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**DRAMATIC ELEMENTS IN MARK**

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**A Thesis Presented to  
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary  
Department of New Testament Theology**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Divinity**

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by  
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**June, 1949**

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Introduction: The purpose of this paper is, by an analysis of the dramatic features in St. Mark's, to bring the reader to a more intimate appreciation of the Gospel.

I. A critique of Mark's style.

A. The relation to the type of presentation.

1. Peter's
2. His own

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Conclusion: What Mark tries to achieve in his Gospel.

## OUTLINE

**Introduction:** The purpose of this paper is, by an analysis of the dramatic features in St. Mark, to bring the reader to a more intimate appreciation of the second Gospel.

### I. A critique of Mark's style.

#### A. The reasons for his type of presentation.

1. Peter's influence.
2. His own constitution.

#### B. Characteristics of his Evangel.

1. Forthright narrative of an eyewitness account.
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1. Double negative.
2. Ellipses.
3. Parataxis.
4. Direct speech.
5. Unusual verb constructions.
6. Tenses.
7. Adverbial

#### E. Elimination of long discourses.

#### F. Retention of original Aramaic expressions.

#### G. The abrupt ending.

**Conclusion:** What Mark tries to achieve in his Gospel.

## INTRODUCTION

Mark is commonly recognized as the most vivid, the most dramatic of the Synoptic writers. His Gospel fairly leaps with life-like action. It progresses rapidly in presenting an historical account, without stopping for long discourses. At the same time as brevity is the watchword, Mark does not limit himself in describing detail of all sorts - time, place, personal emotions. He often adds pieces of information that reveal much to the reader, thus affording a more intimate glimpse into the event. The purpose of this paper is to present an analysis of some of these dramatic elements, together with a critique of Mark's style, with a view to creating a more intimate appreciation of and a greater fondness for the second Gospel.

This study has been primarily concerned with uncovering the dramatic elements through a comparative study of the parallel accounts of the three Synoptic Gospels in Greek. More vivid diction, omission of certain sections, and addition of detail in relation to the two other Gospels were particularly noted. Commentaries and isagogical material were consulted for opinions on Mark's style and analysis of the dramatic elements. A combination and interweaving of these studies resulted in the conviction that in this practically eyewitness account of Peter the Christian world has a most faithful reproduction of the life and actions of its Savior, that Mark preserved through inspiration of the Holy Ghost a most dramatic, a most vivid, a most living account of the ministrations of Christ and of His glory and power as the Son of God. The Gospel of Mark abounds with dramatic elements.

## PART ONE

### A CRITIQUE OF MARK'S STYLE

The reasons for his type of presentation.

The question arises as to the reason for Mark's writing in the style which he used. Commentators are fairly well agreed that Mark was, to a large extent, a faithful recorder of Peter's accounts. Peter's influence then is responsible, partially at least, for the vividness of the second Gospel.

That Mark and Peter were closely associated is asserted by Eusebius, who quotes Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor in the first half of the second century:

"This also the Presbyter (John) said: Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately though not indeed in order whatsoever things he remembered of the things said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed Him, but afterwards, as I said, he followed Peter who adapted his teaching to the needs (of the hearers) but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord's discourses. So that Mark committed no error in writing some things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely." (Church History, iii, 39)<sup>1</sup>

One can hardly escape the impression that Mark's Gospel is the result of a request by some who had sat at the feet of the Apostle Peter for a permanent record of his accounts. The minute observations are without any doubt possible only from an eyewitness, only from someone who had followed Jesus close at hand and someone

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<sup>1</sup> Branscomb, B. Harvie, The Gospel of Mark, p. xvi.

preservation of a lively image of Him. Mark, who in I Peter 5, 13, is called the son of Peter, through Peter's eyes has seen and recorded even the looks and gestures of Christ, 3,5; 5,32; 11,11. Peter's extroverted personality thus has led Mark to write as he does.

While most authorities state that Mark recorded the discourses of Peter, all do not agree that such was the only source of his material. Zahn believes that Papias, in the quotation above and elsewhere, expressly limits the dependence of Mark's Gospel upon the discourses of Peter to some portions of the Gospel. But he agrees that in so far as he recorded Peter's information, he recorded it accurately, without omitting or without including any additions of his own.<sup>1</sup>

Only one commentator consulted in this study disagreed entirely with this theory of the source of Mark. Branscomb, writing in the recent Moffatt New Testament Commentary, feels that the last half century of study has eliminated the easy answer mentioned above. Instead of a direct eyewitness account, he postulates, we have an account made up of a combination of materials from different sources. He denies the exactness of detail as pointing to a direct personal source. Instead the Evangel, although some of the material goes back to Peter ultimately, incorporates stories with a long previous history.<sup>2</sup> In answer we might point out some of the autoptic touches found, for example, in the transfiguration story as being likely only from an eye-

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<sup>1</sup> Zahn, Theodor, Introduction to the New Testament, pp. 440-441.

<sup>2</sup> Branscomb, op. cit., p. xxii.

witness.

It is not the purpose of this study to solve the problem of the source of Mark. Instead we wish to point out that the majority opinion feels that Mark was influenced by the bold and excitable personality of Peter, whose discourses he heard often, to write in the style and to include the detail which he did.

