

of the returned exiles mentioned by name.<sup>1</sup> And then two years later Zechariah describes the embassy sent from Bethel to inquire what were to be the relations between themselves and the restored community.<sup>2</sup> Such a question, the author of Daniel would infer, was bound to have been asked fairly soon. The evidence, therefore, would appear to him incontrovertible—Haggai and Zechariah prophesied in Palestine *almost immediately after the Return*.

Yet both prophets date their books in the 'second' and 'fourth' years of 'Darius the king'. It was but a short step to the final inference that Darius, not Cyrus, was the liberator; and that it was he who had conquered Babylon at the head of the Median hosts.

If the above considerations be sound it follows that 'Darius the Mede' is no less a 'fiction'; but he is a fiction created not solely, or indeed primarily, by 'a conflation of confused traditions'. Traditions there certainly were, and some of these at least will have been known to the author of Daniel.<sup>3</sup> But on the crucial point we have been considering he was *not* dependent on tradition. In naming Darius as the conqueror of Babylon, and in styling him 'the Mede', he re-arranged, re-cast, or even ignored, the traditions which came to him, because he preferred the evidence which he thought (quite naturally in the circumstances) was provided by 'the books' of his prophetic Canon.

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### ST. MARK XVI. 8. 'THEY WERE AFRAID.' WHY?

THE second gospel, though it is the shortest of the *synoptic gospels*, has probably been more often misunderstood than either of the other two. This is perhaps largely due to the nature of the volume. It is not a literary work planned by a skilled writer; but it is a collection of incidents and sayings from the life of Jesus based upon reminiscences of an eye-witness, who very probably narrated them to groups of Aramaic-speaking Christians living in Palestine or Syria in the years immediately succeeding the death of their Master. As time passed on these reminiscences would be committed to writing, and at length as the gospel spread westward they would be translated into Greek. But from a very early period this gospel has caused perplexity to simple-

<sup>1</sup> It is to be observed that two of the names, Tobijah and Jedaiah, occur also in the Chronicler's list of those who returned 'at the first' (Ezra ii. 36, 60 || Neh. vii. 39, 62).

<sup>2</sup> Zech. vii. 1-7.

<sup>3</sup> Thus, he must have heard of both Darius and Cyrus (i. 21, vi. 28, x. 1) through tradition: so, too, he will have heard in all probability that Ahasuerus (ix. 1) was related to Darius; and also, perhaps, that the conqueror of Babylon was at the time advanced in years (v. 31).

minded readers. Some illustrations of this may be found in 'St. Matthew' (*Int. Crit. Comm.*), pp. xxxi ff. And perhaps the closing words of the Gospel have been more misunderstood than any others. It may not be amiss to examine them once more.

It is recorded that three women who went on an errand of piety to visit the tomb saw, on reaching it, that the cave was open, and that a young man clothed in white was sitting there. This caused them great amazement or astonishment. The root *ἐκθαμβέω* means 'amazement' or 'wonder', and there is no reason for reading 'fright' into it as does the A.V. 'affrighted'. The R.V. 'amazed' is better. The young man then gave them a message to the effect that Jesus had risen from the dead, and they were to go and bid the disciples to go to Galilee, where they would see their Master. The effect of this was to make them leave the tomb, and the gospel ends with the words 'For trembling and astonishment had come upon them: and they said nothing to anyone; for they were afraid'. Now what is the meaning of 'were afraid'?

To begin with, there is no reason to read into 'trembling and astonishment' anything like 'terror'. 'Astonishment', *ἐκστασις*, is used before in this gospel (v. 42) of the amazement of those who witnessed the restoration to life of Jairus' daughter. 'Trembling', *τρόμος*, need not be caused by fright. The verb is found in some MSS. in Acts ix. 6 in connexion with another expressing 'wonder', *θαμβέω*, to describe St. Paul's emotions after receiving a message from the Lord in a vision.

But what about 'were afraid'? A previous passage in this gospel seems to help us to answer that question. In ix. 2-16, we read the narrative of the Transfiguration. Three disciples see Jesus transfigured before their eyes. And as they gazed they saw Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. They must have felt as Jacob did when he saw angels moving between heaven and earth and said 'how full of awe is this place—it is the ante-room of the presence of God!' And Peter burst in upon the scene with an expression of his wish to prolong it, 'for he wist not what to answer for they became sore afraid'. Now there is a remarkable amount of parallelism between this and the closing narrative of the gospel.

i. (a) Disciples see a vision of the supernatural.

(b) Women receive what they deemed to be an angelic assurance that Jesus had proved Himself to be conqueror of death and was alive.

ii. (a) Peter bursts into speech not knowing what to say (or what he was saying) for he was afraid.

(b) The women are stunned into silence for they were afraid.

