" although he rejects its identity with the star of Matthew, because he understands his description to mean a strictly miraculous star which "went before" the Magi, and "stood over" the abode of Christ in Bethlehem. It certainly makes the pilgrimage of the Magi to Jerusalem and Bethlehem more intelligible. "The star of astrology has thus become a torch of chronology" (as Ideler says), and an argument for the truthfulness of the first Gospel.

It is objected that Matthew seems to mean a single star (*ἀστὴρ*, comp. ver. 9) rather than a combination of stars (*ἄστρον*). Hence Dr. Wieseler supplements the calculation of Kepler and Ideler by calling to aid a single comet which appeared from February to April, A.U. 750, according to the Chinese astro-

nomical tables, which Pingré and Humboldt acknowledge as historical. But this is rather far-fetched and hardly necessary; for that extraordinary star described by Kepler, or Jupiter at its most luminous appearance, as described by Pritchard, in that memorable constellation, would sufficiently answer the description of a single star by Matthew, which must, at all events, not be pressed too literally; for the language of Scripture on the heavenly bodies is not scientific, but phenomenal and popular. God condescended to the astrological faith of the Magi, and probably made also an internal revelation to them before as well as after the appearance of the star (comp. ii. 12).

If we accept the result of these calculations of astronomers, we are brought to within two years of the year of the Nativity, namely, between A.U. 748 (Kepler) and 750 (Wieseler). The difference arises, of course, from the uncertainty of the time of departure and the length of the journey of the Magi.

3. *The Fifteenth Year of Tiberius.*—Luke, ch. iii. 1, 23, gives us an important and evidently careful indication of the reigning powers at the time when John the Baptist and Christ entered upon their public ministry, which, according to Levitical custom, was at the age of thirty. John the Baptist began his ministry “in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius,” and Jesus, who was about six months younger than John (comp. Luke i. 5, 26), was baptized and began to teach when He was “about thirty years of age.”

Tiberius began to reign jointly with Augustus, as “*collega imperii*,” A.U. 764 (or, at all events, in the beginning of 765), and independently, Aug. 19, A.U. 767 (A.D. 14); consequently, the fifteenth year of his reign was either A.U. 779, if we count from the joint reign (as Luke probably did, using the more general term *ἡγεμονία* or *βασιλεία*), or 782, if we reckon from the independent reign (as was the usual Roman method).

Now, if we reckon back thirty years from A.U. 779 or 782, we come to A.U. 749 or 752 as the year of John's birth, which preceded that of Christ about six months. The former date (749) is undoubtedly to be preferred, and agrees with Luke's own statement that Christ was born under Herod (i. 5, 26).

Dionysius probably (for we have no certainty on the subject) calculated from the independent reign of Tiberius; but even that would not bring us to 754, and would involve Luke in contradiction with Matthew and with himself.

The other dates in Luke iii. 1, generally agree with this result, but are less definite. Pontius Pilate was ten years governor of Judæa, from A.D. 27 to 37. Herod Antipas was deposed by Caligula, A.D. 39. Philip, his brother, died A.D. 34. Consequently, Christ must have died before A.D. 34, at an age of thirty-three, if we allow three years for His public ministry.

4. *The Census of Quirinius*.—Luke, ch. ii. 2. Luke gives us another chronological date by the incidental remark that Christ was born about the time of that census, or enrolment, which was ordered by Cæsar Augustus, and which was “the first [enrolment] made when Quirinius (Cyrenius) was governor of Syria.” He mentions this fact as the reason for the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. The journey of Mary makes no difficulty, for (aside from the intrinsic propriety of his company for protection) all women over twelve years of age (and slaves also) were subject in the Roman empire to a head-tax, as well as men over fourteen, till the age of sixty-five. There is some significance in the coincidence of the birth of the King of Israel with the deepest humiliation of Israel, and its incorporation in the great historical empire of Rome.