At the same time as he was influenced by Peter, Mark very likely found that influence very congenial to his own temperament. Mark was probably of a like fiery disposition and a man of action, as was his teacher. Hence he was fitted for his task of recording the vivid recollections of Peter. He would not be likely to tone them down, but to record them faithfully, because of his make-up appreciating them as fully as his master. An appraisal of Mark in his role as Peter's recorder is given us by Westcott:

"It is perhaps a mere fancy, but it seems natural to find in St. Mark a characteristic firmness for his special work. One whose course seems to have been marked throughout by a restless and impetuous energy was not unsuited for tracing the life of the Lord in the fresh vigor of its outward power. The friend alike of St. Paul and St. Peter, working in turn each of the great centers of the Jewish world, at first timidly sensitive of danger, and afterwards a comforter of an imprisoned Apostle, of the circumcision and yet writing to Gentiles, St. Mark stands out as one whom the facts of the Gospel had moved by their simple force to look over and beyond varieties of doctrine in the vivid realizations of the actions of the Son of God. For him teaching was subordinate to action; and every trait which St. Peter preserved in his narrative would find a faithful recorder in one equally suited to apprehend and treasure it. The want of personal knowledge was made up for by the liveliness of attention with which the Evangelist recorded 'without omission' or 'misrepresentation' the words of his master. The requirements of a Roman audience...fixed the outlines of the narrative; and the keen memory of a



devoted Apostle filled up the picture with details which might well remain in all their freshness on such a mind as his. For St. Peter himself was of a kindred nature with St. Mark. He, too, could recall scenes of inconsiderate zeal and failing faith; while in the later years he still dwelt on each look and word of the heavenly Lord, whom he had earlier loved with more than a disciple's affection. Thus it was that master and disciple were bound together by the closest sympathy. The spirit of the Apostle animates the work of the Evangelist...<sup>1</sup>

Hence Peter, the faithful Apostle of Christ, and Mark, the faithful reproducer of the reminiscences of Peter, formed a team alike in disposition and temperament. It is not surprising that the Gospel is a vivid and dramatic presentation of the life of Christ.

#### Characteristics of the Evangel.

Basically, the Gospel of Mark is a forthright narrative of the account of an eyewitness. Mark, in recording the vivid recollections of Peter, wrote a straight narrative style, plunging directly into the story and proceeding rapidly to the end. There is here no embellishment such as one might expect from a learned man. Instead Peter, an unlettered man, and Mark, following him, spoke simply and directly. Faced with the necessity of telling his story to the world, Peter spilled out the memories of his own heart, speaking of the human and the divine Christ, of the men with whom the Savior came in contact, of times and places in a straightforward manner - a manner which Mark faithfully reproduced. Of the forthright character of the Gospel Kleist says:

"Here everything is simply direct, graphic, and intensely interesting to the speaker. There is here no

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<sup>1</sup> Westcott, B.F., An Introduction to the Study of the Gospels, pp. 234-6.

'labor,' no unwholesome straining after cleverness. A poet or master of prose may give illumination to a great concept to invest the statement of truth with glory. All that St. Peter or St. Mark is able to do is to tell directly what has happened. And this is the very thing that pleases us so much. There is here no 'art,' but just common sense."<sup>1</sup>

It is this manner of writing that not only makes possible, but is a part of the dramatic quality of Mark's Gospel. In the framework of a forthright narrative Mark has given us a graphic and realistic Gospel of action, rich in pictorial effects and life-like touches. The second Gospel has the charm of a singular vividness, and it is this vividness which makes the second Gospel dramatic. Almost all the features of Mark's style contribute to the vividness and hence dramatic quality which is the predominant note in Mark.

Not least among the characteristics of this Gospel which make it dramatic and graphic is the fulness Mark employs in noting detail. Peter undoubtedly furnished much of the intimate detail which Mark wrote down from his warm personal memory of the Savior's actions. In including these additional details, many of which the other two synoptic writers do not have, he paints in a few strokes scenes for us which stand out in their life-like quality. In a phrase he sets the time or the place, or gives added information, often not essential to understanding the story, but giving us a more intimate glimpse of the situation. It is true that Mark omits much that Matthew and Luke have, but Mark's style is not on the whole distinguished by brevity. What he does

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<sup>1</sup> Kleist, J.A., The Gospel of St. Mark, pp. 108-109.

include he often gives a fuller account of than the other two writers, 4,36-39; 6, 14-29. Luke and Matthew also have fulnesses of their own, but they are of another character and are due to their styles. Swete point out:

"St. Mark knows how to compress his matter where a multitude of words would only weaken the effect, or where the scheme of his work forbids greater fulness; on the other hand, when words can heighten the coloring or give life to the picture, they are used without regard to brevity and with little attention to elegance."<sup>1</sup>

Mark proceeds rapidly from section to section with the adverb immediately, but can also sit in contemplative stillness and sketch the scene, noting a thousand life-like touches.