Does it not seem plain that in both cases the 'fear' was an emotion produced by an experience which seemed to transcend human experience? It may be called 'fear', but 'fear' in religious language can describe a vast range of human reactions from physical gibbering

terror or nervous mental apprehension to that reverential awe, and fear of losing one's sense of the Presence of God, which is closely bound up with love and trust, adoration and worship. And it seems to be used here in the lofty religious sense. We might paraphrase the word 'They were hushed into silence because they were overwhelmed by a feeling of reverential awe'. If this is so, the book ends on a high note, and the final words form a fitting ending. The original narrator was recording his recollections of some incidents in the life of Jesus. He closes them at the moment when it had become clear to some of His followers that His life had ended, not in death, but in mastery over death. The writer's personal reminiscences were ended. Henceforth life with Jesus was equally open and possible to all men.

Of course if there be any who will admit that the foregoing argument makes it possible to hold that the closing words interpreted as a note of triumph form a fitting end to the book, others will urge that no one can believe that a Greek author would end his book with a conjunction (*γάρ*). But why not? Is it not at least probable that this is the end of a sentence? The words 'for they were afraid' seem to give the reason for 'they said nothing'. If so, the sentence is complete in itself and nothing more is required. But if the writer could end a sentence with a conjunction he could also end his book in that way.

But what sort of a writer is he who could do so unliterary a thing? It is very generally believed that in the period before our gospels were committed to writing, sayings and incidents from the life of Jesus were current in Christian circles orally, and, in the earliest period, in Aramaic diction. When these traditions began to be translated into Greek, the Greek chosen was not the Greek of Hellenistic writers, but an imitation of the translation-Greek of the O.T. Scriptures in the LXX. Whilst all four gospels are in this sacred translation-Greek there are subtle differences between them. The first gospel is written in good Septuagintal Greek. So is the third, though the preface shows that the writer had he chosen could have adopted a more literary style. About the Greek of the fourth gospel there is an Hebraic flavour that has caused some scholars to think that Hebrew originals lie not far away behind at least parts of that Gospel. But the literary aroma of the second gospel is quite different. In his monotonous use of imperfect tenses, and participles with the verb 'to be', and in other ways, it savours Aramaic rather than Hebrew idiom; and this brings us back to 'For they were afraid'. In Aramaic the conjunction would not have stood last. When the writer was putting into Greek the oral narratives or the written accounts of his sources he had two alternatives. He could use a participle or adjective with the verb 'to be', or he could use the imperfect tense so characteristic of him. He chose the latter, and of necessity the conjunction fell into the last place.

'They were afraid.' Why? Because their fear was not fright or terror but the solemn awe of human beings who felt that they stood at the gate of heaven and had just received a message from the Master they loved; who was after all not dead and buried beyond recall, but now finally transfigured and changed into the conqueror of hell and of death.<sup>1</sup>

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[*Note by the acting-editor.* It may be remembered that one of Dr. Hort's contentions, in his discussion of the ending of the second gospel (*The New Testament in the Original Greek*, Introduction: Appendix, p. 47), runs thus: '... it becomes incredible ... that his [St. Mark's] one detailed appearance (*sic*) of the Lord on the morning of the resurrection should end upon a note of unassuaged terror'. It will be noticed that Mr. Allen's note offers an interpretation of the passage which may be thought to go far to remove the difficulty expressed by Dr. Hort in the above quotation.]

#### LUKE XXII. 19 b-20

It has long been realized that at Luke xx. 19 f. the choice lies between the longer text of the bulk of our witnesses and the shorter, found in *D a ff<sup>2</sup> i l* and, with the transposition of 19 a to before 17, in *b e*, and that the readings of the two old Syriac MSS. represent a compromise between these variants. At this point agreement ends, and scholars are sharply divided in their opinions on the original form of the passage and on its history. In view of the many discussions from Westcott and Hort onward this note will not go over all the arguments that have been brought forward in favour of one variant or the other, but will be confined to certain points which, if not novel, seem to have been commonly overlooked.

The first point is concerned with the evidence for the shorter form of the text. Verses 19 b-20 are present in the Old Latin MSS. *c f q r<sup>1</sup> r<sup>2</sup> aur δ*. Burkitt, however, showed in *The Old Latin and the Itala*, 35-40, that in Luke xxiv. 36 to end an archetype of *c* had been interpolated from the *vg*. These interpolations could be detected because they were lacking in other Old Latin MSS. and, while their contexts in *c* showed no significant agreements with the *vg*, they themselves followed it closely. Burkitt treated no passage outside Luke xxiv.

<sup>1</sup> I have for a good many years been unable to read current New Testament critical works. After the above note had been written and sent to be typed, there was brought to my notice a volume by Dr. R. H. Lightfoot, and also a review by him in *J.T.S.*, 183-4, in both of which he deals with the points made in my note. The arguments which he uses are in my opinion a convincing refutation of the too widely held view that it is incredible that the second gospel should have come to an intentional ending with the words *ἐφοβούντο γάρ*.