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A table of contents for *Journal of Biblical Literature* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_jbl-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jbl-01.php)

ἐφοβούντο γάρ, MARK 16 8<sup>1</sup>

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**F**EW tasks are more instructive for the student of history than the tracing of an idea, all but universally held in his day, to its source. One thing he will usually discover: viz., as successive writers treat the subject anew, but not afresh, their effort to avoid plagiarism consists too often merely in deleting the "apparently's," or "possibly's" or "not improbably's." And so oftentimes without a fresh reworking a judgment, originally expressed with caution, becomes the "tested result of criticism." Why the mere fact of repetition should remove doubts is hard to say. Perhaps it is but a reflection of the "*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum, etc.*"

Few better illustrations of this evolution of certainty can be found than in the attitude of scholarship to the so-called "mutilated ending of Mark." Everyone seems to know that the author could not have ended with the words ἐφοβούντο γάρ. Personally I always feel it a bit rash to state what an author could or could not do, especially if he were writing in what is to us a more or less painfully acquired book-language.

Is not our certainty that the gospel did not originally end as it now does colored by the convincing case against the

<sup>1</sup> Since writing this article my attention has been called to the note ἐφοβούντο γάρ Mark XVI 8 by R. R. Ottley in *J. T. S.*, July 1925, pp. 407-409. It need hardly be said that the two are completely independent. I quite disagree with his concluding paragraph in which he expresses his opinion that the imperfect ἐφοβούντο is not as "conclusive" as would have been the aorist, v. *infra*.

genuineness of the endings now in existence? One would indeed be rash to question the findings here. On textual and internal grounds alike the present endings must be seen as early attempts to complete the original gospel. But the point often ignored is: what was the fancied need? Was it of form or content?

In a most fair discussion of the problem Hort wrote: "It is incredible that the Evangelist deliberately concluded either a paragraph with ἐφοβούνται γάρ, or the Gospel with a petty detail of a secondary event, leaving his narrative hanging in the air" (p. 46). Both of these points must be considered.

First, that from style. Some time ago while re-reading Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* I discovered that he did not know the prohibition against a final γάρ, for he concluded the first section of Chap. XXXII with the words ἐσταυρώθη γάρ. Interested, I dipped into some other Greek authors. In the LXX it is said of Sarah (Gen. 18 15), ἠρνήσατο δὲ Σάρρα λέγουσα οὐκ ἐγέλυσα, ἐφοβήθη γάρ. Not the end of a paragraph, but the end of a sentence. This is a most interesting parallel to the 'impossible' sentence of Mark. Nor is the change of tense (ἐφοβήθη instead of ἐφοβεῖτο) significant as we shall see below. ἐφοβήθη γάρ is the translation of פָּחַדָּהּ יָרָא. This same phrase (except that it is masculine) is translated in 1 Chr. 10 4 ὅτι ἐφοβεῖτο. Other examples of final γάρ in the LXX are ἐταράχθησαν γάρ (Gen. 45 3), and καὶ ἐρεῖ οὐ δύναμαι ἀναγνῶναι, ἐσφράγισται γάρ (Is. 29 11).

In the New Testament we find ὑμεῖς φωνεῖτέ με ὁ διδάσκαλος καὶ ὁ κύριος, καὶ καλῶς λέγετε, εἰμὶ γάρ (John 13 13). In Rom. 3 3 and Phil. 1 18 Paul writes τί γάρ;—a phrase by no means uncommon in classic Greek. In the space of nine lines Sophocles uses the phrase three times (*O. C.* 539, 542, 547), while I discovered it as well in Plato (*Theaet.* 209 B) and Menander (*Epitrep.* 44).

In the rapid dialogue of Plato it is hard to discover a page where some sentence does not end with γάρ. A few illustrations of many taken almost at random will suffice: ἰκανῶς γάρ (*Rep.* 502 C); ἢ γάρ (*ib.* 371 B, E; 505 D, *et passim*); ἔχει γάρ (*Phaedr.* 268 A). In the *Institutio Cyri* Xenophon

wrote *ὑμεῖς δ' ἔφη, ὦ Γαδάτα καὶ Γωβρύα, δείκνυτε τὰς ὁδοὺς ἵστε γάρ.* (7. 5. 24, Teubner 1877, ed. Dindorf). A brief examination of Menander revealed 3 cases (in addition to the *τί γάρ* mentioned above), in all of which the final *γάρ* was not even in its usual second place. *ἐν ταύτῃ περιφέρει γάρ* (*Epitrep.* 147); *καὶ σὺ γάρ* (*Samia* 233), *σοὶ λαλῶ, ἦπτον μεθύεις γάρ* (*Perikeir.* 221). And the casual nature of my search convinces me that I happened upon but a few.<sup>2</sup>

To be sure only the example from Justin closed a formal section, though all concluded sentences, and several of them paragraphs in dialogue. It is interesting to observe that no less a writer than Plato ended not only what is now a chapter (*Rep.* V. *cap.* VI, p. 457 B) but also Book V itself (480 A) with the phrase *παντάσῃ μὲν οὖν*. Is it so much more elegant to end a book with *οὖν* than with *γάρ*?