The material which Mark includes and that which he omits also contribute to the dramatic and vivid quality of the Gospel. Since it is a message of action, Mark is interested in incident, not discourse. Hence Mark omits most of the longer discourses. He here and there weaves into his account striking extracts from the Sermon on the Mount, while Matthew, for example, devotes three chapters to it. Mark also does not include any birth narrative, but instead plunges immediately into the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Mark eliminates almost entirely the Lucan travel narrative, Luke 9,51-18,14. While Mark, as is to be expected, includes nearly all the miracles which the others record, he has only four of the parables of Christ. While large portions found in Matthew and Luke are either lacking or fragmentary in Mark, he seems to have a predilection for including dialogues and the Lord's

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<sup>1</sup> Swete, H.B., The Gospel according to St. Mark, p. xlvi.

briefly sayings. But, says Hastings, these are introduced mainly because of their connection with the events and acts.<sup>1</sup>

Many of Mark's grammatical constructions tend to add vividness to the exposition. The body of the Gospel is a series of sentences connected with the simplest of Greek copulas. Generally, *καί* and *δέ* are all that Mark uses to string together one idea after another, and consequently the thought and action move on apace. When the action becomes overwhelming, Mark is apt to slip into the historical present. His frequent use of the present tense to describe an historical event again adds life to the narrative.

Mark's treatment of Christ, while not strictly a stylistic question, is still subject to his manner of writing. Mark gives us a dramatic and objective picture of Christ. Hastings analyses it thus:

"It is in harmony with this (his vivid style) that Mark presents Christ so largely in the energy of His superhuman power. The prevailing aspect in which the second Gospel sets forth its subject is not that of the Son of David and Abraham...it is that of the Son of God with power, moving among men with His gift of miracle, and making the things of nature the servants of His grace. St. Mark gives a large place to His mighty works, and exhibits Him in the majesty of His energy. He shows us how He used His miraculous power, how that power was felt and recognized by different classes, how the multitude believed in it and made their appeal to and brought their sick to Him, confident if they could secure His notice or even touch Him it would be enough and how resistless were the effects produced alike on people and on disciples by His wonderful works."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hastings, James, ed., A Dictionary of the Bible, vol. III, "Gospel of Mark," p.254.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 254-255.

Mark was no master of prose writing. Kleist bluntly exclaims, "Style - there is none in this Gospel," but he adds, "but there is life in it and there is idiom. Every word is vibrant with the high seriousness of those eyewitnesses from the beginning, those ministers of the word."<sup>1</sup> Zahn does not believe that the dramatic quality is an artificial effect, for he feels that Mark was not capable of that in view of the thoroughly clumsy way in which Mark uses language. Rather he holds that the effect is a natural one, that the little touches never make the impression of being designed, and that to write this way was the author's second nature.<sup>2</sup> Mark, in writing His Gospel, however, kept always before himself his purpose - to set forth the history of the beginning of the Gospel.

A summary of the essential features of Mark's style which make it as dramatic as it is may be found in the words of Westcott:

"It is enough that Christ should be presented in the most vivid light, unfolding the truth in acts rather than in words; for faith will translate the passing deed into an abiding lesson. Everything centers in the immediate facts to be noted. Without drawing a complete history, St. Mark frames a series of complete pictures. But each is a representation of the outward features of the scene. For this reason the Evangelist avoids all reference to the Old Testament. The quotations which occur in the Lord's discourses remain, but after the introduction he adds none in his own person. The living portraiture of Christ is offered in the clearness of His present energy, not as the Fulfillment of the Past, nor even as the Foundation of the Future. His acts prove that He is both, but this is a deduction from the narrative and not the subject of it. There is perhaps not one narrative which

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<sup>1</sup> Kleist, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>2</sup> Zahn, op. cit., p. 462.

he gives in common with St. Matthew and St. Luke in which he does not contribute some special feature."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Westcott, op. cit., pp. 365-366.

PART TWO  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE DRAMATIC ELEMENTS

After the preceding discussion of Mark's style in general, we wish in this section to present an analysis of the dramatic elements themselves. Under each classification we will discuss the particular ways in which Mark uses the elements in his dramatic scheme, listing examples. The examples which will be adduced are numerous, but by no means are an exhaustive compilation. This study is to bring about a fuller awareness of the graphic features in Mark and hence a deeper appreciation of this Gospel.

Use of detail.

Perhaps the most impressive quality of Mark's Gospel is the great amount of detail. The facts furnished by Peter are often employed in an unconscious, but nonetheless effective way to heighten the vivid character of the narrative.

Mark, for example, is fond of noting facts of time and place. He is more abundant in these references than are the other two synoptic evangelists. Examples of Mark's predilection for noting facts of time are the following: 1,35 "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day;" 4,35 "And the same day, when the even was come;" 6,2 "And when the sabbath day was come;" 11,11 "And now the eventide was come;" 15,25 "And it was the third hour;" 16,2 "And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun." These vivid added touches are found only in Mark.

Places and situations are also noted more frequently in Mark than in Matthew and Luke. In 1,19, "And when he had gone a little

farther thence,' Mark is more exact by adding "a little." In 2,1, "And he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house," only the second Gospel notes that he was in a house. Additional examples are the following (underlined portions being peculiar to Mark): 2,13 "And he went forth again by the seaside;" 3,3 "And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth;" 3,7 "But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea;" 4,1 "And he began to teach by the seaside...so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land" (Matthew has "in the boat," but Mark graphically has "in the sea"); 4,38 "And he was in the hinder part of the ship;" 5,20 "And he departed and began to publish in Decapolis;" 7,31 "And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis;" 8,27 "And by the way he asked his disciples;" 9,28 "And when he was come into the house;" 9,33 "And he came to Capernaum, and being in the house;" 10,17 "And when he was gone forth into the way;" 10,32 "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem;" 10,46 "And they came to Jericho, and as he went out of Jericho...sat by the highway side begging;" 12,41 "And Jesus sat over against the treasury;" 13,3 "And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the temple;" 14,68 "And he went out into the porch;" 15,39 "And when the centurion, which stood over against him;" 16,5 "And entering into the sepulchre... a young man sitting on the right side." In giving us the situations and places, Mark adds to the drama of his narrative.



