THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF INACCURACIES AND ANACHRONISMS IN THE GOSPEL RECORD.

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PREFACE

It was the original intention of the writer to comment only upon such passages of Mark's Gospel as have aroused general critical interest. After having once set out, however, so many paths presented themselves that it seemed advisable to follow each in turn in order to learn whither it would lead. In such a quest it naturally comes to pass that many preconceived ideas, hitherto regarded as trustworthy landmarks, are found upon experience to be inadequate or incorrect, causing at first some disappointment as the loss of a cherished idea. Such a loss is, however, the assurance of gain - the evidence of progress toward the goal of a deeper realization of truth.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of the Gospel narrative is a subject which has given rise to so many critical commentaries that the earnest seeker after truth is confronted today by an overwhelming number of volumes each representing a distinctive view ppint from which the life of Jesus may be surveyed. The general purpose of the critics has been to examine the recorded incidents relating to Jesus and to pass judgment as to their historicity by comparing them in their relation to other events recorded as having occurred at a certain place or period in his lifetime. This method of investigation has been of such inestimable value that to attempt to state its worth would be futile.

There is however another method of research which might well be applied to the life of Jesus, namely, that of endeavoring to ascertain <u>why</u> the author of the narrative introduced into the life of Jesus certain elements which when examined in the light of modern criticism, stand out in bold relief as fallacious statements, which do but tend to darken with their heavy shadows the sublime character of the Man "who went about doing good."

To examine by this method certain passages in the Gospel as recorded by Mark, is the abject of this thesis.

When considering the chief events in the life of any of the great leaders of mankind in the past, the tendency to transfer his own ideas into their consciousness is a danger which besets the path of every historian. In the Gospel according to Mark we cannot fail to notice certain passages in which the author , consciously or unconsciously, violates the rules of perspective by which a narrator should be governed, in his attempt to portray the character and actions of an individual at any definite period of history.

That Mark's Gospel was used as a basis by the other Synoptists is now generally acknowledged. The important matter to consider is whether he has given us a trustworthy account of the career of Jesus, or whether such events as occurred between the death of Jesus and the writing of the Gospel have not influenced the author's mind to so great an extent that he has ascribed to Jesus a consciousness of conditions which did not arise until some years after his death.

"The ultimate difficulty felt by so many modern critics about the Gospel of Mark is not the minor discrepancies in the narrative, though they are present, or the tales of miracle, for it is always possible to allow for unscientific description or exaggeration. The difficulty lies in its presentation of the actual contents of the "Gospel" itself and in the career of Jesus. According to these critics Mark has not only put in things that he might have left out, but he has left out things,-and those the most important,that he ought to have put in." .....For the student of history are those parts of the remembered words of Jesus which happen to strike an immediate chord in our ethical consciousness. The first necessity is to place him in due relation to the strange and far off time in which he lived among men. The first theory we have to account for is the enthusiasm

and the devotion of those who claimed to be his followers and apostles. 'Let the children first be filled'. We must first of all think of our Lord in connection with the aspirations of his own time and his own country, and be ourselves content with the crumbs that have fallen down into our very different world. After all the table was spread for the lost sheep of the House of Israel; not for us. In these suggestive words Dr.Burkitt criticizes the critics and closes his article as follows:- "However we may look at it the rise of Christianity is a wonderful, a most wonderful tale. It must always remain a portent to be marvelled at, a thing that cannot wholly be explained. And it is therefore not surprising that Jesus himself cannot wholly be explained. It is not likely that he can really be comprehended under a modern formula, whether ecclesiastical or unecclesiastical. And therefore it is not likely that we are getting any nearer to historical truth, when we desert the earliest historical tradition about him, the tradition that is preserved for us in the Gospel according to Mark."

We can agree with Dr.Burkitt upon this point, namely, that we shall not learn more of the great Teacher of Nazareth by deserting the earliest historical tradition of him that has come down to us, but we may be able to learn more of the ideal character of Jesus if we can succeed in showing that certain discourses and modes of action attributed to him are not such as could have occurred in his own lifetime, but have been superimposed upon his character in order that the subsequent doctrinal development of the early Church might find its justification in the personality and teaching of its Founder.

The Gospel according to Mark.

In order to approach a consideration of Mark's Gospel with the historic consciousness necessary for the due appreciation of the events there set forth, it is well at the outset to form a clear and as far as possible an unbiasdd mental portrait of the author of the narrative, and of the conditions of the period when he wrote.

By general consent the Gospel according to Mark is the work of John Mark to whom references are frequently made in the New Testament documents. He lived with his mother, Mary, in Jerusalem, where both were members of the Christian community. In that center of early Christian activity he was brought into contact with the leaders of the New Faith, and is said to have accompanied the apostle Paul on some of his travels. It is also generally held that in Jerusalem Mark first became acquainted with Peter, later becoming his companion and interpreter. In the First Epistle of Peter the apostle speaks of the evangelist as being at Rome:-'The Church that is in Rome salutes you, so does Mark,my son.' It is commonly believed that about A.D.70 whilst in Rome Mark wrote the Gospel which bears his name.

MARK 1. 4-9

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness proclaiming a baptism upon repentance, for the forgiveness of sins....and he proclaimed saying, 'After me there is coming one more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not even worthy to stoop down and unloose. I with water have baptised you but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' Now about that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan, and as he was coming up out of the water he saw how the heavens parted, and the spirit like a dove descended upon him. And a voice from heaven said; 'Thou art my beloved son; in thee I am well pleased.

The Baptismal narrative in Mark is colored by later Christian reflection. To Mark Jesus is the Messiah. He leads us, however, to identify Jesus as the Messiah merely by an inference. There is nothing in the narrative to show that John recognized in Jesus the 'one coming after him', or that his baptism was in any degree different from that of the others who were seeking the rite at John's hands.

The supernatural element which is introduced need not be considered, as the author states that the vision was perceptible to Jesus alone--not to the others. He indeed may have had some spiritual experience at the time which he afterwards related to his followers, and which in after years received a formal interpretation; with regard to the historicity of such an experience however it is not in our sphere to enquire. In considering the baptism as a whole we can understand the reasons which influenced the author to present the narrative in the form in which it has come down to us.

He was dominated by the consciousness of the Messiahship of Jesus, and it was therefore natural for him to emphasize the idea that Jesus himself was conscious of his high calling at a very early period in his life. In following this line of thought Mark evidently was also influenced by the conditions of the time in which he wrote.

A bitter controversy was ever being waged between Christians and Jews with regard to the Messiahship of Jesus. Indeed the most bitter opponents of the new faith were some of the leading Jewish teachers of the day. As evidence of this we have but to read of Paul's conflicts with them as described in the Book of the Acts, and in many of his letters to the Christian communities. Against Judaistic unbelief Mark was defending the Messiahship of a crucified Galilean,

who had been condemned to death as a false Messiah by Roman Law. It was therefore necessary, in order to meet this opposition, that there should be not only unmistakable proof of the Messiahship of Jesus, but that his consciousness of Messiahship should be recorded as manifesting itself at the very outset of his ministry. Christianity arose on Jewish soil and found its earliest and most uncompromising opponents among the Jewish teachers. The hostility which had pursued Jesus in his life time was directed after his death against his church, and became always more radical as the church attained to a fuller consciousness of its true mission. At the outset the controversy centered on the question of the Messiahship of Jesus, but this single point of difference covered a profound antagonism which was certain sooner or later to declare itself. Already in the early chapters of the Book of the Acts we can discern the gradual widening of the cleavage between Christianity and Judaism and after the appearance of Paul it became complete. .....The defense of the Messianic claim of Jesus widens out into a defence of the Christian view of morality, history and man's destiny, and the nature of the religious life. We can hardly overestimate the importance for the whole future of Christianity of this early conflict with a spiritual religion so nearly akin to itself. It was thereby compelled to realize its own distinctive nature. It developed henceforth not as a higher type of Judaism, but in accordance with the new conception implicit in the teaching of Christ."

The forgoing quotation from Scott's admirable work "The Apologetic of the New Testament" offers in a few words an explanation for the unhistorical Messianic conception

apparent in Mark's narrative. The closing words of this quotation however do not seem to express the true origin of the entire doctrinal development, much of which was due not to a "new conception implicit in the teaching of Jesus", but toa a realization of the necessity of introducing into the narrative of the life of Jesus such characteristics as would offer a basis for the position which the Christian church adopted toward Jewish and Pagan thought many years after the death of its Founder.

We can understand how this consciousness of the Messiahship of Jesus so influenced the thought of the first evangelist as to render it quite natural for him to suggest that Jesus was himself aware of his high calling at the very outset of his career. In this conception of Jesus however Mark was confronted with the historical tradition of the baptism of Jesus by John. Obviously to state this event merely as an unadorned historical fact would lessen his claim for the Messiahship of Jesus, by the inference that Jesus as a self-acknowledged sinner was inferior to the Baptist. That the difficulty of reconciling the baptism of Jesus by John was felt in the early Church we may judge from a passage in the Gospel to the Hebrews, written about 120 A.D., but evidently reflecting the ideas of the early Christians. In this Gospel Jesus is represented as asking his mother and brothers, when requested by them to be baptised, wherein he had sinned that John's baptism was needful for him. "In evangelio juxta Hebraeos--narrat historia. Ecce Matter Domini baptizat in remissionem peccatorum; eamus et baptizemur abeo - - Dixit autem eis; quia peccavi ut vadam et baptizer ab eo ? Nisi forte hoc ipsum quod dixi, ignorantia est.

