

DID OUR LORD EAT THE PASCH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BEFORE HIS PASSION?

THE difficulty is a familiar one. Jn. xviii, 28 records the fact that the Jews would not enter the hall of Pilate because they were going to "eat the Pasch" that evening, i.e. Friday. On the other hand the Synoptics all speak of Christ and his disciples as "eating the Pasch" the evening before (Matt. xxvi, 17; Mk. xiv, 12; Lk. xxii, 7-8). Are we to assume that the phrase did not always refer to eating the Paschal supper, or are there any grounds for supposing that the Paschal supper could be eaten on different days?

Our Saviour's Last Supper. The Apostles seem to have shared a common opinion that this was the right day to eat the Pasch (Matt. xxvi, 17, etc. as above), and expected our Lord to act on it. The initiative did not come from Him, but He did not express any dissent from their view. The disciples were so sure of our Lord's intention that they offered to make the necessary preparations assuming He would eat the Pasch that day. They knew he had more than one friend in Jerusalem who would be willing to lend a suitable room for the festive meal. They also realized that the preparations would take some time. A lamb had to be obtained, killed by the Levites in the Temple-court, skinned, the blood poured out by a priest before the altar and the interior fat burnt on it. In addition the unleavened bread, the special sauce for dipping, reminding them, together with the bitter herbs, of the hard life they led in Egypt, and other things had to be prepared. One might have expected that Judas would be sent to make the preparations, but in fact Jesus sent Peter and John (Lk. xxii, 8). He did not want Judas to know the whereabouts of the supper-room before the time, otherwise he might have warned the leaders of the Jews at once and so prevented the supper taking place. In his instructions to Peter and John, our Lord repeats the phrase "eat the Pasch"; the Evangelist goes on to say they prepared the Pasch as commanded, Mk. xiv, 16, and Lk. quotes our Lord as saying "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you." It is clear that they were eating what Peter and John had prepared (cf. Jn. xiii, 2-5). To eat the Pasch means ordinarily to eat the Paschal lamb, and if some interpreters have difficulty in finding traces of the Paschal ritual in our Lord's last supper they might look again and consider the dipping of the morsel into the sauce (Jn. xiii, 26), and the recital of the Paschal Hallel (Matt. xxvi, 30; Mk. xiv, 26). Certainly, if we only had the Synoptics to go by, every unprejudiced reader would conclude that our Lord ate the OT Pasch the night before he died. And as Jn. does not deny that they were eating what he and Peter had been told to prepare, or explicitly contradict the statements of the Synoptics, we are entitled to sing without hesitation: "Observata lege plene cibis in legalibus" (Pange Lingua).

The Pasch of the Jewish Leaders (Jn. xviii, 28). Even if we had not the testimony of John we could conclude that the leaders of the Jews did not eat the Pasch at the same time as our Lord, for they appear to have been actively preparing for his arrest. St. John tells us in effect that they ate the Pasch on the Friday. Why should we assume that the phrase here means something different from its meaning in the Synoptics? On the assumption that they ate the Pasch on the Friday, while Christ ate it on the Thursday, various explanations have been proposed.

(a) *Anticipation of the supper by Christ.* As our Lord claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath, so also was he Lord of the Pasch. It is hardly a serious objection to say that he could not have had the lamb sacrificed the day before. The rite of sacrificing the Paschal lamb did not differ from that of other peace offerings, which could be sacrificed any day except the sabbath. And as the officiating clergy would on that day obtain their share of meat in many voluntary sacrifices offered by the numerous pilgrims, they would easily forego their share in a lamb. Moreover they would be too busy to trouble whether the meat was boiled and eaten in the holy place (I Kings ii, 13ff.) or taken home for roasting.

(b) *Different Calculations.* The Pasch occurred when the moon was full. For the inhabitants of Jerusalem the new moon was announced by the blowing of trumpets and thus they could easily calculate the fourteenth day of the month when the Pasch was to be eaten. But the farmers, shepherds and fishermen in distant Galilee would not be aware of this. Nor could they be expected to observe the new moon during the rainy and clouded season. Naturally therefore, they would count the days from the last full moon. Now if the latter occurred late in the day and they allowed only twenty-nine days they would be a day too early. Bringing with them their lambs and having to camp outside, they would approach the Temple as soon as possible. Have we any reason to think that the priests and levites (who were neither Pharisees nor scribes) would refuse to sacrifice the lambs before the prescribed day? As they would have to expect heavy work the following day it would be a relief to them to anticipate some of it the day before. It would also seem natural that the Apostles should share the view of the Galilean pilgrims and therefore they approached our Lord on the Thursday. As this day suited his purpose He would have no reason to demur.