But the statement of Luke seems to be in direct conflict with the fact that the governorship and census of Quirinius began A.D. 6, *i. e.*, ten years *after* the birth of Christ. Hence many artificial interpretations. But this difficulty is now, if not entirely removed, at least greatly diminished by archæological and philological research independent of theology. It has been proved almost to a demonstration by Bergmann, Mommsen, and especially by Zumpt, that Quirinius was *twice* governor of Syria; first, A.U. 750 to 753, or B.C. 4–1 (when there happens to be a gap in our list of governors of Syria), and again, A.U. 760–765 (A.D. 6–11). This double legation is based upon a passage in Tacitus, and confirmed by an old monumental inscription discovered between the Villa Hadriani and the Via Tiburtina. Hence Luke might very properly call the census about the time of Christ’s birth “the first” (πρώτη) under Quirinius, to distinguish it from the second and better known, which he himself mentions (in his second treatise on the history of the origin of Christianity, Acts v. 37). Perhaps the experience of Quirinius as the superintendent of the first census was the reason why he was sent to Syria a second time for the same purpose.

There still remain, however, three difficulties not easily solved: (a) Quirinius cannot have been governor of Syria before autumn, 750 (B.C. 4), consequently *after* Herod's death and still more *after* Christ's birth; for we know from coins that Quintilius Varus was governor from A. 748 to 750 (B.C. 6-4) and left his post *after* the death of Herod. (b) A census during the first governorship is nowhere mentioned but in Luke. (c) A Syrian governor could not well carry out a census in Judæa during the life-time of Herod before it was made a Roman province (*i. e.*, A.U. 759).

In reply to these objections, we may say: (a) Luke did not intend to give an exact, but only an approximate chronological statement, and may have connected the census with the well-known name of Quirinius because he completed it, although it was begun under a previous administration. (b) Augustus ordered several *census populi* between A.U. 726 and 767, partly for taxation, partly for military and statistical purposes; and, as a good statesman and financier, he himself prepared a *rationarium* or *breviarium totius imperii*, that is, a list of all the resources of the empire, which was read, after his death, in the Senate. (c) Herod was only a tributary king (*rex socius*), who could exercise no act of sovereignty without authority from the emperor. Judæa was subject to taxation from the time of Pompey, and this seems not to have ceased with the accession of Herod. Moreover, towards the end of his life he lost the favor of Augustus, who wrote him in anger that "whereas of old he had used him as his friend, he would now use him as his subject."

It cannot, indeed, be proven by contemporary testimony of Josephus or the Roman historians, that Augustus issued a decree for a universal census, embracing all the Provinces ("that all the world," *i. e.*, the Roman world, "should be taxed," Luke ii. 1), but it is in itself by no means improbable, it was necessary to enable him to prepare his *breviarium totius imperii*, and it is directly asserted by Cassiodorus and Suidas, who mention a number of circumstances derived from other sources than Luke. In the nature of the case, it would take several years to carry out such a decree, and its execution in the provinces would be modified according to national customs. Augustus also carried out a measurement of the empire begun by Julius Cæsar.

Zumpt assumes that Sentius Saturninus, who was sent as governor to Syria A.U. 746 (B.C. 9), and remained there till 749 (B.C. 6), began a census in Judæa with a view to substitute a head-tax in money for the former customary tribute in produce; that his successor, Quintilius Varus (B.C. 6-4), continued it, and that Quirinius (B.C. 4) completed the census. This would explain the confident statement of Tertullian, who was a well-informed lawyer, that enrolments were held under Augustus by Sentius Saturninus in Judæa. Another, but less probable view is that Quirinius was sent to the East as special commissioner for the census during the administration of his predecessor. In either case Luke might call the census "the first" under Quirinius, considering that he finished the census for personal taxation or registration, according to the Jewish custom of family registers, and that afterwards he alone executed the second census for the taxation of property according to the Roman fashion.

The problem is not quite solved; but the establishment of the fact that Quirinius was prominently connected with the Roman government in the East about the time of the Nativity, is a considerable step towards the solution, and encourages the hope of a still better solution in the future.

5. *The Forty-six Years of the Building of Herod's Temple.*—St. John, ch. ii. 20, furnishes us a date in the remark of the Jews, in the first year of Christ's ministry: "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days?"