But it is often objected, that not only the *γάρ* but the *ἐφοβοῦντο* is strange; that the sentence is not really concluded, for *ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ* should not mean "for they were afraid," but "for they were afraid of" with an expected object. This objection is not valid. Aside from the passage under discussion forms of *φοβέομαι* occur 11 times in Mark. In 5 of these it is used absolutely, i. e. with no complement such as object, infinitive, clause, or phrase. These may be listed:

- 5 15 *θεωροῦσιν τὸν δαιμονιζόμενον καθήμενον . . . καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν.*  
 5 33 *ἡ δὲ γυνὴ φοβηθεῖσα καὶ τρέμουσα . . . ἦλθεν.*  
 5 36 *μὴ φόβου μόνον πίστευε.*  
 6 50 *ἐγὼ εἰμι μὴ φοβεῖσθε.*  
 10 32 *οἱ δὲ ἀκολουθοῦντες ἐφοβοῦντο.*

The remaining 6 occurrences are as follows:

- (1) with cognate accusative *once*, 4 41,
- (2) with other direct object *4 times*, 6 20; 11 18, 32; 12 12,
- (3) with complementary infinitive *once*, 9 32.

<sup>2</sup> Since writing this paragraph I opened the *Republic* at random and discovered 6 cases on the two opened pages; cf. also the additional illustrations listed by Otley, *op. cit.*

No example of the so-called Hebraism, i. e. *φοβέομαι* + *ἀπό*, occurs in Mark. This, however, is not such weighty proof of the Greek origin of the gospel as might be imagined, for of the 426 cases where forms of *φοβέομαι* occur in the LXX only 42, if my hasty counting was accurate, are followed by *ἀπό*. No example of the complementary clause introduced by *μή* or *μή πως* occurs.<sup>3</sup>

In the light of this the objection that *ἐφοβούντο* must originally have had an object collapses, especially in the light of 10 32 and numerous examples from the LXX. In 10 32 *ἐφοβούντο* occurs without an object, while in 11 18 it takes the object *αὐτόν*. The LXX provides numerous cases evidencing with what indifference the two constructions were used.

Again the change from imperfect to aorist is of no consequence in this matter. *ἐφοβήθησαν* is used absolutely in 5 15, but with the object *τὸν ὄχλον* in 12 12. The same thing occurs in the LXX, e. g. (1) *ἐφοβήθη γάρ* (without object, Gen. 18 15); (2) *ἐφοβήθη Δαυεὶδ τὸν Θεόν* (1 Chr. 13 12).

The result of this phase of the study would seem to justify a word of caution. In the light of the freedom that masters of Greek style such as Plato and the poets exercised, it is perhaps unwise for us to be too certain as to what a man who really knew Greek could or could not do. Again, in the light of the many places in Mark that seem rough to us,—only 4 verses before our case he had been satisfied with *ἦν γὰρ μέγας σφόδρα*<sup>4</sup>—need we feel that on purely literary grounds *ἐφοβούντο γάρ* would have offended his ear?

It should also be noted that what is perhaps not the most elegant of Greek idiom, may yet if it is passable Greek

<sup>3</sup> In the light of this fact Streeter's comment (*The Four Gospels*, p. 337) seems a bit rash: "Indeed, the words *ἐφοβούντο γάρ* in Greek may not even be the end of a sentence; they lead us to expect a clause beginning with *μή*, 'They were afraid lest they be thought mad,' or something to that effect."

<sup>4</sup> Nor is this exceptional. Mark is very fond of concluding a statement with a brief clause introduced by *γάρ*. E. g. *ἦσαν γάρ ἀλειψί* (1 10); *ἔλεγεν γάρ ὅτι ἐξέστη* (3 21); *ἐφοβού γάρ ἐγένεοντο* (9 8); *ἦν γάρ ἔχων κήρυγμα πολλὰ* (10 29); *καὶ γάρ Γαλιλαῖος εἶ* (14 70). Cf. also 1 23; 5 28; 6 14; and especially 16 4.

represent a perfectly good Aramaic equivalent. Without desiring to discuss the question of an Aramaic original (which nevertheless seems to me far more probable than the pronouncements of many would indicate), it is perhaps worth while to ask how a literal translator of the Aramaic equivalent of  $\text{ܡܪܝܢ}^5$  would have avoided  $\epsilon\phi\omicron\beta\omicron\upsilon\nu\tau\omicron$  γάρ. This point may not be without value to Aramaic students, and would perhaps strengthen the case for these words being final; but it is to be remarked that the instances cited from writers certainly not translating from a Semitic original are unaffected by the verdict of the professional Aramaists on this question.