A'heretical'work seems to have attributed to Jesus a confession of his sins at his baptism. The author of the 'Tractatus de non iterando baptismo'in Cyprians Works, says - 'Est - liber, qui inscribitur Pauli prae dicatio praedicatio. In quo libro, contra omnes scripturas et de peccato proprio confitentem invenies Christum, qui solus omnino nihil deliquit et ad accipiendum Joannis baptisma poene invitum a matre sua Maria esse compulsum.'

We must remember that Mark was writing his account of the life of Jesus at a time when the followers of John the Baptist had organized themselves into a separate religious movement. The evangelist was undoubtedly acquainted with the efforts which were being made by this sect at the time of his writing to foist their characteristicstenets upon the different Christian communities. That the Baptist's adherents were at an early date active is evident from Acts 18. 24-- 19.5:- "In the meantime an Alexandrian Jew, by name Apollos, had come to Ephesus, who was learned in the Scriptures and a man of persuasive speech..... he discussed matters relating to Jesus with remarkable insight and spoke of him with great enthusiasm, but he knew of no other baptism than John's" When Paul arrived in that district he asked the disciples concerning the nature of their baptism and on their replying that they had been baptised according to the rite of the Baptist's followers the apostle replied"John's baptism was a baptism dependent upon repentance, but John told his followers to believe on Jesus - referring to him as the 'one coming after him.'

With reference to these followers of John the Baptist, Bacon says, "To suppose however that these were disciples of John the Baptist, pure and simple, is in our

judgement, less probable than to recognize here one of the many Judaistic Gnostic sects of the usual eclectic character which after the manner of parasitic growths, had fastened upon the movement of the Baptist, before endeavoring to absorb Christianity. The fact should not be forgotten that by unanimous representation of the Fathers, both Simon Magus, the father of Gnosticism and Dositheus, his reputed predecessor and rival in Samaria, began as disciples of John the Baptist."

In conclusion we may note how natural would be the inference which the circumstances of the time would have over the mind of an author who was attempting to present a convincing narrative of the life of the Messiah, many years after his death. That the episode at the outset of Jesus' ministry is thus portrayed in later perspective seems to be very strong evidence for the belief that in narrating the account of the Baptism of Jesus by John, Mark is looking back to an actual historical fact, but his presentation of it is dominated by his conception of the Messianic character of his Master.

Mark 2. 18-22

"Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were accustomed to fast. Men therefore came to him and said, "Why do the disciples of John and those of the Pharisees fast while thine do not"? And Jesus said to them, "Can the sons of the bride-groom fast whilst the bridegroom is with them ? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them and then shall they fast in those days. No one sews on an old garment a patch of unshrunk cloth, for if so the patch tears away from it, and the rent becomes worse. And no one pours new wine into worn-out wine-skins, for if so the new wine will burst the skins and the wine is lost as well as the skins.

We have here apparently an example of the association of ideas in the mind of the author, the result being a complete coordination of thoughts, each reflecting a different origin, the sum total of which is welded together around the much-debated question as to a Christian's duty with regard to fasting and abstinence in general. It is a matter however which did not arise until brought about by the Jewish-Christian controversy in the early days of the Church.

We may assume that Mark inserted this passage in his record for the following reasons:-

Mark 2.18-20

1. To indicate that although the Baptists disciples existed as a separate organization their practices were not to be regarded as being authorised directly by the Messiah.

2. To prove the Messiahship of Jesus by emphasizing the reported use of the word "bridegroom" by him as referring to himself.

Whatever may have been the historical basis for this narrative an analysis of it shows that its presentation is influenced by later Christian conceptions, and that it is therefore a reflection of the author's own experience of the conditions of his time. The reasons for the insertion of this passage we may believe to be similar to those considered under Mark 1.4-9.

Mark 2.21-22

These verses are especially remarkable. The evangelist by his use of the illustrations of the old garment and the old wine-skins seems undoubtedly to be referring to Judaism as being incompatible with Christianity as he had come to accept it. He here makes Jesus impose a rule to

which he himself was opposed. Jesus held fast to Judaism whilst purging it of its imperfections, and yet in this passage he is represented as declaring that his teaching can be apprehended truly only under entirely new forms; that new categories of the understanding are necessary for such individuals as would endeavor to receive his message; and that to attempt to apply his precepts in accordance with old and accepted beliefs would end in both losing their value.

Many commentators in considering this passage endeavor to explain what Jesus really intended to convey to the minds of his hearers by his use of these adages. Montifiore in his treatise on the Synoptic Gospels quotes from a note of Menzies as follows, 'The movement Jesus has set on foot is a fresh and growing thing; it is impossible to set limits to its expansion, irrational to confine it to forms which were not made for it. The lofty consciousness of Jesus here finds expression that as his Gospel is one of joy, it is also one of freedom. He reverenced the forms of the religious life of his time but he saw them to be inadequate to the new principle of which he was the herald to the world." Montifiore himself coincides on the whole with this view.

The writer, however, would offer the suggestion in all reverence, that if the name "Mark" were to be substituted for "Jesus", in the foregoing quotation from Menzies, we should have a more adequate explanation as to the reason for the inclusion of this statement in the Gospel.

We cannot believe that Mark intentionally determined to represent Jesus as saying that which he did not say, but, was in this instance, as in others, unconsciously but direct-

ly influenced by the circumstances of his time.

What circumstances then would induce him to narrate this episode ? Next in importance to establishing faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the early church was compelled to meet the opposition of the Jews on the question of the observance of the Law. Paul had proclaimed that the law had been annulled and that therefore it was not binding upon Christians. To the orthodox Jew such a position could have but one meaning,--that the Christians in denying the law, did so in order to have freedom to live in a state of immorality. This was indeed one of the most forceful charges brought against them by their Jewish opponents in their endeavors to excite political hostility against them. The Christians therefore were compelled to find some authoritative basis for their rejection of the ancient standards of belief and practice. In Stephen's speech in Acts 7.1-53 the temporary nature of the laws is proved from the Old Testament writings, wherein God himself speaking by the lips of his prophets foretells the coming of a new regime. In Paul we have the champion of liberty dominated by the conviction that as Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and man, the law exists no longer for the Christian because he is thec child of God. Paul finally severed connection with the synagogue in all places where he preached, and the Old Testament had to be brought to the Gentile Christians without the official Jewish explanation. For the liberty of Gentile Christians he had opposed the congregation at Jerusalem, and for their recognition as being on the same footing as Jewish converts he had withstood Peter to the face. His ministry was indeed divided between founding new churches and waging war against Judaisers who sought to wrest them from his control. It was the Jews who were ever seek-

ing some new excuse for delivering him up to the authority of the courts. Yet not once did he refrain from proclaiming his message of freedom. Jesus had died as a transgressor of the law, yet he was without sin. Therefore he had paid the penalty of man's transgression of the law; hence man was free. This freedom was not one for licentiousness however because the new life springs from within, being the manifestation of the spirit of God.

We shall never know to what extent this conception of Paul's influenced the early Christian Church, but judging from his letters, the necessity for new categories of the understanding as a prerequisite for the assimilation of the Christian faith became a generally recognized principle.

From this consideration it seems evident that Mark, in recording this statement about the sewing of a patch of new cloth onto an old garment, and the pouring of new wine into old wine-skins, is introducing into the life of Jesus, an element which is there strangely out of place, but which is in perfect accord with the conditions existing within the Christian Church at the time of his writing.

Mark 3. 1-6

And he entered again into the synagogue and there was a man there who had a withered hand and theybwatched him carefully if he would heal on the Sabbath day, in order that they might bring an accusation against him. And he said to the man whose hand was dried up, 'Stand forth in the midst', and he said to them,'Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil', but they remained silent, and he looked round upon them in an angry manner, being made sorrowful by the hardness of their hearts, and said to the man,'Stretch out your hand', and he stretched it out, and his hand became cured. And the Pharisees went out and immediately
c consulted with the Herodians how they might do away with him.

It is not within the sphere of this treatise to discuss the authenticity of this reported miracle. From our point of view,however,the substance of the account is important because of the result it produced:- The consultation of the Pharisees with the Herodians.

Mark states that the Pharisees were inconsed against Jesus; not because he restored the lost vitality into the disabled hand, but because he did so on the Sabbath day, and therefore the Pharisees consulted with the Herodians as to the best means,for doing away with him.

Dr.Burkitt's comments on this passage are as follows:- "Jesus, says Mark,"looked round upon the Pharisees in anger at their crassness (Mark 3.5); and they on their part quitted the building to concert measures with the'Herodians', i.e. with what we should now call the 'Government Circles' or 'Bureaucracy' to plan how they might get rid of this impossible personage. Here in Mark 3.6, as I read the Gospel, we have our Lord's definite breach with official Judaism."

Burkitt thus admits his belief in the historicity of the episode as it stands in the narrative. We do not knowtthe actual circumstances by which Mark was led to construct this account, but he is evidently at fault in representing the plots against Jesus' life as having begun at this early date, and it seems, even still more so, in depicting the alliance between the Pharisees and the Herodians on this occasion. The question raised --the observance of the Sabbath, was one with which the Herodians had no concern, and it was not for them to interest themselves in a peripatetic preacher protesting against the formalism of his own religion.