We learn from Josephus that Herod began the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem in the eighteenth year of his reign, *i. e.*, A.U. 732, if we reckon from his appointment by the Romans (714), or A.U. 735, if we reckon from the death of Antigonus and the conquest of Jerusalem (717). The latter is the correct view; otherwise Josephus would contradict himself, since, in another passage, he dates the building from the fifteenth year of Herod's reign. Adding forty-six years to 735, we have the year A.U. 781 (A.D. 27) for the first year of Christ's ministry; and deducting thirty and a half or thirty-one years from 781, we come back to A.U. 750 (B.C. 4) as the year of the Nativity.

6. *The Time of the Crucifixion.*—Christ was crucified under the consulate of the two Gemini (*i. e.*, C. Rubellius Ge-

minus and C. Fufius Geminus), who were consuls A.U. 782 to 783 (A.D. 28 to 29). This statement is made by Tertullian, in connection with an elaborate calculation of the time of Christ's birth and passion from the seventy weeks of Daniel. He may possibly have derived it from some public record in Rome. He erred in identifying the year of Christ's passion with the first year of His ministry (the fifteenth year of Tiberius, Luke iii. 1). Allowing, as we must, two or three years for His public ministry, and thirty-three years for His life, we reach the year 750 or 749 as the year of the Nativity.

Thus we arrive from these various incidental notices of three Evangelists, and the statement of Tertullian, essentially at the same conclusion, which contributes its share towards establishing the credibility of the Gospel history against the mythical theory. Yet in the absence of a *precise* date, and in view of uncertainties in calculation, there is still room for difference of opinion between the years A.U. 747 (B.C. 7) as the earliest, and A.U. 750 (B.C. 4) as the latest, possible date for the year of Christ's birth. The French Benedictines, Sanclemente, Ideler, Münter, Wurm, Ebrard, Jarvis, Alford, Jos. A. Alexander, Zumpt, Keim, decide for A.U. 747; Kepler (reckoning from the conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars in that year), Lardner, Ewald, for 748; Petavius, Ussher, Tillemont, Browne, Angus, Robinson, Andrews, for 749; Bengel, Wieseler, Lange, Lichtenstein, Anger, Gresswell, Ellicott, Plumptre, Merivale, for 750.

II.—THE DAY AND MONTH OF THE NATIVITY.

The only indication of the season of the year when our Saviour was born is the fact that the shepherds were watching their flocks in the field at that time (Luke ii. 8). This fact points to any other season rather than winter, and is therefore not favorable to the traditional date, though by no means conclusive against it. The time of pasturing in Palestine (which has but two seasons, the dry and the wet, or summer and winter) begins, according to the Talmudists, in March and lasts till November, when the herds are brought in from the fields, and kept under shelter till the close of the rainy season. But this refers chiefly to pastures in the wilderness far away from towns and villages, and admits of frequent exceptions in the

close neighborhood of towns, according to the character of the season. In Switzerland the herds are driven to the mountains in May, brought back in August or September, and then pastured in the valleys before the winter sets in. A succession of bright days in December and January is of frequent occurrence in the East, as in Western countries. Tobler says that the weather about Christmas in Bethlehem is favorable to the feeding of flocks, and often most beautiful. On the other hand, strong and cold winds often prevail in April, and explain the fire mentioned John xviii. 18.

No certain conclusion can be drawn from the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, and to Egypt; nor from the journey of the Magi. As a rule February is the best month for travelling in Egypt, March the best in the Sinaitic Peninsula, April and May and next to them Autumn the best in Palestine; but necessity knows no rule.

The ancient tradition is of no account here, as it varied down to the fourth century. Clement of Alexandria relates that some regarded the 25th Pachon (*i. e.*, May 20), others the 24th or 25th Pharmuthi (April 19th or 20th), as the day of the Nativity.