One further point with regard to the literary problem remains. It should be observed that if our gospel is mutilated, whatever may have been the cause, the final γάρ does not seem to have caused any disturbance. Horrid indeed must have been the heresy of the next word if the critic hewed it away though his soul was sore within him at the resultant final γάρ. To assume that a page ended with this phrase demands that the one who suppressed the last page felt that the result was intelligible Greek and a tolerable ending. Finally, when attempts were made to complete the gospel there is no evidence that any effort was made to smooth out the barbarism of a γάρ concluding a paragraph. Accordingly on purely stylistic grounds it is most unwise to assert that the gospel could not have ended as it does now.

With regard to the second part of Hort's statement, viz., concerning Mark's ending his gospel "with a petty detail of a secondary event, leaving his narrative hanging in the air," I am not attempting any exhaustive discussion. My interest was chiefly concerned with the question of form. But one or two observations may not be out of place.

Would this ending be any more abrupt than the beginning? May not the feeling of some early Christians—and of us too—that the account is incomplete be due to familiarity with the resurrection appearances as told in the other gospels?

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps  $\text{ܡܪܝܢ}^5$ .

Other accounts in Mark seemed incomplete to later Christians, and they amplified them. This, however, does not affect the fact that for Mark they were not incomplete. The case of the relation of John and Jesus at the baptism, or the attitude of Jesus toward Peter at the famous confession near Caesarea Philippi are instructive.

The plausibility of this suggestion is heightened by the fact that the so-called longer conclusion is hardly more than a catena of passages from Matthew, Luke, and John. With the fondness that Mark shows for ending an incident with an explanatory phrase it may not have seemed to him that he ended with a petty detail or left his narrative hanging in the air. On the contrary 16 1-8 makes an admirable climax for the sketch of the critical period of Jesus' life, during which he labored amid ever-increasing difficulties which resulted in his death. But short though the conclusion is it definitely states the triumph of Jesus' opponents was only temporary, and that God's power had been vindicated (τ. 8). The words of v. 7 *προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν, ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν* are often cited as conclusive proof that a statement of Galilee appearances—perhaps akin to those of Matthew or of the appendix to John—originally followed. Need the words, however, be more than an echo of 14 28 *ἀλλὰ μετὰ τὸ ἐγερθῆναί με προάξω ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν*? From his sources, or elsewhere, he had learned of appearances in Galilee, but either because his information was limited or through choice he did not give it in detail, but merely referred to it in this intriguing way. Nor is this bare reference any more difficult than the cryptic phrase in Luke 24 34 *ἠγέρθη ὁ κύριος καὶ ὤφθη Σίμωνι*.

If these suggestions be discounted and it be held that the gospel did have a different ending, one needs try to find a tolerable explanation of the excision. Suggestions that the author came to the end of his roll prematurely, or stopped with the intention of writing Volume II a little later, or fell sick ere he finished are too ridiculous for consideration. Nor is the view tenable that a last sheet was lost. The only possible justification for such a view would be that the sheet

was lost at so early a date that not only had it never been copied, but that no one was sufficiently familiar with the writing to restore it from memory.

The usual argument is that the ending was intentionally deleted because it was offensive to certain Christians. There is more plausibility to this argument, yet it is by no means completely satisfactory. It would require a tremendously early date for this act of vandalism to account for no vestige of the early ending being preserved anywhere. And it would require an extraordinary unanimity of thought on the part of the Christians familiar with the book to see them all acquiescing without a single discordant voice. Surely this was not the case when Marcion a few years later deleted the books he accepted, or when Serapion sought to suppress the Gospel of Peter after his trip to Rhossus. These acts of censorship may be performed with ease in theory; in practice the matter is somewhat more difficult. If any one thing is clear from our knowledge of our early brethren, it is that unanimity of opinion was not one of their conspicuous virtues.

I am not trying to prove that the gospel could not—or for that matter did not—end differently. My object has been to point out how tenuous the evidence is, and that one of the sheet anchors (to introduce a figure) has never grappled bottom.