Mark in stating that the Pharisees and the Herodians were conspiring to kill Jesus is clearly influenced by his knowledge of the manner in which the death of Jesus was brought about. His crucifixion, however, was not the result of enmity on the part of some Galilean Pharisees in collusion with emissaries from the Court of Herod, but was compassed by the Sanhedrists at Jerusalem who delivered Jesus over to the Romanscourt on a charge of treason. The manner in which Jesus' death was brought about seems to have influenced the author in inserting in this place in his record a somewhat distorted reflection of later events as conceived in his own consciousness, Moreover when we remember that the early Christians owed much of their persecution to the Jewish informers who aroused the hostility of the Government Officials against them, we can understand how natural it would seem to Mark that this hostile alliance began at the very outset of Jesus' ministry. That it did do however on this occasion, and for the reason here given seems to be most improbable.

Mark 3. 11-12

And the unclean spirits whenever they beheld him fell down before him and cried saying, 'Thou art the Son of God'. And he charged them that they should not make him known.

We may believe that Jesus, possessing a personality sontranscendent above that of the average being, was enabled to perform certain workd of healing which in his day and even in ours might properly be termed 'miracles'. With regard to the foregoing quotation from Mark, however,it is no easy matter for us to believe that Jesus would command the evil spirits to refrain from revealing his divine character after they had already made him known.

We have here evidently, a representative passage illustrative of one of the methods by which the author seeks to emphasize the deity of Jesus, yet it is such accounts as this which tend to detract from the moral earnestness of Jesus ' character in the estimation of modern critics, causing them to reject as unhistorical such works of healing, the evidence for which, however, rests in the first place, upon the essential nature, of the character of Jesus, and not upon such elements as have been superimposed by his biographer.

Mark, in his earnestness to give a convincing portrayal of his Master's life on earth, here involves himself in a difficult situation:

1. Jesus as Messiah must be portrayed in such a manner as will convince the Gentile converts of the Graeco-Roman world that he was indeed the Son of God.

2. The fact that the Jews did not recognize him as Messiah during his life-time can be explained only by the fact that Jesus commanded the demons to keep silent upon this point --since they, being supernatural,must have known that which the mind of man did not comprehend.

Viewed in this light we may regard this reported command of silence as being an addition by the author rather than representative of the method followed by Jesus.

Mark 4. 13-20

And he said to them, you do not understand this parable; how then will you understand all the other parables ? The sower sows the Word, and these by the wayside where the Word is sown are they who have heard it, but Satan comes and takes up the Word which was sown into them. In a similar manner these meant by the seed sown upon a rock soil are they who on hearing the Word receive it joyfully, but have no root in themselves and therefore they but temporarily receive it; hence when there arises oppression or persecution on account of the Word, they are immediately caused to stumble. And the others who are meant by the seed sown among the thorns are they who hear the Word but the anxieties of life and the chicanery of wealth, and their vehement striving about many other things enter in, choking up the Word, and so it is rendered barren. But those who are represented by the seed which is sown on good ground,-these are they who hear the Word and take it into themselves and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundred-fold.

The Parables of Jesus have been regarded for so long many ages as representing the deepest truths of human experience, that to classify the interpretation of the parable of the Sower as unauthentic may appear at first to be almost an act of sacrilege.

The fact, however, that the interpretation of the parable may be thus regarded does not reflect upon our acceptance of the belief that the parable itself was first heard from the lips of Jesus. A painting may be capable of diverse interpretations but its genuineness is tested by its coincidence with the genius of the Artist.

The explanation of the parable as narrated by Mark may be regarded as an anachronism for the following reasons:-

1. The teaching conveyed is not in agreement with that of Mark 3. 31-35, or even with that of the verses immediately preceeding:-Cf.Mark 4.11-12
2. In the parable itself Jesus is depicting the apparent waste of his message, but the sower is not discouraged because some of his grain is lost. In the interpretation he is represented in explaining the parable as portraying different ways in which his message is accepted.

The explanation for these incongruities may be found in regarding the interpretation of the parable as being addressed to the members of the early Christian Church rather than to the peasants of a secluded Galilean district. In support of this position the following reasons may be adduced:-

1. Amongst the early Christians "The Word" was synonymous with the Christian Faith.
2. At the time Mark wrote his Gospel the phrase "To sow the Word" had come to be one of the general terms used to denote Christian preaching.

3. In verse 17 Mark uses the word . Amongst the early Christians was used to denote apostasy. Cf. Romans 9.32-33: 1 Cor.1.23

4. The most conclusive evidence, however, is to be found found in the reference in verse 17 to oppression and persecution. Cf. 1 Thess.2.14a Gal.6.12

We,today, cannot fully comprehend how ominous must have been the dark shadow cast over the infant church by the clouds of persecution, and we must not be surprised if the records of the time are influenced by contemporaneous conditions.

The interpretation of the parable reflects such circumstances as would naturally exist in a pagan city where a small Christian community was struggling for existence amid the glamor of luxury and the oppression of tyrannous persecution.

Assuming that Mark wrote his Gospel at Rome about A.D.70 we can readily understand the references to the dualism which is so apparent in the explanatory comment on the parable. When, however, to this is added the atmosphere of struggle, persecution and apostasy, we seem to be brought into close touch with the very early Christian Church at Rome at one of the most trying periods of its history.

In A.D.64, during the reign of Nero, a terrible fire broke out in Rome and a great partvof the mighty city was reduced to smaking ruins. According to rumor Nero had himself caused the conflagration, but, after many deviations, the blame was settled finally upon the Christians: a precedent often followed in succeeding years when the popular voice demanded a reason for the occurrence of calamities. This gave rise to what is known as the First Persecution, concerning which Tacitus writes as follows:-

"But all human efforts, all the Emperor's lavish gifts, and the propitiations offered to the gods did not banish the accepted belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Therefore to suppress the report, Nero falsely charged with the guilt and inflicted the most terrible tortures upon a class called Christians by the populace, who were generally hated for their infamous doings. Christus from whom this title has its origin had been sentenced to death during the reign of Tiberius by Pontius Pilate -one of our Procuators. But the pernicious superstition although checked for a time broke out again not only in Judea where it had its origin but through the city (Rome) whither flow all things horrible and disgraceful from all parts of the world and are generally accepted. Accordingly those who were arrested first, confessed and upon the information thus obtained a great multitude was convicted, not so much on account of burning the city as for general hatred to mankind. In their dying moments mockery was heaped upon them. Shrouded in the skins of widl beasts they were mangled to death by dogs, or were nailed upon crosses, or set fire to at night-fall in order to illumnie the darkness. For this kind of sport Nero offered the use of his own gardens, and exhibited a circus race whilst he mingled with the crowds in his costume of a charioteer, or stood aloft in his chariot. Hence there arose a feeling of pity for those who were suffering, in spite of the fact that they were guilty, and were deserving of punishment according to the utmost rigor of the law, because it appeared as though they were not being destroyed for the sake of the public welfare, but to satisfy the cruel instincts of one man.

Eusebius in describing the persecution of the Christians at Rome, says, "Thus Nero publicly announcing himself as the chief enemy of God was led in his fury to slaughter the Apostles. Paul isssaid to have been beheaded at Rome,

and at this time also Peter was crucified".

We find also an illustration of the conditions of the time in Clement's Letter to the Corinthians:- By reason of the sudden and repeated calamities which are befalling us, brethren, we consider that we have been somewhat tardy in giving heed to the matters of dispute that have arisen among you". But to pass from the examples of ancient days, let us come to those champions who lived nearest to our time. Let us set before us the noble examples which belong to our own generation. By reason of jealousy and envy the greatest and most righteous pillars of the Church were persecuted and contended even unto death. There was Peter who by reason of unrighteous jealousy endured not one nor two but many labors, and thus having borne his testimony went to his appointed place of glory. By reason of jealousy and strife Paul, by his example, pointed out the prize of patient endurance. After that he had been seven times in bonds, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, had preached in the East and in the West, he won the noble renown which was the reward of his faith.

It would seem but natural that an author writing at a time when the Neronian persecution was still vivid in his memory should present in symbolic form the contrast between the faithful receivers of the Word, and those who accepted it for a time, only to become apostates when confronted with the alternative of choosing between a life of comfort and ease, or facing oppression and persecution.

The interpretation of the parable as recorded by Mark stands as an enduring monument to testify to those who in spite of the fires which destroyed some of the fields of harvest, brought forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred fold. The destroying fires, serving but to illumine with gold the sheaves yet standing.

Mark 5. 18-20

And as he was getting into the boat the man who was possessed by the evil spirit entreated him to let him remain with him. But Jesus would not allow him him but said to him, return to your home and your kindred and proclaim to them what the Lord has done for you, and how he had pity upon you.

We have here an illustration of one of those inconsistencies which have caused misgivings in the minds of those who would fain see a harmonious representation of the character of the Great Teacher of Nazareth. Mark tells us of the many miracles which Jesus performed and concludes his account, almost invariably, with the strict injunction of silence imposed by Jesus upon the person cured.

In this place however we have his definite command to the restored demoniac to spread abroad the story of his cure. Are we to regard this as characteristic of Jesus? Is it not rather a reflection of the author's own mind ?

It is worthy of note that Jesus' commands of silence are given only when he is amongst the Jews. Here, however, he is in the country of the Gentiles. It is noteworthy also in this connection to observe that the title"The Lord", in verse 19 is not used in Mark until the time of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, except here and in the mouth of the Gentile Syro Phoenician woman: Chap.7.28.