Mark is also impressed with the number involved in his narrative. The record of the number adds realism to his account, and hence vividness. For example, 1,33 "All the city;" 5,13 "They (the swine) were about two thousand;" 6,7 "By two and two;" 6,37 "Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread;" 6,40 "And they sat down in ranks by hundreds, and by fifties;" 14,30 "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." Mark is the only one of the three Evangelists to record these expressions of number, with the exception of the "thrice" in the last quotation.

As might be expected, Mark delights in calling our attention to the size of the crowds that followed Jesus. Westcott notes this:

"Everywhere multitudes crowd to hear Him, 2,13; 4,1; 5,21.24.34; 10,1; 12;37; as well as to receive His blessings, 1,33. When He was in a house, 'the whole city' was gathered at the door, 2,2, and even then the crowd could find no room. So great at times was the excitement that He 'could no longer openly enter into the city,' 1,45; and it is said twice that 'as many came and went, He could not even eat,' 3,20.21; 6,31; so that He seemed to His kindred to be beside Himself. Those who were healed, in spite of His injunctions, proclaimed abroad the tidings of His power, 6,33. And in His retirement, men 'from all the cities ran together on foot' to see Him, 6,55.56; and 'wherever He went,' into villages, or city, or country, they placed their sick before Him; and 'as many touched Him' were made whole."<sup>1</sup>

Fondness for proper names is also characteristic of this Gospel. Mark is alone in mentioning the name of one of the beggars at Jericho, Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus, 10,46; and together with the others he records the name Levi, son of

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<sup>1</sup> Westcott, op. cit., p.370.

Alphaeus, 2,14, and Simon, a Cyrenian, but adds, "father of Alexander and Rufus," 15,21.

Descriptive detail abounds in Mark. The extra vivid touches that he employs in making his Gospel live are numerous. They are to be found everywhere, in a variety of different forms. A sample follows (underlined sections again are found only in this Gospel): 1,7 "The latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose;" 1,13 "And was with the wild beasts;" 2,3 "And they came unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four;" 4,8 "And did yield fruit that sprang up and increased" (an enlargement on the idea of continued growth as reflected in the imperfect "did yield fruit"); 5,3 "Who had his dwelling among the tombs" (ΚΑΤΟΙΚΗΣΕΝ ΕΣΤΥΕΝ, stronger than Luke's ΕΜΕΝΕΝ, abode); 5,4 "Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces;" 5,5 "And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones;" 5,26 "And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse;" 6,13 "And anointed with oil many that were sick;" 6,39 "By companies (ΠΡΟΪΣΤΑΛ, garden beds) upon the green grass" (one of the most picturesque verses of the Gospel, the bright Oriental costumes arranged in companies like flower beds against the green grass); 6,47 "And he alone on the land;" 6,48 "And would have passed by them;" 6,50 "They all saw him;" 8,14 "Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf;" 8,24 "And he looked up and said, I see men as trees

walking;" 9,3 "And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them;" 9,14 "Scribes questioning with them;" 9,15 "And straightway all the people when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him;" 9,26 "And he was as one dead;" 10,44 "Servant of all;" 10,49 "And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee;" 10,50 "Casting away his garment, rose ( $\alpha\rho\lambda\iota\tau\eta\sigma\acute{\alpha}\omega$ , leap up);" 12,38.39 "And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplace, and the chief seats in the synagogue, and the uppermost rooms at feasts" (itemization of the scribes' pompousness); 12,41.42 "And many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing;" 14,3 "And she broke the box (of precious ointment);" 16,4 "For it was very great;" 16,19 "And sat on the right hand of God."

Illustrations of Mark's love of detailed and more vivid description is noted in two longer sections. There is a definite contrast in his style with that of Matthew and Luke. Vincent takes the story of the tempest:

"After the discourse from the boat, Mark alone tells us the disciples sent away the multitude, throws in the little details, they took him 'as he was,' and 'there were with them other little ships.' His account of the storm is more vivid than Matthew's or Luke's. He pictures the waves beating into the boat, and the boat beginning to fill, notes the steersman's cushion at the stern. He throws the awaking by the disciples and the stilling of the tempest into a dramatic form by the distressful question, 'Master, carest thou not that we perish?' And the command to the sea as to a raging monster, 'Peace, be still.'" (4,36-39)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vincent, M.R., Word Studies in the New Testament, vol. I, pp.156-7.