(a). The traditional 25th of December is defended by Jerome, Chrysostom, Baronius, Lamy, Ussher, Petavius, Bengel, (Ideler), Seyffarth, Jarvis, and McClellan. It has no historical authority beyond the fourth century, when the Christmas festival was introduced first in Rome (before A.D. 360), on the basis of several Roman festivals (the *Saturnalia*, *Sigillaria*, *Juvenalia*, *Brumalia*, or *Dies natalis Invicti Solis*) which were held in the latter part of December in commemoration of the golden age of liberty and equality, and in honor of the sun, who in the winter solstice is, as it were, born anew and begins his conquering march. This phenomenon in nature was regarded as an appropriate symbol of the appearance of the Sun of Righteousness dispelling the long night of sin and error. For the same reason the summer solstice (June 24th) was afterwards selected for the festival of John the Baptist, as the fittest reminder of his own humble self-estimate that he must decrease, while Christ must increase (John iii. 30). Accordingly, the 25th of March was chosen for the commemoration of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, and the 24th September for that of the conception of Elizabeth.

(*b*). January 6 has in its favor an older tradition (according to Epiphanius and Cassianus), and is sustained by Eusebius. It was celebrated in the East from the third century as the feast of the Epiphany in commemoration of the Nativity as well as of Christ's baptism and His manifestation to the Gentiles (represented by the Magi).

(*c*). Other writers have selected some day in February (Hug, Wieseler, Ellicott), or March (Paulus, Winer), or April (Gresswell), or September (Lightfoot, who assumes on chronological grounds that Christ was born on the feast of Tabernacles as He died in the Passover and sent the Spirit on Pentecost), or October (Newcome). Lardner puts the birth between the middle of August and the middle of November; Lichtenstein in summer; Robinson leaves it altogether uncertain.

III.—THE DURATION OF CHRIST'S LIFE.

This is now generally confined to thirty-two or three years. The difference of one or two years arises from the different views on the length of His public ministry. Christ died and rose again in the full vigor of early manhood, and so continues to live in the memory of the Church. The decline and weakness of old age is inconsistent with His position as the Rénovator and Saviour of mankind.

Irenæus, otherwise (as a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John) the most trustworthy witness of apostolic traditions among the fathers, held the untenable opinion that Christ attained to the ripe age of forty or fifty years and taught over ten years (beginning with the thirtieth), and that He thus passed through all the stages of human life, to save and sanctify "old men," as well as "infants and children and boys and youths." He appeals for this view to tradition dating from St. John, and supports it by an unwarranted inference from the loose conjecture of the Jews when, surprised at the claim of Jesus to have existed before Abraham was born, they asked Him: "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" A similar inference from another passage where the Jews speak of the "forty-six years" since the temple of Herod began to be reconstructed,

while Christ spoke of the temple, his body (John ii. 20), is of course still less conclusive.

IV.—DURATION OF CHRIST'S PUBLIC MINISTRY.

It began with the baptism by John and ended with the crucifixion. About the length of the intervening time there are (besides the isolated and decidedly erroneous view of Irenæus) three theories, allowing respectively one, two, or three years and a few months, and designated as the bipaschal, tripaschal, and quadripaschal schemes according to the number of passovers. The Synoptists mention only the last passover during the public ministry of our Lord, at which He was crucified, but they intimate that He was in Judæa more than once. John certainly mentions three passovers, two of which (the first and the last) Christ did attend, and *perhaps* a fourth (which He also attended).

(1). The bipaschal scheme confines the public ministry to one year and a few weeks or months. This was first held by the Gnostic sect of the Valentinians (who connected it with their fancy about thirty æons), and by several fathers, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and perhaps by Origen and Augustine (who express themselves doubtfully). The chief argument of the fathers and those exegetes who follow them, is derived from Isaiah's prophecy of "the acceptable year of the Lord," as quoted by Christ (Luke iv. 14), and from the typical meaning of the paschal lamb, which must be of "one year," and without blemish. Far more important is the argument drawn by some modern critics (*e. g.*, Keim), from the silence of the synoptical Gospels concerning the other passovers. But this silence is not in itself conclusive, and must yield to the positive testimony of John, which cannot be conformed to the bipaschal scheme. Moreover, it is simply impossible to crowd the events of Christ's life, the training of the Twelve, and the development of the hostility of the Jews, into one short year.