Mark's general purpose was to present Jesus not only as the Messiah of the Jews, but also as the Son of God whose message of salvation was universal. Therefore, whilst describing Jesus' mission as being primarily to the Jews, he emphasizes Jesus' consciousness of his divine mission also to the Gentiles, by whom he is accepted as the Son of God.

These verses therefore should not be considered as detracting from the consistency of Jesus' character, but rather as evidences of the author's own conception of the universality of the message of glad tidings.

Mark 6. 17-29

For Herod himself had sent and arrested John and put him in prison on account of Herodias - the wife of his brother Philip - because he had married her. For John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful to have your brother's wife." On account of this Herodias was angry with him and wished to kill him, but was not able to do so because Herod was afraid of John,realizing that he was an upright and holy man, and kept him in safety; and when he heard him he was much perplexed,yet he heard him willingly. Now it came to pass on an auspicious occasion, when Herod on his birthday gave a feast to his high officials and his chief captains, and to the most notable men of Galilee,- his daughter, namely, the daughter of Herodias, came in and danced and pleased Herod and his guests. And the King said to the girl 'Ask me for whatever you wish and I will give it to you; and upon his oath he promised, 'Whatever you ask I will give you even unto a half of my kingdom', and she went out and said to her mother, 'For what shall I ask', and she said, 'the head of John the Baptist,' and she went immediately with haste into the King's presence and asked saying, 'I desire that you forthwith give me upon a dish the head of John the Baptist. The King, however, was exceedingly sorry, but owing to his promises and the presence of his guests he did not like to refuse her. So the King immediately dispatched a guardsman, ordering him to bring his head, and he went out and beheaded him in the prison, and bringing his head

on a dish he gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. And his disciples, on hearing of this, came and removed his body and placed it in a tomb.

This passage is somewhat replete with incorrect statements to which attention must be given before endeavoring to ascertain why they were inserted in the Gospel.

1. In verse 17 Mark tells us that Herod shut up John in prison because he was reproved by him for marrying Herodias, his brother Philip's wife.

A. The Philip mentioned in this passage is Philip, the Tetrarch of Trachonitis, the half-brother of Herod the Tetrarch, both being sons of Herod the Great. According to Josephus, however, Herodias was not, at any time, the wife of Philip, half-brother of Herod the Tetrarch, but was the wife of Herod, another half-brother of Herod the Tetrarch.

B. The cause of the Baptist's imprisonment is narrated by Josephus as follows:- " Now the generality of the Jews were of the opinion that this was only a just judgment of God upon Herod and his army, for the benefits of John, surnamed the Baptist, which excellent man this Tetrarch murdered. And what was his crime but only his exhorting the Jews to the love and practice of virtue; and in the first place of piety and justice, and to a regeneration by baptism and a new life, not by abstaining from this of that particular sin, but of an habitual purity of mind as well as of body ? Now so great was the credit and the authority of this holy man, as appeared by the multitude of his disciples, and the veneration they had for his doctrine (for he could do what he would with them) that Herod did not know how far the reputation of a man of his spirit might influence the people toward a revolt. So that for fear of the worst, he chose rather to take him out of the way in time before any hurt was done, than to put it to the hazard of an unprofitable repentance, when it should be too late. Wherefore he sent him away bound to Machaerus (the place before mentioned)

with orders to have him put to death, which was accordingly executed; and that impious fact was followed by a divine vengeance upon Herod, for the blood of that just man, as the Jews reasonably enough persuaded themselves."

Josephus differs therefore from Mark not only as to the cause of John"s imprisonment, but also as to his place of confinement. This Mark locates intthe palace of Herod Antipas in Tiberias. From Josephus, however, we learn that it was in the border fortress of Machaerus.

2. It does not seem probable that the kind of dancing described in this passage would result in pleasingbthe King when performed in public by a member of his own family.

3. The King's promise would have been quite inconsistent with his position under the Roman government.

In seeking a reason for the inclusion of this legendary account of the Baptist's imprisonment and death into the Gospel record, a solution to the problem may be found in the following:-

1. From the acount in Josephus we may assume that Herod had some definite reason for fearing that a great Messianic outbreak on behalf of John, by the Baptist's followers was immanent. The imprisonment of John is conclusive evidence that he must have had a considerable following who regarded him as the Messiah. The author of this Gospel account has already portrayed John as the forerunner of Jesus, testifying to his Messiahship. This representation would lose its force if John himself were described as having been accepted as the Messiah.

2. The relationship which had existed between John the Baptist and Jesus would influence the author of this narrative to ascribe John's execution to a personal and moral cause rather than to one which was public and political. Especially would this be the case if writing at a time in which the Christians were regarded as a sect actively hostile to the government, We may conclude, therefore, that the most probable reason for the insertion of this unhistoric narrative may be found by regarding it as a defence of the non-political nature of the new religion.

Mark 6. 35-44

When evening was come his disciples came to him and said,'this is a desert place and the shadows of evening are falling. Send away the people that they may go to the farm houses and villages near by and buy food for themselves;' But he answering said to them, 'It is for you to feed them; but they said to him,'Are we to go and buy bread to the value of two hundred denarii and give them food to eat ? And he said to them,'How many loaves have you ? Go away and see.' and having ascertained they said, 'Five and two fishes', and he directed them to arrange that all the people should sit in eating parties on the green grass; and they sat down in divisions of hundreds and fifties. And taking the five loaves and the two fishes he raised his eyes to heaven and pronounced the blessing, and divided the loaves into portions and gave them to the disciples in order that they might place them before the people, and in a similar way he distributed the two fishes amongst them all. And they all ate and were staisfied and they gathered up of the broken pieces of bread and of the fish, enoughtto fill twelve baskets. And they who had partaken of the loaves of bread numbered five thousand.

Mark is evidently much impressed with the lesson which the reputed miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is intended to convey as it is recorded twice in this Gospel,- here, and in the 8th chapter, verses 1-10. In both versions for the inclusion of this narrative is apparent.

There seems to be unmistakable evidence for the belief that we have here a symbolical representation of an ideal Agape. The day has come to its close and the multitude have assembled to listen to the message of salvation, at the close of which they become the guests of Jesus and his disciples innpartaking of a common meal together. Reclining in orderly table-companies they hear the,by now,familiar words of benediction uttered over the loaves of bread and each one present partakes of the common store.

It is noteworthy that each detail of the account describes some point of ritual common in the early Christian celebration of the "Breaking of Bread." The meeting together for instruction, followed by the common meal, the blessing of the bread, its distribution and its participation by all,- each detail seems to be drawn from the author's knowledge of the method observed at the celebration of the Agape.

The reference in the Gospel record to the gathering up of the fragments is significant in that the baskets filled corresponded in number to the distributors at the feast. It was customary for the deacons, who acted as distributors at the Love Feast, to take portions of it to those who were unable to attend the meeting. To quote Justin Martyr , "Afterwards....bread is brought and wine and water, and the president likewise offers up prayers and thanksgiving to the best of his ability and the people assent with an Amen. Then follows the distribution to each, and the partaking of that

for which thanks were given, and to them that are absent a portion is sent by the hand of the deacons."

It does not, however, seem probable that this passage was introduced merely as a description of the method observed in the celebration of the Love-Feast, but rather to inculcate a needed lesson of practical import upon the early Christian communities.

In the Gospel particular emphasis is laid on the orderly arrangement of the multitude present and the systematic way in which the "miracle" was performed. That there was, at times, a lack of decency and decorum in the observance of the Agape we may well believe. The Gentile converts to Christianity brought with them their pagan canceptions of religious feasts, and it must have been no easy task for the leaders of the Christian Church to eliminate from the Agape those orgiastic revels which accompanied pagan rites of a similar nature. Indeed its observance in the Corinthian Church had become so degenerated as to merit the severe censure of Paul. In his first Epistle he charges the Corinthians with the gross abuses which were prevalent at their abcelebrations of the Love-Feast. The wealthy brought plenty to eat and consumed it at the earliest opportunity, whilst the poorer brethren were compelled to go without food. The result being that what should have been a love feast became an empty form. Divisions and parties arose, and much harm was done to the Church. (1 Cor.11). The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is a representation in symbolic form of the harmony and methodical observance which should govern every celebration of the love-feast, and as teaching this needed lesson, it is here inserted in Mark's Gospel.

Mark 8. 31-33

And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and that he must be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be put to death, and after three days rise again; and this he stated publicly. But Peter took Jesus aside with him and began to rebuke him, but turning around and seeing his disciples he rebuked Peter and said,'Get behind me,Satan; you regard things from a viewpoint that is human, and not from one that is divine.

Immediately preceding this incident in Mark's Gospel is the scene at Caesarea Philippi, where the question, 'Who is Jesus?' is answered by Peter in the memorable words of his confession. Jesus as the Messiah, is the theme here definitely stated for the first time. The supernatural events related as occurring at his Baptism; the evidence of his miraculous powers; his parables of hidden truth; the shrieking demons acknowledging him as the Son of God;- all have gradually implied and led up to this culminating point.

The idea as to the Measiahship of Jesus here expressed is that which was held by his immediate followers and is not of late origin. The Master is here represented as regarding himself as the Messiah who would suffer death, and after three days rise again. That is, the Jesus here portrayed is not the incarnate Son of God who would rise <u>in the flesh on the third day</u>, but the Jewish Messiah, whose soul, at death, would not descend into Sheol but would return to its former state of glory.