Vincent also analyses the example of the beheading of John the Baptist:

"It is interesting to compare the account of Herod's feast and John the Baptist's murder as given by Matthew and Mark respectively. Mark alone mentions the great banquet and the rank of the guests. He adds the little touches of Salome's entering in and delighting the guests. He throws Herod's promise and Salome's request into dialogue. Where Matthew says simply, 'He promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she should ask,' Mark gives it, 'Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom.' The whole narrative is more dramatic than Matthew's. Matthew says that Salome was put forward by her mother. Mark pictures her going out and details her conversation with Herodias, and her entering in again with haste, and demanding the horrible boon forthwith. Mark also enlarges upon Herod's regret: he was exceeding sorry; and where Matthew notes only his compliance with the damsel's request, Mark lets us in on his feeling of unwillingness to refuse her, also emphasizing the promptness of the transaction. Salome demands the Baptist's head forthwith; Herod sends the executioner straightway. Mark alone mentions the executioner." (6,11-29)<sup>1</sup>

Closely akin to the fondness for descriptive detail is a stylistic habit of mentioning many accessory circumstances. This additional information is usually not essential for understanding the story, but it illuminates the situation, making it more realistic. Often the reader is made to feel present at the event by such intimate detail. Hence, a dramatic effect is obtained through its use. Examples are as follows, with underlined sections found only in Mark: 1,20 "And they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants;" 1,29 "They entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John" (particular designation of Jesus' company and the house);

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p.158.

3,30 "Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit;" 4,10 "And when he was alone;" 5,35 "And while he yet spake;" 5,40 "But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying;" 5,42 "And straightway the damsel arose and walked, for she was of the age of twelve years;" 7,26 "The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation;" 8,3 "For divers of them came from afar;" 10,22 "And he was sad at that saying and went away grieved, for he had great possessions" (here not the detail peculiar to Mark, but the placement; while Luke mentions that he was a rich man first, Mark waits until the end where the disclosure of the fact adds to the drama of the climax); 12,44 "All that she had, even all her living;" 14,44 "And lead him away safely;" 14,51.52. The story of the young man in the linen cloth is found only in Mark; 14,59 "But neither so did their witnesses agree together;" 15,44 "And calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead;" 16,8 "Neither said they anything to any man."

Personal action and movement was remembered by Peter vividly, and Mark records even these details, bringing the characters close to life for the reader. 3,5 "And when he had looked round about on them;" 5,30 "And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press;" 5,32 "And he looked round about;" 6,41 "He looked up to heaven;" 9,35 "And he sat down;" 9,36 "And when he had taken him in his arms;" 10,17 "There came one running and kneeled to him;" 10,21 "Then Jesus,

beholding him;" 10,23 "And Jesus looked round about;" 10,27 "And Jesus, looking upon them;" 11,11 "And when he had looked round about on all things;" 11,13 "And seeing a fig tree afar off...he came... and when he had come to it" (progression of movement).

Noting of human feelings and emotions.

An outstanding characteristic of this Gospel which contributes much to its dramatic quality is the observation of human feelings and emotions. Mark is not alone a writer of surface action, nor does he go deeply into human motivation. But he does record what Peter remembered of the feelings of Jesus and of those with whom He came in contact, especially the disciples. In this feature we have a warm realism which makes this Gospel live.

Mark especially records Jesus' feelings of compassion and anger. 1,41 "And Jesus, moved with compassion (σπλαγχνισθείς, a strong word);" 1,43 "And he straitly charged him (ἐμβριμησάμενος a forceful expression, used for the snorting of a horse, indicating powerful emotion);" 3,5 "And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts;" 5,43 "And (he) commanded that something should be given her to eat" (tender compassion; Luke, the doctor, has this detail also); 6,31 "And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat" (appreciation of the disciples' weariness); 6,34 "And Jesus...was moved with compassion toward them, for they were as sheep not having a

shepherd;" 8,3 "And if I send them away fasting unto their own houses, they will faint by the way; for divers of them came from afar" (touched by their need and fatigue); 8,12 "And he sighed deeply in his spirit;" 9,21 "And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came upon him?" (interest in the lad); 10,14 "But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased."

Mark is also particularly interested in recording the effect the Son of God made on His hearers and the observers of His mighty deeds. In this connection Mark uses some of the strongest expressions of the Gospel and also the strongest expressions denoting fear, amazement, and astonishment at his command. Detailed mention will be made of this in the next section dealing with diction. 1,22 "And they were astonished at his doctrine;" 1,27 "And they were all amazed;" 4,41 "And they feared exceedingly;" 5,20 "And all men did marvel;" 6,51 "For they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered;" 6,52 "For they considered not the miracle of the loaves; for their heart was hardened;" 7,37 "And they were beyond measure astonished;" 9,10 "And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean;" 9,34 "And they held their peace;" 10,24 "And the disciples were astonished at his words (about the rich man);" 10,26 "And they were astonished out of measure;" 10,32 "And they were amazed, and as they followed, they were afraid;" 11,18 "Because all the people was astonished at his doctrine;" 15,44 "Pilate marvelled at Jesus being already dead."

Forceful expression of ideas.

Mark employs certain characteristic ways to make a point stronger, and hence more vivid and dramatic. Among these is his diction, or choice of words. He is particularly fond of using the strongest possible terms in describing the reaction of those who witnessed Christ at work. In other cases, too, his nature and his association with Peter caused him to write more vividly than the other two synoptic evangelists.