(2). The choice, therefore, lies between the tripaschal and the quadripaschal schemes. The decision depends in part on the interpretation of the unnamed feast of the Jews, John v. 1, whether it was a passover, or another feast; and this again

depends much (though not only) on a difference of reading (*the* feast, or *a* feast). Tischendorf, following his favorite Codex Sinaiticus, reads ἡ ἑορτή, while Westcott and Hort, with Codex Vaticanus, omit the article. The parable of the barren fig-tree, which represents the Jewish people, has been used as an argument in favor of a three years' ministry: "Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none." The three years are certainly significant, but according to Jewish reckoning two years and a half would be called three years. More remote is the reference to the prophetic announcement of Daniel ix. 27: "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." Internal reasons prevail in favor of a ministry of three years and about three months. This view leaves ample room for arranging the discourses and miracles of our Lord, and has been adopted by Gresswell, Robinson, Andrews, and the majority of harmonists; but Ussher, Wieseler, and Tischendorf confine the ministry to two years and a half.

V.—THE DATE OF THE LORD'S DEATH.

The day of the week on which Christ suffered on the cross, was a Friday, during the week of the passover in the month of Nisan, which was the first of the twelve lunar months of the Jewish year, and included the vernal equinox. But the question is whether this Friday was the 14th or the 15th of Nisan, that is, the day before the feast, or the first day of the feast, which lasted a week. The Synoptical Gospels clearly decide for the 15th, for they all say (independently) that our Lord partook of the Paschal Supper on the legal day, called the "first day of unleavened bread," that is, on the evening of the 14th, or rather at the beginning of the 15th (the paschal lambs being slain "between the two evenings," *i. e.*, before and after sunset, between 3 and 5 P.M. of the 14th). John, on the other hand, seems at first sight to point to the 14th, so that the death of our Lord very nearly coincided with the slaying of the paschal lamb. But the three passages of John (xiii. 1, 29; xviii. 28; xix. 16) which look in that direction, can, and on closer examination must, be harmonized with the Synopti-

cal statement, which admits only of one natural interpretation. It is almost impossible that the Synoptists should have mistaken the day of the crucifixion, and that John should have found it necessary to correct them. Moreover, while it seems strange that the Jewish priests should have executed their bloody counsel in the solemn night of the passover and urged the crucifixion on a great festival, it is, on the other hand, in full keeping with the Satanic wickedness of their crime, and it is equally difficult to explain that they, together with the people, should have remained about the cross till late in the afternoon of the fourteenth, when, according to the law, they were to kill the passover and prepare for the feast; and that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, with the pious women, should have buried the body of Jesus, and so incurred defilement at the very hour of the passover.

The critical and cautious Dr. Robinson says ("Harmony," p. 222): "After repeated and calm consideration, there rests upon my own mind, a clear conviction that there is nothing in the language of John, or in the attendant circumstances, which upon fair interpretation requires or permits us to believe, that the beloved disciple either intended to correct, or has, in fact, corrected or contradicted, the explicit and unquestionable testimony of Matthew, Mark, and Luke." The same opinion has been elaborately defended by Wieseler (the most learned chronologist of the life of Christ, and the apostolic age), Lange, Keil (on Matthew), Mr. Clellan, and Plumptre.

The view here advocated is strengthened by astronomical calculation, which shows that A.D. 30, the probable year of the crucifixion, the 15th of Nisan (April 7), actually fell on a Friday; and this was the case only once more between the years A.D. 28 and 36, except, perhaps, also in 34 (if this was a leap-year).

To sum up the results, the following appear the most probable dates in the earthly life of our Lord:

Birth,	A.U. 750 (Jan. ?), or 749 (Dec. ?), B.C. 4 or 5.
Baptism,	" 780 (Jan. ?), A.D. 27.
Length of Public Ministry,	" 780-783, " 27-30.
Crucifixion,	" 783 (15th of Nisan), A.D. 30 (April 7).
Resurrection,	" 783 (17th of Nisan), A.D. 30 (April 9).

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