This passage evidently represents an historic saying of Jesus, its underlying idea being quite consistent with his conception of his Messiahship. It is commented upon here not because it is either unhistoric or inaccurate but for the reason that it offers the strongest testimony against the resurrection story which later grew up, which represented Jesus as rising again in the flesh on the third day. Cf. Mark 16. 1-8.

Mark 8. 34-38

And he called the multitude together with his disciples and said to them,'If anyone wishes to follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow after me. For whosoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake and for the sake of the glad tidings shall save it. For of what benefit is it to a man to gain the whole world, if he lose his own life, or what can a man give in exchange for his life. For whosoever is ashamed of me and of my message in this faithless and sinful age, of him shall the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.'

A glance at this passage is sufficient to convince the impartial reader that the verses do not recount authentic utterances of Jesus. At the time this account was written, the word had come to be synonymous with Christianity, and moreover its acceptance then carried with it the probability of a martyr's death. The warning being addressed to 'the multitude' as well as the disciples seems to inculcate the lesson that all Christians must be prepared to suffer rejection, persecution, and even death because of their loyalty to their Master and to the glad tidings of salvation.

We must not necessarily deny a historical basis for these warnings and encouragments to loyalty. Indeed it is highly probable that Jesus was aware of the rising storm of opposition which threatened a short time to burst in fury upon himself and his faithful followers. Under such circumstances it is natural that he would speak of his forebodings, and at the same time endeavor to strengthen their faith by contrasting temporal welfare with eternal values. Some tradition referring to such an incident may have been in the compilers mind as he wrote this passage. Cf.Acts 5.41-42: 1 Peter 4.12-19

The prevailing idea of faithfulness under persecution was soubtless set forth in certain scripture tracts or Christian "sayings", which were repeated as articles of faith, and it is possible that this passage may be an elaboration of one or more of these. In 2 Tim.2.11-13 we have a quotation, evidently from the ritual of the early Church setting forth in catechetical form the teaching conveyed in these verses.

Whatever teaching Jesus may have conveyed to his disciples with regard to coming persecution must have been altered by the author of this saying to suit a later period, as it obviously refers to an age of persecution "on account of the Name". Cf.Acts 5.41-42: 1 Peter 4.12-19.

Mark 9. 2-8

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and took them up a high mountain apart by themselves, and his appearance became changed to their sight and his garments became a purer white than man can possibly make them. And there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is well that we are here, let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' For he did not know how to proceed for they were very frightened. Then a cloud came down and covered them, and there came a voice from the cloud, 'This is my Beloved Son, hear him,' and suddenly on looking around they saw no one with them but Jesus.

In the passage immediately preceding this Mark has reached the crisis in his narrative. There Jesus is portrayedas the sel-acknowledged Messiah; now comes this allegorical group picture intended to represent in perspective his relationship to past and future history. In the account of the transfiguration we have a vision-narrative which grew up out of the resurrection story. Certain features, such as the dating by days, the mountain, and the description of Jesus' appearance, and significance to the fact that in the recently discovered fragment of the "Revelation of Peter", the transfiguration occurs <u>after</u> the resurrection. Moreover, Clement of Alexandria (c.210) reports a representation that gnosis had been given after the resurrection to James the Just (sic) and John and Peter and by these to the rest". The materials for the foundation of this transfiguration story are drawn from the Old Testament, but in our search for the <u>motive</u> which prompted the work, we are led to Pauline sources.The purpose of the narrative is to convey dogmatic instruction by means of poetic imagery.

The doctrinal position here pictorially delineated dominated the Pauline writings. The apostle was ever the most strenuous advocate for the superiority of the new dispensation over the old. The Law and the Pfophets (Moses and Elijah) must fade away and the Christians must realize that in Jesus alone can be found the abiding source of absolute authority. To Him all eyes must turn, for upon his person and teaching has been founded, by direct command from heaven, the new dispensation.

It is quite possible that this portrayal of the glorified personality of Jesus may have had its origin in the Pauline conception as to the nature of the risen body of Jesus, a conception, which we may note in passing, is dia-

metrically opposed to the idea of an actual physical resurrection.

In 2 Corinthians 3. 7-18, there is set forth the doctrinal position of the early Christian Church, and the transfiguration story is a pictorial representation of these dogmatic ideas.

Mark 9.9-10.

And as they were going down from the mountain, he warned them not to tell any one what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. And they laid hold of this saying questioning among themselves as to the meaning of 'rising from the dead.'

These verses immediately following the transfiguration story belong with the story itself in the sphere of early Christian apologetic material rather than in the realm of history.

The implied obedience of the command that the disciples should observe secrecy as to the lesson taught by the transfiguration until after Jesus had risen from the dead, is intended by the writer to explain why they did not proclaim their master as the Son of God until after death has closed his earthly career.

With this explanation, however, the author involves himself in another difficulty. He states that the disciples were at the time unable to understand the lesson conveyed by the transfiguration, that the idea of a resurrection from the dead was beyond their comprehension. Thus do we find Mark intimating in no obscure language that the followers of Jesus did not expect him to rise again from the dead in the manner as generally conceived by the Christian Church.

The disciples are represented as descending the mount after having been witnesses of a most wonderful event. Their conversation turns not to the awful revelation which has just been vouchsafed to them, nor to its meaning, neither to Jesus command of silence, nor to his rising from the dead, but to questionings as to the general nature of resurrection from the dead.

The passage is somewhat involved owing to the unconscious blending of independent elements. As a whole it seems to have grown up out of the resurrection story, but the mind of the writer was evidently dwelling upon the disputes which were rife in the early Church as to the manner in which the resurrection of believers would be brought about. Paul when writing to the Corinthians does not seem to have known anything of the transfiguration story, and expounds at some

length the accepted view as to the manner in which the resurrection will be consummated. In this he is evidently voicing the general belief of the early Church.(2 Cor.15.35-38).

It is possible that this passage was inserted to serve the purpose of pointing to the transfiguration as answering the much debated question,- "With what body do they come?" as in Mark 9. 2-10 we have a symbolical representation of the phraseology in 2 Cor.15. 35-38.

Mark 10. 28-31

But Peter began to say to him, 'As for us, behold we have left all and followed you.' Jesus said,'Verily I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the glad tidings, who shall not now even in this present time receive a hundred fold--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands in the midst of persecutions, and in the comingbtime,-eternal life. But many who are now first shall then be last and the last first.

Peter's interjection and Jesus' reply as recorded by Mark, immediately follow the account of the teaching of Jesus concerning riches, after the rich young man, who had approached him with the question,"Master, what shall I do in order that I may inherit eternal life,' had gone away sorrowing at Jesus' answer.

Here as in other places we cannot fail to notice a coordination of different ideas, each relating to its own particular historical setting, from which it has been taken in order to add lustre to the diadem placed upon the head of Jesus.

In verse 29 we find Jesus represented as encouraging the practice of community of property which was followed in the early Apostolic Church. (Cf.Acts 2.44-47, 4.32, 2 Cor. 8. 13, 9.8-15.) It is quite probable that the author in narrating the account of the meeting between Jesus and the rich young man was drawing from some traditionally historical source. It is not difficult to realize how natural would be the impulse to follow up this account with such a description as would depict the actual practice of the early Christian community with regard to the distribution of wealth. That this is the reason for the inclusion of this reported saying of Jesus seems evident from the use of the word in this connection.

The writer, however, had in mind not only the Christian ideal of the community of goods but seems also to have learned by sad experience that Christian fellowship could be enjoyed only at the cost of bitter persecution.

The promise that the faithful would receive abundant rewards "now in this present time", is also evidence for the belief that this passage as a whole does not belong amongst the sayings of Jesus. He taught the approaching end of all

things and there could hardly have been the opportunity for his followers to renounce their possessions and receive so abundant a reward before the accepted end of the old order was brought about.

To sum up, we may hold that the narration of Jesus' teaching, addressed to the rich young man, on the use of w wealth aroused in the authors mind his knowledge of the method of its distribution followed by the early Christians. With this was allied his experience of the fierce persecutions which were at that time being directed against the Christians, and he therefore addresses these words of comfort to the faithful adherents of the Word.

Mark 10.32-37

And they were upon the way going up to Jerusalem and Jesus was going before them, but they were perplexed and the others who were following behind were afraid. And again drawing the twelve apart from the rest he began to tell them of the things which were about to happen to him, as follows:- "Behold we are on our way up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered up to the chief priests and to the scribes and they will condemn him to death and shall deliver him up to the Gentiles, and they will make sport of him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him, and after three days he will rise from the dead.

These verses are a repetion of verses 8.31 and 9.30-32, but they contain a somewhat more detailed account of the events which later took place. The author was so deeply impressed evidently, with the necessity for emphasising the foreknowledge of Jesus as to the exact manner in which his sufferings and death would come to pass that he was constrained to add this, the third prediction-to those which he has already incorporated in his record.

The reasons upon which we reject the historicity of the former predictions apply equally well to this. If Jesus had foretold his death in language so unmistakable, the collapse of his disciples on his arrest, their terror and their flight, would be inexplicable. So also their recorded amazement at his resurrection.

We may well believe that Jesus was expecting opposition from the authorities in Jerusalem, but the precise details of these verses, referring to the trial before the Sanhedrists and their handing him over to the Roman government for punishment are particulars which were added after the events recorded had taken place.