Examples of his forceful choice of words are the following:

1,10 "He saw the heavens opened" (ὄψετο ἰσθμῶν, rent; Mt. and Lk. have ἀνεώχθησαν, opened). 1,12 "And immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness" (ἔκβαλε, drive; Mt. and Lk. have ἄγω, lead). 1,25 "Hold thy peace" (φιμώθητι, be muzzled, used of an ox, a vigorous expression found also in Lk.). 1,26 "And when the unclean spirit had torn him (σπαράξαν, Lk. ἔσπασεν) and cried with a loud voice" (last clause peculiar to Mk.). 4,41 "And they feared exceedingly" (ἐφοβήθησαν φόβον μέγαν, Mt. ἐθαύμασαν, Lk. φοβήθησαν δὲ ἐν μέγαν). 5,24 "And much people thronged him" (συνέβλησαν, press on all sides, a hapax legomenon in Mk., cp. 5,31; Lk. συνέπνευον, throng closely). 5,38 "And them that...wailed greatly" (ἀλαλάζοντας, peculiar to Mk.). 5,42 "And they were astonished with a great astonishment" (ἐξέστησαν εὐθὺς ἐκστάσει μεγάλῃ, peculiar to Mk.). 6,49 "And cried out" (ἀνέκραζον; Mt. only ἔκραζον, an example of Mark's predilection for adding prefixes to heighten the



meaning). 6,51 "And they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure" (καὶ λίαν ἐκ περισσοῦ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐξίσταντο, peculiar to Mk.). 7,37 "And were beyond measure astonished" (καὶ ὑπερπερισσῶς ἐξεπλήσθησαν; Mt. θαυμάσκει). 9,15 "All the people were greatly amazed" (ἐξεθαυμάσθησαν, a hapax legomenon in Mk., the expression peculiar to Mk.). 9,18 "And he foameth and gnasheth with his teeth" (ἀφρίζει καὶ τρίζει, peculiar to Mk., note realistic duplication of sounds). 9,36 "And when he had taken him in his arms" (ἐναγκλισάμενος, a hapax legomenon in Mk., cp. 10,16, this expression peculiar to Mk.). 10,26 "And they were astonished out of measure" (οἷ δὲ περισσῶς ἐξεπλήσθησαν; Mt. only ἐξεπλήσθησαν). 12,41.42. "And many that were rich cast in much...a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites" (πολλοὶ πλούσιοι ἔβαλλον πολλά... μίαν χήραν πτωχὴν ἔβαλεν λεπτὰ δύο, note alliteration in first section, contrast between and among πολλά, μία, and δύο; Lk's. account not as expressive). 13,11 "Take no thought beforehand" (προμεριμνήσατε, a hapax legomenon to Mk.; Mt. only μεριμνήσατε; Lk. προμελετήσατε). 14,33 "And began to be sore amazed" (ἐκ θαμβεῖσθαι, a hapax legomenon to Mk., this expression peculiar to Mk.). 14,40 "For their eyes were heavy" (καταβαρυνόμενοι, a hapax legomenon to Mk., present tense adds vividness although better writers do not use the present; Mt. only βαρυνόμενοι). 16,5 "And they were affrighted" (ἐξεθαυμάσθησαν)...v. 6 "Be not affrighted" (ἐκ θαμβεῖσθε, a hapax legomenon to Mk., these phrases

peculiar to Mk.).

The style of the Gospel, it has been pointed out, is not on the whole characterized by briefness. Mark often obtains force in his expression by a redundancy or copious phraseology. When elaboration would contribute to the distinctness and vividness of the narrative, Mark adds word to word. He sharpens the idea often by adjoining a word of similar meaning. Underlined sections in the following illustrations are peculiar to Mark. 1,32 "And at even, when the sun did set;" 1,45 "And began to publish it much and blaze abroad the matter;" 2,20 "But the days will come... in those days;" 2,21 "Else the new piece that filleth it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse;" 2,28 "Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath" (Mk. alone has the word *καὶ*, even, stressing the majesty of Christ); 4,14 "The sower soweth the word;" 4,30 "Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God, or with what comparison shall we compare it?" 5,42 "And straightway the damsel arose, and walked;" 6,25 "And she came in straightway with haste;" 7,21 "For from within, out of the heart of men;" 8,34 "Whoever shall come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me;" 9,2 "Apart by themselves;" 14,68 "But he denied saying, I know not, neither understand I."

Closely connected with the addition of similar material is the use of an opposing idea for contrast, lending a dramatic force to the expression. Haas points this out.<sup>1</sup> 2,27 "The sabbath was

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<sup>1</sup> Haas, J.H.W., Annotations on the Gospel according to St. Mark, p.xix.

made for man, and not man for the sabbath;" 3,26 "He cannot stand, but hath an end;" 3,29 "He...hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation;" 4,17 "And so endure for but a time... immediately they are offended;" 5,26 "And was nothing bettered but rather grew worse."

