

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

man's moral life his argument is reversed by the figure he uses. "Hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom. ix. 21). Precisely, but only in so far as he has no one but himself to blame for the dishonour of the second lump. And since,

in dealing with his own moral life, Paul never seeks to escape the burden of responsibility by an appeal to God's unlimited power, we must suppose that his doctrine of the latter belonged rather to the traditional theology of his day than to the experience by which he made a living contribution to Christian thought.'

## Was Mark the Gardener of Gethsemane?

BY EDMUND D. JONES, M.A., HEADMASTER, COUNTY SCHOOL, BARMOUTH, N. WALES.

VARIOUS conjectures have been made about the identity of the 'young man . . . having a linen cloth cast about him,' mentioned in Mk 14<sup>51, 52</sup>. Some commentators base their conjectures on an attempt to answer the question, How came it about that this young man was present in his night attire? and accordingly they make one or other of the following suggestions: (a) that the young man was the owner of Gethsemane; (b) that he was Lazarus; (c) that he was a member of the family at whose house Jesus had eaten the Pass-over. Undoubtedly the first is the most natural suggestion, but they all fail to give an adequate explanation of the insertion of such a seemingly trivial incident in Mark's narrative. Other commentators have therefore approached the problem by endeavouring to answer the question, Why was this incident recorded by Mark? And they argue that only by assuming that the young man was Mark himself can a satisfactory reason be given for any mention of such an insignificant occurrence in such a tragic scene. And in confirmation of this is the fact that only Mark mentions it. It has also been pointed out<sup>1</sup> that the theory that the young man was Mark would explain how our Lord's prayer in His Agony came to be reported—it was Mark himself who heard it. But this theory still leaves unanswered the question—which the first-mentioned class of commentators attacked—How came it about that the young man was in the garden clothed in his sleeping garment? Until we have an answer to the *two* questions there can be no satisfactory solution of the problem. Now, it seems to me that the most natural explanation is that *Mark was the gardener of*

*Gethsemane*. Indeed we may go even nearer to the first suggestion mentioned above, and say that he was the son of the owner—for it is generally held that the *sindon* was not worn by the lower classes, and we know (from Ac 12<sup>12-14</sup>) that Mark's mother, Mary, was a matron of some position. It is also a natural inference from the same passage that Mary was a friend of Jesus and His disciples. If Mary owned the garden we can understand how it was that 'Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples' (Jn 18<sup>2</sup>).

Now I believe it is possible to adduce from the Gospel of Mark internal evidence to confirm my suggestion that he was a gardener. It will be found that he employs words and expressions that reveal an intimate knowledge of plant life and garden operations; and when we compare his language with that of parallel passages in the other Gospels we are at once struck by its greater exactness. The following points seem particularly noteworthy:

(i) In his account of the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, Mark says: 'dugged a *pit* for the winepress' (12<sup>1</sup>)—*ὑπολήμιον*, a word used only here in the N.T. Matthew has merely the less accurate 'dugged a winepress' (21<sup>33</sup>).

(ii) In his account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, Mark uses the technical expression *πρασιαί*—'garden beds' (6<sup>40</sup>), translated in R.V. 'in ranks.' This word again occurs only here in the N.T. Commentators generally suggest that this picturesque detail is to be attributed to 'the impressionable Peter.' Surely it is more likely to be an added touch of vividness by Mark—a term familiar to a gardener rather than to a fisherman!

(iii) In their account of the Parable of the

<sup>1</sup> In a paper read before the local Baptist Association at Barmouth by the Rev. J. Williams Hughes, B.A., B.D.

Mustard Seed, Matthew and Luke (Mt 13<sup>31, 32</sup>, Lk 13<sup>18, 19</sup>) describe the seed as 'becoming a tree' (δέιδρον). As the mustard plant is only a herb—an *annual*—this expression is now allowed to be an 'exaggeration.' Mark does not employ this inaccurate expression, but uses instead the words 'putteth out great branches'—κλάδους μεγάλους—perhaps more correctly translated 'large twigs.'

Matthew and Luke again describe the birds of the heaven as 'lodging *in* the branches thereof.' Mark, on the other hand, says: 'can lodge *under* the shadow thereof'—a much more suitable expression for a herb. And Mark is careful not to say that birds do actually lodge under its shadow, but only that it is possible (δύνασθαι) for them to do so.

(iv) In the account of the Withering of the Fig-tree (11<sup>13</sup>) only Mark makes the significant explanation, 'for it was not the season of figs.' And in describing the condition of the tree after it had withered, he alone adds, 'from the roots': as a gardener Mark knew that an accidental injury might have caused a partial withering, but here the life of the tree had entirely passed out of it.

(v) In his account of the Triumphal Entry (11<sup>1-11</sup>) only Mark uses the technical term στριβάδας—'layers of leaves' (11<sup>8</sup>). Matthew has only the ordinary word for 'twigs'—κλάδους.

It is also noteworthy that the four parables recorded by Mark all deal with the life of the garden and the fields. The parable peculiar to Mark—the Seed growing secretly—takes the place of the domestic parable of the Leaven, given in Matthew. And the exactness of the

language of Mark in this parable is very striking—the seed 'sprouting and *lengthening*'; the three stages of growth—'first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear'; and the fruit 'permitting' the husbandman to 'put forth the sickle.' It is hard to believe that Mark received from Peter the parable in this concise form where almost every word is charged with suggestive detail.

I believe that the cumulative effect of these citations goes far to prove that Mark's occupation was gardening, and to confirm the theory that I have propounded.

We may now try to reconstruct the scene in the Garden. When Jesus and His disciples went to Gethsemane, Mark was already there, passing the night, as the custom was, in the watch-tower. He did not know that Jesus would be coming there, and when he heard voices in the garden he immediately arose in his night garment to see what was taking place. And he came across Jesus, and overheard His words of anguish. It may be, indeed, that he even tried to console Him, and that his appearance in a white garment caused those of the disciples who had remained on the confines of the garden—farther away than Peter, James, and John (Mt 26<sup>36</sup>)—to imagine him to be an angel. (This would explain the origin of the interpolated verse about the angel in Lk 22<sup>43</sup>.) When soon afterwards the crowd led by Judas entered the garden, Mark hastened to remonstrate with them for their intrusion, but they began to jeer at him and rough-handle him, so that he was fain to escape naked to the watch-tower.

## The Raising of Lazarus.

By EDWARD GRUBB, M.A., LETCHWORTH.

Is the narrative in the eleventh chapter of John a story of fact, or is it a piece of deliberate fiction? Quite obviously the author intended it to be taken as history, for in the next chapter 'Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead,' is introduced again, and in a very matter-of-fact way; and the miracle is represented as the chief cause of the temporary popularity of Jesus at Jerusalem, and of the determination of the chief priests to put Him to death (Jn 11<sup>46-12<sup>19</sup></sup>). But those critics who conclude

that the story is unbelievable have weighty arguments on their side.

1. In the first place, the modern conception of the miracles of Jesus (which in fact goes back at least to Augustine), that they were 'not contrary to nature, but only to what is known of nature,' seems to fail us altogether when it is a case of believing that a man was restored to life when so completely dead that his body had begun to decay. (It is true that this supposition of the anxious