P.F.Pfleiderer, in a passage dealing with his conception of the use and meaning of the title of "The Son of Man", offers some valuable considerations upon Jesus' prediction of his passion as recorded by Mark. He says, "The threefold repetition with progressively increasing exactitude of detail (Mark 8.31, 9.31, 10.33ff) is sufficient to show that here the molding hand of the Evangelist has been at work in the interests of primitive Christian apologetic. It was of the utmost importance to reconcile the contradiction --full of offence for Jewish minds, and indeed, for those of all men-- between the tragic end and the Messianic dignity of Jesus, by explaining his death as a means determined from the first in the counsel of God for His exaltation to heaven. From this apol-

oletic interest sprang the Gospel predictions of the Passion as vaticina post eventum. Before the events came to pass, no one either in the narrower or wider circles of the discipleship of Jesus had any inkling of the tragic fate which lay before him, nor of the resurrection which should follow. The catastrophe came to them so unexpectedly, and shattered all their hopes so completely for the moment, that they all, dumbfounded by the sudden blow took to flight.....The contradictions between the unambiguous predictions of the passion by Jesus which the evangelists report, and the absolute unintelligence and ignorance of the whole of the disciples in regard to them, is to be explained as solely and simply due to the contradiction between the theological apologetic postulate that Jesus the Messiah must have foreknown and foretold his paradoxical fate as determined by the Divine decree, and the historical Fact that before the arrest of Jesus, no one in his following had any apprehension of the catastrophe. All expected the very opposite - victory and glory,- and similarly after his death and before the Easter visions no one expected his resurrection. On the contrary, the women who came to the tomb had intended to embalm his body. If,then, the predictions of the passion and the resurrection are only evidence of a theological apologetic postulate which stands in absolute contradiction to historical facts they are neither wholly nor partly, neither clearly nor obscurely, spoken by Jesus, but were simply not spoken by him atvall, but rather in every case, put in his mouth by the Evangelists."

Mark 10. 35-40

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached him and said, 'Teacher, we want you to grant whatever request we shall make,' He said to them, 'What is it that you wish me to do for you?' Their reply to him was:-'Grant unto us that we may sit, the one upon your right hand and the other on your left in your glory.' And Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you ask.'Can you drink the cup which I drink, or be baptised with such a baptism as is mine ?' 'Yes,' they replied, 'we can.' And Jesus said to them, 'You shall indeed drink the cup which I drink and be baptised with my baptism, but the right to sit at my right or left hand is not mine to give, but is for those for whom it has been prepared.

The question of ranks and grades in the Kingdom of Heaven raises questions in our mind as to the Apostles' conception of the coming glory which can never be answered. The narrative doubtless rests upon some historic foundation, indeed the very vagueness with which Jesus is recorded as describing his coming sufferings, carries with it a credability which the more elaborate and detailed predictions fail to convey.

There seems to be no doubt that Jesus is represented as using the symbolism of "drinking his cup" and "being baptised with his baptism", as referring to a martyr's death. That he did use thses forms in this way is extremely doubtful. We seem rather to be brought into contact with the sacremental ideas of the early Church.

The important matter however which demands attention is the fact that James and John are here regarded as martyr's. We can hardly conceive that the author would have incorporated this passage into his document, half a century after the prophecy is recorded as having been made, if by that time it had not been fulfilled.

That James was martyred we learn in Acts 12.1-2. "At that time King Herod began to persecute certain members of the Church. By his orders, James, the brother of John, was beheaded."

With regard to the fate of John, however, there is much difference of opinion amongst commentators. Charles B. Waite whose treatments of the New Testament writings is generally far from conservative, says, "John is the only one of the twelve apostles whose life appears to extend into the region of authentic history. And of him this can only be said of the latter portion of his life. He is supposed to have been driven to Patmos by some persecution but the learned cannot agree what emporer it was under, the range being from Claudius to Domitian.

In the persecution under Domitian he was taken to Rome. There it is said that the boiling oil into which he was thrown had no power to hurt him.....The account of his living to an old age at Ephesus, has been universally received and may be considered historic. Irenaeus says that at Ephesus John leaped out of a public bath, with horro, when he saw Cerinthus the heretic entering it. Cerinthus flourished about the middle of the second century, though some ecclesiastical historians in aid of Irenaeus, have tried to bring Cerinthus within the first century....Probably none of the writings attributed to the apostle John are entitled to be considered genuine.

It is of course obvious that the importance of the question as to whether John really lived at Ephesus and became a power in the Church rests upon the bearing which the evidence for and against this contention has upon determining the authenticity of the writings attributed to him. If it can be shown that the history of the early Church supports the position that John did not live to a ripe old age a Ephesus, and if no other hypothesis be forthcoming, we may believe that Mark in recording this passage is narrating a "prophecy" which had already been fulfilled, since it is not probable that he would thus write of John if he were still living.

The evidence against the tradition that John the apostle lived for a time in Ephesus and later became a power in the Christian Church may be summarized as follows:-

1. In Acts 20. 18-38 (A.D.80-110) we have a vivid account of Paul's farewell address to the Christians at Ephesus. The unaffected and pathetic simplicity of the narrative is recorded undoubtedly by an eye-witness to the event. There is not, however, in the address even an indistinct allusion to any apostolic authority except such as Paul himself had introduced.

2. Clement of Rome (A.D. 95-120), when writing to the Christians at Corinth, appeals to the example set by the

apostles and especially appeals to the counsels of Peter and Paul. He does not even allude to any apostle living at Ephesus, a city much nearer than Rome to Corinth. If John had been there at the time, it is inconceivable that his authority would have been thus ignored.

3. Ignatius writes (110-130 A.D.)-to the Smyrnaeans, the Ephesians, the Magnesians, the Philadelphians, the Trallians, and to Polycarp, mainly for the purpose of combating Docetic Gnosticism. His doctrine of the Logos is similar to that in the Fourth Gospel, but not developed to the same extent. He appeals to the authority of Paul, but even in writing to the Ephesians and to Polycarp he makes no mention of John.

4. Polycarp (A.D.110-130), whom tradition has designated as being a personal disciple of John, when writing to the Philippians exhorts them to study the wisdom in the "Epistles of the Blessed and Glorious Paul." He makes no mention of John.

5. Heracleon (A.D.180) gives a list of the names of the apostles who died natural deaths:- "For not all the saved have made confession with the voice and so departed amongst whom were Matthew, Philip, Thomas, Levi." John's name should certainly have been included in this list if he,too, died a natural death,--the difference is he was martyred.

6. "In a 7th or 8th century epitome probably based on the chronicle of Philip of Side (about 430 A.D.), it is stated that, "Papias in his second book says that John the Divine and James his brother were slain by the Jews. And this statement occurs again with verbal variations in the oldest mss of the Chronicle of George the Monk, a writer of the 9th century. This statement is historically of importance, not because these chronicles had independent knowledge of the

facts, but because they base their information on Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis about 160 A.D., who wrote "An Exposition on the Oracles of The Lord" in five books."

7. The Ms of the Syriac Calendar of the Church of Edessa dated 411 A.D. begin thus:-

"The names of our lords the martyrs and victors and their days on which they gained their crowns.

In the month Kamen the first (i.e. December)

On the 26th, the first martyr at Jerusalem, Stephen the apostle, the head of the martyr. On the 27th James and John, the apostles at Jerusalem.

All the foregoing reasons against the truth of the tradition that John lived to a ripe old age and in support of the contention that he died a martyr's death, are based on facts. It is especially significant that in the early Church James and John were regarded as brother martyrs. When to this conception is added the testimony of the early Christians as quoted above, there remains but one position open to us, that, namely, of believing that what was common knowledge to these men was the same also to Mark, and that he was thereby influenced in his narration of this passage.

Mark 12. 35-37.

And Jesus answered and said as he was teaching in the Temple, 'How do the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David ? David himself said intthe Holy Spirit, ,The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.' David himself addresses him as a Master; how is he then his son?'

In seeking enlightenment upon this much-discussed passage, it is interesting to note the scholastic method generallybfollowed by commentators in order to account for the logical - or illogical - method of Jesus' reasoning.

The controversy as tothe true meaning of this saying has been waged around the central idea of the Messianic consciuosness of Jesus.

With reference to this conception it is important to note that the verses supposed to have been quoted by Jesus in support of his Messiahship form no part of any psalm of David, neither would the occasion of their original utterance justify their use in the way in which they are here employed.

Moreover the abrupt manner in which this saying is introduced into the Gospel record is also indicative of its late origin. It is highly probable that the author, in inserting this passage, used - with reference to the Messianic claim of Jesus - a conception of the apostolic church as to the nature of his risen glory. When Peter delivered his address on the day of Pentecost he made use of this same quotation from Psalm 110, in his description of his Master's exaltation to the throne of Glory. (Acts 2. 33-35)

If we also regard this quotation in the same way as that in which it was held by the early church, the difficulty of explaining this passage in Mark's gospel, as representing an actual saying of Jesus, will be removed.

Mark 13. 9-13

But as for you take heed to yourselves, for they will deliver you over to the law courts, and in synagogues will you be beaten, and before rulers and kings will you be brought for my sake in order that you may bear witness before them. For the glad tidings must first be proclaimed unto all the nations. But whenever they take you and deliver you up, do not be troubled beforehand as to what you shall say, but whatever shall be given you in that hour - that speak, for it is not yourself speaking, but the Holy Spirit. And the brother will deliver up brother to death and the father his child, and children shall rise up against their parents and will kill them; and you will be hated of all for my name's sake but he that endures to the end - he indeed shall be saved.