A fourth manner in which Mark likes to express himself is by a crowding of participles. Using as many as seven participles in succession, Mark seems to be overcome with the details of his story, wishing to present as complete a picture as possible in a hurry. The result is a dramatic relation of the story. Examples are as follows: 5,15 "καὶ θεωροῦσιν τὸν δαίμονιζόμενον ἠλιθίμενον ἰματισμένον καὶ σωφρονουῦντα, τὸν ἔσχηκότα τὸν λέγιον;" 5,25 "καὶ χυτὴ οἶσα... πιδιοῦσα... δαπιδνήσασα... ὠφελιθεῖσα... ἔλθοῦσα... ἀκούσασα... ἔλθοῦσα .;" 6,22 "εἰσελθούσης... ὀρχησμένης." 6,54 "ἔξελθούτων... ἐπιχρόντες .;" 10,17 "ἐκπορευομένου... προδραμών... χονυπετίως." 12,28 "προσελθών... ἀκούσας... συζητούντων... εἰδώς." 14,67 "ἰδοῦσα... θερμολνόμενον ἐμβλέψασα."

A familiar example of Mark's style is the very frequent use of the word εὐθύς, straightway. In sixteen chapters, it occurs about forty times. Such an adverb is in keeping with the rapid, energetic action of the Gospel.

Adding vividness to the account is also the use of diminutives. Examples are ψυχάτριον, κυράσιον, and κυνέριον.

### Employment of grammatical effects.

The writer uses certain grammatical effects, for some of which he is outstanding. Others are common tricks, employed by Mark not intentionally, but rather flowing naturally out of his exuberance for the story. They all, nonetheless, add to the overall effect of the narrative and help create the illusion of realism and drama.

Mark loves the double negative, employing it in such a way as to intensify his point. 1,44 " *μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἶπης.*"  
2,2 " *ὥστε μηκέτι χωρεῖν μηδέ.*"

In his enthusiasm for relating the story in as direct a manner as possible, Mark occasionally fails to complete his thought. Examples of ellipses are as follows: 3,30 (He spoke in view of the fact) "that they said" (peculiar to Mk.); 9,11 (How is it related with the fact) "that the scribes say" (Mt. has the full expression); 9,23 (How can you say) "if thou canst" (peculiar to Mk.); 9,28 "That we could not cast it out" (how is that to be explained) (Mt. has full expression); 14,49 "But (it must happen so) that the Scriptures might be fulfilled" (Mt. again has full expression).

Parataxis is a feature of this Gospel. Whole sections and sentences are strung together, one after the other, with the simplest of Greek copulas, *καί* and *δέ* predominating. This arrangement aids the flow of the narrative and is in keeping with Mark's style.

Mark often puts words into direct discourse, instead of

reporting in indirect discourse or omitting the words altogether. Direct discourse again adds realism and heightens the dramatic effect. Zahn remarks, "He uses direct discourse even where unspoken thoughts or remarks of several people, or words spoken on different occasions are reproduced, and also where other narrators do not find it necessary to repeat the words at all."<sup>1</sup>

Mark records in direct discourse often, including the following cases: 1,37 "They said unto him, All men ask for thee" (Lk. has indirect discourse); 4,39 "And (he) rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still" (Mk. only one with direct discourse); 5,8 "For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit" (Lk. indirect); 5,12 "And the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them" (Mt. direct, Lk. indirect); 5,28 "For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole" (unspoken thought in direct discourse; Mt. also direct); 6,31 "And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while" (peculiar to Mk.); 10,49 "And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee" (peculiar to Mk.).

Another feature of Mark's vivid and graphic style is his use of tenses. He very frequently slips into the historical present as he is carried away by the story he is telling. Mark has about one hundred fifty of such historical presents to seventy-eight in Matthew and only four in Luke. Hence there is a great difference in this respect among the three Synoptic Gospels. Swete

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<sup>1</sup> Zahn, op. cit., p.481.

describes Mark's use of tenses in the following way:

"Changes of tense occur...apparently for the purpose of giving life to a dialogue, 9,34ff; 11,27 (five verbs). Present, imperfect, perfect, and aorist are interchanged, not through ignorance or artificiality, but from a keen sense of the reality and living interest of the facts. Sometimes the historical tense is used almost exclusively throughout a paragraph, 2,3-10; 15,20-24. More frequently they alternate with the imperfect and aorist, 4,35-41; 6,30-51. Even in indirect narration the present and perfect are freely used, 2,1; 15,44,47;16,41, when the writer desires to place the reader for the moment in the speaker's point of view. On the other hand, St. Mark frequently uses the imperfect in a sense which is scarcely distinguishable from the aorist, except that it conveys the impression of an eyewitness describing events which passed under his own eye, 5,18; 7,17; 10,17; 12,41; 14,55.<sup>1</sup>

Mark therefore uses even the tense of verbs to contribute to the dramatic quality of his Gospel.

He has a fondness for doing two other things with his verbs. He uses *ἔρχομαι* with the infinitive, a use which is common in the Synoptic Gospels. Often it is employed almost superfluously, as in 1,45 "ἦρξάντο κηρύσσειν" (hardly distinguishable from the simpler *ἐκήρυσσεν*; Lk. has *διήρχετο*). Here again Mark's predilection for adding words shows up, and the result is a more impressive expression. Also the periphrastic imperfect is common in Mark's vivid description. 1,6 "ἦν ἐνδεδυμένος," peculiar to Mk. 1,22 "ἦν διδάσκων," Mt. also. 1,33 "ἦν ἐπισυνηγμένοι," peculiar to Mk. 2,18 "ἦσαν νηστεύοντες," peculiar to Mk.