(c) *Postponement of the Paschal supper by the Jews of Jerusalem.* The law required a Sabbath-rest on the Paschal feast and if the Pasch fell on a Friday this would mean two consecutive days of rest. It is true that we do not consider this a hardship, say at Easter and Whitsun, but the comparison is hardly fair. For the Jews the hardship was rather as if we had two strict abstinence days in succession. The Sabbath rest forbade

cooking. If the Pasch was on a Friday there could be no hot meal on Friday night. As that meal was and still is, for the Jews the great meal of the week, something like the English Sunday dinner of roast-beef, its absence would be painfully felt, especially in the spring when the days are often very hot, but the nights really cold (Mk. xiv, 54). The meal on Saturday night would be no compensation, for since it could not even be cooked until after sunset, it was always a hurried and makeshift affair. For the delicately nurtured city people the missing of the Sabbath dinner would be a real hardship and for the scribes an occasion for exercising their ingenuity.

If the Pasch were transferred from Friday to Saturday the tradesmen of Jerusalem could keep their shops open on Friday and do a profitable business with the thousands of pilgrims and could well afford to bribe the scribes. The pilgrims might be ignorant of the law; or even if they were unwilling to sell they would not so easily scruple to buy especially when they saw the shops open, II Esd. xiii, 15-22. We might even exculpate the business people, for it would be too difficult to supply such great crowds of visitors even with bread and fruit over two days of complete rest.

Owing to the scarcity of contemporary records and the custom of oral rather than written tradition of the Rabbis we need not be surprised if we find only much later documentary evidence of the transfer of the Jewish Pasch from Friday to Saturday. This however does not militate against the possibility of an earlier custom, but rather encourages an enquiry as to whether the reasons which prompted this practice did not also exist in the time of Christ. Nor should we think it beyond the conception of our Lord's enemies to twist the law to their own advantage.

LAMBERT NOLLE, O.S.B.

A NOTE ON THE DATE OF ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL

AS students of the Bible are not in the habit of looking to the pages of *The Journal of Roman Studies* for articles bearing on their subject, readers may be glad to have their attention called to a study entitled "The Fall of Jerusalem and the 'Abomination of Desolation'" by C. H. Dodd in Volume xxxvii (1947) 47-54. The article, it may be remarked, is written from the point of view of one who regards the Gospels as the subject-matter of quite independent criticism. By many such critics it has been taken for granted that the prediction of the fall of Jerusalem in St. Luke was written after the event on account of its accurate agreement with the historical facts.

C. H. Dodd points out that this assumption is unwarranted. All the language of the two passages in question, xix, 42-4 and xxi, 20-4, is based on that of the Old Testament, and the description of the fall of the city is based on the similar descriptions of the prophets. "There is no single trait of the forecast which cannot be documented out of the Old Testament," p. 52. On the other hand, the distinctive features which caught the imagination of Josephus, the historian of the siege, and presumably of contemporaries, are entirely lacking. Such are the faction-fighting among the city's defenders, the pestilence and famine culminating in cannibalism, and the conflagration which laid low the temple and a large part of the city. This, it may be added, is precisely what is to be expected in prophecy of which it is not a characteristic to enter into definite and accurately foretold details.

EDMUND F. SUTCLIFFE, S.J.

BIBLICAL STUDY IN FRANCE DURING AND AFTER THE WAR

THE production of strictly scientific works on the Bible has fallen short of that of pre-war days as one would expect. Nevertheless the publishing houses have made praiseworthy efforts and have produced some notable works. In the first place we must record the re-appearance of the *Revue Biblique* in 1946 as a regular quarterly. During the German occupation a substitute for the review was produced in the form of three volumes which appeared at long intervals. Three fascicles have been added to the *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, namely "Hetzenauer" to "Israël." In the *Mémorial Lagrange* (1940) and *Mélanges Podechard* (Lyons, 1945) we have a number of studies in French and English by eminent scholars and covering the whole Scriptural field. Among introductory works we may notice the first volume of *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* (Etudes Bibliques, 1944) dealing with astrology and the occult sciences. Displaying a mastery of his subject Père Festugière introduces us to this mysterious literature, so important for a thorough knowledge of the religious life of the Roman Empire. The same author has, moreover, in collaboration with Professor A. D. Nock of Harvard, begun the critical edition (with French translation) of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Two volumes of this have appeared in the "Collection" of the Universities of France (1945). In 1944 Père Spicq published the *Esquisse d'une histoire de l'exégèse latine au Moyen Age*, a valuable and accurate guide, in spite of the modest title. In this field of exegesis we have several recent issues of patristic work in the series *Sources Chrétiennes*, begun in 1942—in particular, the commentaries of St. Gregory of Nyssa on the Creation of Man,