When reading these verses we can follow to some extent the progression of the different ideations in the author's mind. This passage stands as a remarkable mosaic, the whole giving a pleasing and ordered impression to the distant eye, the component parts of which, however, are found upon examination, to have belonged originally in other writings.

There is no need to prove by an elaborate examination that these words were not spoken by Jesus, such references to his followers being brought to the judgment-bar of governors and kings - to the universality of the Gospel message - to the gift and operation of the Holy Spirit - to suffering the death penalty for being a Christian - these utterances are not such as could have been made by one whose dominating purpose in life was to purify the Jewish religion of its legalistic accretions.

The reference in verse 9 to the Christians being presented by both the Jews and the heathen seems to be taken from the author's own experience. This thought, however, arouses his enthusiasm for the universal message of glad tidings. The power of the Holy Spirit as manifested in the sp speeches od both Peter and Paul,- as recounted in the Acts, is evidently the basis for this conception here presented.

The "prediction" of discord amongst the Christians themselves and resulting in their betrayal of their brethren in the faith was a condition of things which actually existed. At what date these divisions began we do not know, but the factsthat lists of names of alleged Christians were sent to the Roman governors by anonymous informers is strong evidence for believing that treachery from within the Christian fold was one of the paramount dangers to which the faithful were subjected. In Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trajan, written about 112 A.D., he refers to such anonymous communi-

cations in these words:- "Meantime this is the course I have taken with those who were accused before me as Christians: I asked at their own lips whether they were Christians, and if they confessed I asked them a second and third time with threats of punishment. If they kept to it, I ordered them for execution.....An unsigned paper was presented which gave the names of many."

It is improbable that we can fix the date of the persecution to which this passage refers - if indeed it does relate to any particular one. It seems more likely that the w writer has in mind the general attacks upon the Christians, which, after the Neronian persecution broke out in many of the provinces, instances of which are to be found in the Acts, and to which references are also made in the Epistles. There is, however, one conclusion which is definite, namely:-that these are not the words of Jesus, but of the historian.

Mark 13. 14-20

But when you shall see the abomination of Horror standing where he ought not - let the reader understand,- then let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let him that is on the roof not descend to enter into his house, and let him that is in the field not return to get his cloak. But woe to them that are with young and to them that give suck in those days. Pray ye that it may not be in the winter, for in those days shall be affliction such as has not been since the beginning of the world which God created until now, and shall not be again. And but for the fact that the Master shortened those days no flesh would have been saved, but for the sake of the elect, those whom he hath chosen did he shorten the days.

This remarkable passage seems to be a reflection of 2 Thess. 2.4.

The dread of the impending desecration of the Temple hung as a black cloud of fear on the Jewish horizon ever since Caligula had threatened to set up bis own statue for worship within the sacred precints. The emperor was prevented finally from carrying his threat into execution by his assassination in A.D.41. This however did not remove either the terror or the excitement caused by the threat.

The reason for the inclusion of this passage in the Gospel record will probably never be known. The writer would, however suggest that verses 14-19 form part of a warning originally intended for the peasants of Judea predicting the "abomination of Horror" so dreaded by the Jews; and that this document was in Mark's possession when he was compiling his narrative. A glance at the "warning" would be sufficient to arouse in his mind a vivid recollection of the results it produced, namely the continual attempts at insurrection - which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70. The awful impression made by this catastrophe bridged the distance between the warning and its results in the authors mind and adding verse 20 to this Jewish document he incorporated it into his record, addressed to Christians, as a warning against fanaticism.

This explanation is moreover supported by the verses immediately following, which will now be considered in the following chapter.

Mark 13.21-23

And then if anyone shall say to you, 'Behold here is the Christ; behold he is there', believe him not. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform sings and wonders with the intention of leading astray, if possible, even the elect. Therefore be on your guard; I have warned you of these things.

At the time of Mark's writing the Antichrist legend specifically stating that miracles would be performed by the false prophet was growing in importance, it was indeed one of the distinctive features of this period in the history of the Church.

The earliest record that we have however of the rise of a false prophet claiming for himself the title of the Messiah is that of Bar-Cochba, who led the Jews in revolt against the Emperor Hadrian in A.D.131. Whatever may be the true meaning of the reference here to 'false Christs' it does seem possible that this passage can be made to refer to this event which occurred at so late a date.

These verses formed probably another part of the original warning addressed to the Jews before the destruction of Jerusalem. During the two decades previous to this calamity Judea was in a continual state of revolutionary agitation, in which Jewish patriots, known as the'Zealots; were engaged in a ceaseless guerilla warfare against the Roman troops.

"While Fadus was procurator of Judea, a certain charlatan, Theudas by name, persuaded a very great number of people to take their effects with them and follow him to the river Jordan; for he told them that he was a prophet and said he would, at the word of command, divide the river and give them an easy passage through it, and by these words he deluded many. Fadus, however, did not permit them to gain aught by their folly, but sent a squadron of cavalry against them, which falling upon them unexpectedly, slew many of them and took many alive. Taking Theudas also alive they cut off his head and carried it to Jerusalem."

This passage was inserted by the author, probably for the same reason as the one immediately preceding - to warn the Christians against fahaticism and following any leaders who might make special claims for themselves. By quoting the

causes

causes which had given rise to the Jewish rebellion, and thereby implying the terrible results which it had brought in its train - the author issues this warning as an exhortation to the Christians to accept present and future oppression in qu quietness born of the confidence that all will come right in God's own time.

It is quite possible that Jesus may have spoken in a manner similar to that which is here recorded,- the tradition of which may have influenced the author into incorporating this message into his record. The form in which it has come down to us, however, justifies the foregoing presentation, but this does not necessarily deny that the underlying thought may have had a place in the teachings of Jesus.

Mark 14. 17-21

And when evening was come he came with the twelve and as they sat eating Jesus said, 'Verily I say to you that one of you shall betray me, one who is now eating with me,' and they began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after the other, 'Not I,indeed'; But he siad to them,'One of the twelve who dippeth with me into the dish. For indeed the Son of Man goes even as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It were well for him if that man had never been born.

This passage does not seem to be an account of the words spoken by Jesus. The impersonal designation of the betrayer as "one of the twelve", seems to be such as would be used by Jesus himself. It is, moreover, inconceivable that after such a statement by Jesus, the meal should progress as usual whilst a known traitor was present.

The Son of Man goes even as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. How foreign to the character of Jesus are these words. We cannot think think of a greater contrast than that afforded by the gentle loving, forgiving, courageous Jesus, and the Jesus here depicted: a portrait taken not from life but from the mind of a late writer who felt constrained to portray the character of the Master in such a way as to bring its component elements into harmony with later events.

Whilst regretting to deny the historicity of this solemn and impressive scene, we must nevertheless regard this passage as being an early Christian apologetic in defense of the doctrine of the Cross. In the Acts and in the Epistles, the apostle Paul is ever explaining to an unbelieving world that the way of the cross is the way of glory. This reconciliation of two extrames was one of the most difficult obstacles which the early Church had to overcome. The thought of worshipping a crucified Galilean was abhorrent both to the Jew and to the Gentile,- to the slave as well as to the patrician. This offence could only be removed by showing that Jesus, knowing beforehand all that would come to pass, suffered this shameful death of his own free will - thereby consciously and willingly fulfilling his destiny. Presented in this way the cross lost its stigma of shame and became the symbol of heroic self-surrender.

In this instance as in others, it is well not to pronounce too hastily an adverse verdict as to the historicity of this incident - such a verdict however must be pronounced upon it as here recorded, for it is narrated to serve a purpose obviously apologetic.

Mark 14. 22-25

And while they were eating he took the bread, said the blessing and broke it and gave it to them, and said, 'Take,-this is my body.' And he took the cup, pronounced the blessing and gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them,'This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many. Verily I say to you that I shall not again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.'

These verses give rise to sommany serious problems that to attempt to enter into a discussion of them would be far beyond the scope of this thesis.

We may however note that the form of this rite as narrated by Mark is colored by later Christian conception as to the meaning of this act of communion. In its original intention it was doubtless meant to symbolize the approaching death of the Master, and also to stand as an act of brotherhood binding together the disciples and their master into a common fellowship - a covenant effected once and for all between those who were prepared to be true to their leader, and to each other whatever might befall.

In the form in which we have it however, this passage is a prediction of the death of Jesus as a <u>sacrifice</u> - an atonement - for the forgiveness of sins. That is: the passage indicates that Jesus by his death instituted a new covenant thereby annulling the central doctrine of the Jewish religion. The author makes the idea of expiation overshadow the conception of the rite as being symbolical of a covenant, and thus indicates his indebtedness to Pauline theology.

AlthoughtJesus realized that the path he was following would shortly lead him to pass through the mists, beyond which no mortal eye can see, he was nevertheless confident of the glorious sunrise which would herald the dawn of a new day. There was in this act of communion no thought of atonement. It was rather a final meal taken with his friends, before whom he was going to prepare the Kingdom of Heaven, where he would, before long, meet them again. In the early Christian celebration of the Love Feast, it was customary for bread to be blessed and broken and distributed amongst those present. This, however, was not in commemoration of the death of Jesus but as symbolical of unity within the

Christian brotherhood. Cf.Acts 2.46. This was doubtless in close imitation of the rite as instituted by Jesus - however foreign its repetition may have been to the intention of the Master.