Mark alone of the Evangelists uses *πολλά* as a mere adverbial modifier. Where other writers would be content with the mere statement, Mark must add "much." Examples of this use are

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<sup>1</sup> Swete, op. cit., pp. xlix-l.

1,45 "And began to publish it much" (κηρύσσει πολλά);  
3,12 "And he straitly charged them" (πολλὰ ἐπετίμη); 6,20  
"He did many things" (πολλὰ ἔποίησε).

#### Elimination of long discourses.

While Mark at times is fuller than the other two synoptic writers, in recording the discourses of Jesus he is very brief. Long sermons are not in keeping with the rapid movement of his book. With a few exceptions (such as the Eschatological Discourse in Chapter 13) Mark compresses the longer discourses into a few sentences, which are, however, compact. For example, the Sermon on the Mount leaves only a few traces in Mark (4,21; 9,50; 10,11). The long charge to the Twelve in Matthew 10 is reduced to a few short verses (6,8-11). Such public teaching as Mark records is chiefly parabolic (2,19-22; 3,23-27; 4,3-32; 7,15; 12, 1-9). Yet his parables are less numerous than Matthew's or Luke's. On the other hand, instructions delivered to the Twelve are sometimes longer (7,18-23; 8,17-21; 9,33-50; 13,34-37). Swete adds, "And such sayings as Mark records are often, like his narrative, characterized by touches which possess a singular freshness and originality."<sup>1</sup> Examples of the last are the following: 1,15 "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the Gospel;" 3,23 "How can Satan cast out Satan?" (peculiar to Mk.); 7,27 "Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs;" 8,21 "How is it that ye do not understand?" (cp. Mt. 16,11);

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<sup>1</sup> Swete, op. cit., p. lxxiv.

12,27 "He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye do greatly err."

#### Retention of original Aramaic expressions.

Mark in five instances retains the original Aramaic phrase, while Matthew and Luke write only the Greek equivalent. The impression of accuracy is heightened, and the vividness increased. The Aramaic is used, with translation, in 2,17 "And he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder;" 5,41 "Talitha cumi, which is being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise;" 7,11 "It is Corban, that is to say, a gift;" 7,34 "Ephphatha, that is, Be opened;" 14,36 "Abba, Father." In the first, second, and last of these quotations, Matthew and Luke record only the Greek. In the other two the material is peculiar to Mark.

#### The abrupt ending.

It is not the purpose of this section to discuss whether or not the Gospel actually ends with the expression ἐφθόνησαν γαίε, 16,8. It, however, seems evident that this point was at least some sort of deliberate breaking-off point for Mark, whether or not he intended to continue and whether or not he did continue. This ending, in any case, is a dramatic one and is a fitting close to a dramatic presentation. "For they feared" leaves us on a note of suspense. The history of the beginning of the Gospel thus ends, leaving the reader to wonder what the results of the resurrection were, what became of the women's fear. The play is cut off at the climax, leaving no denouement. This is a remarkable, unexpected close to an energetic, fast-moving Gospel.



## CONCLUSION

In writing the history of the beginning of the Gospel, Mark intended to lay only the foundation, leaving the superstructure of Christianity to the other Evangelists and the Apostles. Hence he does not go into the deeper mysteries of faith, but instead presents actions which are easily translatable into lessons. He compresses the longer discourses of Christ and concentrates on His miracles. He presents Christ as the Son of God, in the majesty of His divinity, for example, at the transfiguration. He paints also the human side of our Savior, His compassion on the people, His weariness at the end of a long day. But he records the life of Christ in action.

In achieving this purpose, he keeps his Gospel moving at a fast pace, not permitting himself, however, to pass by a scene which had been described in all its detail to him by Peter. Hence, the use of detail of different kinds is a chief characteristic of this Gospel. Mark describes, adds information giving the reader a more intimate knowledge of the situation, notes time, place, and number, records proper names, and remembers even personal movement.

Mark does not look into character deeply or explain human motivation, but he does not fail to note human feelings and emotions. He is particularly interested in the effect of Jesus' work and sayings on those who heard Him. In this connection he uses some of his strongest words, "astonished out of measure," "feared a great fear." Peter also was impressed with Jesus' compassion, but also His anger and grief, and passed these

impressions on to his son Mark.

Underlining the speed of the narrative is the frequently encountered εὐθύς, straightway. Lending force to certain expressions is a repetition with similar words, or a contrast with an opposite expression. Overcome with the picture he is painting, Mark adds detail to detail by stringing participles together. He forcibly expresses himself by noting that the heavens were rent, not merely opened; that Christ was driven, not led, into the wilderness; and that the unclean spirit was muzzled, like an ox.

Again, using certain grammatical devices, he expresses himself more vividly than Matthew and Luke. He is fond of the historical present and slips into it often as he is carried away by the mood of the story. He phrases the material in direct discourse to add realism. He retains the original Aramaic expressions in five instances, heightening the impression of accuracy of his account.

In keeping with his style, he breaks off with "for they feared."

Mark is not artificial. He makes no conscious attempt at this graphic style, for he is not a master of the Greek language. The graphic clearness of his narrative flows out of his own personality and mirrors, at the same time, the eyewitness reminiscences of Peter. For this reason, whatever he does, whatever he writes seems to contribute to the overall dramatic quality of his Gospel.

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