From these considerations we are justified in drawing the conclusion that the sacrificial conception here introduced, is untrue to the original intention of Jesus, and that Mark in writing his narrative unconsciously attributes to the Master the idea of atonement, which is the central point of Pauline theology.

Mark 14. 27-28

And Jesus said to them you will all be caused to stumble, as it is written, I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. But after I have risen I will go before you to Galilee.

"The author is now nearing the end of his narrative and feels constrained to make Jesus utter a final prediction of his passion and a promise of his resurrection."

The overwhelming shock which the disciples suffered on the arrest of their Master followed immediately by their desertion of him, are clear indications that they could not have been told of the approaching calamity in language so unmistakable as this

We may note also that this quotation from the Old Testament (Zech 13.7) is an appeal to Yahweh to overthrow an ungodly monarch and has no bearing upon Messianic tradition.

This saying is rather an attempt on the part of the author to indicate that Jesus was aware of the scattering of his flock which was about to take place. It is of course based upon the writers own recollection of the way in which the disciples were scattered immediately following the arrest of Jesus.

The reference to the appearance in Galilee is a natural adaptation of the resurrection story, according to some legends it was in Galilee that the disciples were re-united for the first time after their dispersal. (Cf. Mark 16.7)

Mark 15. 9-15

But Pilate answered them saying, 'Is it your wish that I should release unto you the King of the Jews?' Because he realized that out of envy the chief priests had delivered him up. But the chief priests incited the people that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. But again Pilate answered saying to them,'What then shall I do to him whom you describe as the King of the Jews?' But again they cried out, 'Crucify him!' Then Pilate said to them, 'What evil has he done?' But they cried out even more strenuously 'Crucify him!' and Pilate being desirous of pacifying the multitude released unto them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

The evangelist's narrative of the sufferings of Jesus during his last hours on earth is so simple and at the same time so forceful in its portrayal of the character of the Master that to turn the glaring search-light of modern criticism upon this sacred scene of sanctity seems almost sacriligious. We cannot believe, however, that these acts in the great drama were written down by any of his followers who witnessed their rapid procession through the hours because at the first appearance of the coming trouble "they all forsook him and fled." The narrative as we have it is rather a compilation made some time after the event, and it is but to be expected under these circumstances that we should find the impress of the author's molding hand.

We have here an instance of a possibly historical act being made to serve an apologetic purpose. That Pilate offered the Jews the choice of liberating either Jesus or Barabbas is possible. It is also possible that he endeavored to release Jesus rather than the other, but to accept this passage as historically accurate in its entirely is to endue the author with an inconceivable degree of psychological insight, so direct and penetrating in its intensity that it could reveal to him the hidden workings of a Roman governor's mind several years after such operations had taken place. In this passage there seems to be two dominating ideas, which were undoubtedly called forth by the circumstances of the time in which they were written.

1. In relating the trial of Jesus it must be shown that he was not condemned for instituting revolutionary measures against the Roman government.

2. The responsibility for his crucifixion must be shown to rest primarily upon the priests who had delivered him up"on account of envy."

With regard to the first of the above considerations we may note the emphatic way in which Pilate is made to regard the Kingship of Jesus as being in no way antagonistic to the Roman government. Such a delineation of the purpose of the great prophet, who was the (unintentional) Founder of the Christian sect, would naturally appear to the narrator as desirable - nay even necessary, if he were writing his record at a time when Christianity was regarded as a religion directly opposed to the welfare of the government. That such was the general conception of this new religion, we have abundant evidence.

With a mind seared by the memory of the terrible fate which his friends had suffered at the hands of political rulers, it was but to be expected that the author would emphasize the non-political character of the Christian religion, although in order to do so he had to mold the character of Pilate and even the judicial principles of the great Roman Empire into such a form as suited his purpose.

With regard to the second point noted above the author seems also to be attempting to show that the Jews were the originators of persecutions against the Christians, and that if the Roman governors would but give heed to this aspect of the situation they would change their opinion with regard to Christianity, and find it to be religion in no way inimical to the state though declared to be so by Jewish agitators. It was however the Jews who should be subjected to persecution for causing insurrections and not the Christians whose religion based upon ethical conceptions was non-political in character.

It is interesting to note the way in which these two conceptions as to the difference between the Christian and the Jewish methods are contrasted in the Old Testament.

The quiet orderly methods followed by Christians in proclaiming their message is described in the same paragraph as that in which is emphasized the revolutionary activity of their Jewish opponents.

Compare	Acts 18.14-17	with	Acts 18.12
	" 19.31,37-41	"	" 19.33
	" 23.26-30	"	" 23.1
	" 25.16,25-27	"	" 25.2,3,15,16
	" 28.30-31	"	" 28.19

Rom.13.1-7 1 Thess. 2.14-16

1 Peter 4. 12-19

In conclusion we may note that although there possibly may be some element of historicity in this passage, the form in which this episode is presented is however indicative of its apologetic interest rather than of its historic value.

Mark 16.1-8

And when the Sabbath was over Mary of Magdala and Mary the mother of James and Salome brought sweet spices in order that they might go and anoint him. And very early in the morning,- at sunrise- on the first day of the week they came to the tomb, and they were saying among themselves,'who will roll away for us the stone at the entrance to the tomb?v And when they looked up they saw thatvthe stone had been rolled away- indeed it was a very large one. And on entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting clothed in a white robe and they were terrified. But he said to them,'Do not be frightened; you are looking for Jesus the crucified Nazarene- he has risen, he is not here,- behold the place where they laid him,- but go and tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you into Galilee, you will see him there, even as he told you.' And they went out and fled from the tomb, for they were trembling and amazed, but did not tell anyone for they were frightened.

With these verses Mark brings his record to a close, the verses which follow being generally regarded as forming no part of the original document.

It is impossible to say when the conception of the resurrection of Jesus as here presented by Mark, first came to be held by Christian believers; nowhere is the process of evolution so secret and its effects so apparent as in the development of legend. We do know of a time, however, when the belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus was not held; and proceeding from that as a starting point we may be able to trace some of the reasons for the growth of this resurrection story.

The arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane came to his followers as an overwhelming catastrophe. That he, the Messiah, could allow himself to be taken in this way seemed almost incredible. They doubted whether he could indeed be the Messiah, and in their terrified perplexity they fled. The intensity of the shock which they must have suffered is beyond the comprehension of the modern mind. The sun of hope which but a moment before had been riding in dazzling brilliance in the heavens in a moment gave place to the lengthening shadows of eventide. Their beloved Master was led away by the cold grey hand of death and the darkness of despair enfolded them in a sombre shroud and left them alone with their grief.

Their Master dead ! No that could not be ! He who by his life had revealed so sublime a character was more than man, he was indeed the Messiah who after having risen from the dead would return to earth to restore the fallen house of David. With patient hearts and hope restored, ever turning their eyes eastward to welcome the first touch of gold which would herald the dawn of the new day, they went forth to prepare for his coming.

Years went by, however, and as yet there was no sign of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. His followers were not discouraged, however, for they had seen the Master in visions, in which he had appeared to them in his divine personality. The earliest reference to such an appearance of the risen Master is in 1 Cor. 15. 5-8, where we learn that these manifestations were as equally potent to those who never had known Jesus in the flesh, as they were to those who had been his friends. We must remember, however, that the earliest visions came only to those who had been most intimately acquainted with him; (Acts 13.31); it is also well to remember that in the history of religious experience there is nothing so contagious as visions, and also that there is a difference between subjective and objective appearances. These appearances, however,-whatever their nature may have been - bore very fruitful results. According to the Pauline conception the risen body of Jesus was his incorruptible ethereal personality. This conception, however, did not appeal to later Christians whose ideas turned toward the idea of a bodily resurrection. That this was a common conception we may judge from the fact that Mark tells us that Herod Agrippa supposed Jesus to be John the Baptist "risen from the dead". It was moreover generally believed later that Nero would rise from the dead and return in the flesh. With this general conception as to the nature of resurrection from the dead, it was but natural that the early Christians should think of the Messiah as having risen in the flesh. Here, however they were confronted with an almost insurmountable difficulty. The proof of the bodily resurrection of Jesus would indeed once and for all silence their Jewish opponents, but there was no such proof. It however became necessary to present a concrete practical view of the resurrection for apologetic purposes, with the result that there came into being the resurrection story in Mark 16. 1-8.

This passage in Mark contains its own proofs of its legendary character, but in order to support the foregoing opinion as to its origin, the following points are here presented for consideration:-

1. If a bodily resurrection of Jesus was expected on account of his predictions of such an event, why did the three women come to anoint his body ?

2. Is it possible that three orthodox Jewish women would defile themselves by entering a tomb in the manner here recorded ?

3. If they knew that the stone at the entrance to the tomb was too heavy for them to move, why did they not bring someone with them instead of helplessly discussing their inability to move it whilst continuing on their way ?

4. Is it conceivable that these three women would undertake to anoint a corpse which by this time must have been in the process of decomposition ?

There is no need to discuss further this resurrection story. That it is legendary is self-evident. The passage is however of apologetic value, as a refutation to the Jews who denied the Messiahship of Jesus, and as affording the required proof to the world that the Son of God had indeed <u>risen in the flesh</u>. This conception as to the nature of the resurrection is contrary to that which was held by Jesus himself, but here, as in other places in Mark's Gospel, historical values are superseded by apologetic interests.

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