

THE BOY WHO RAN AWAY

BY WILLIAM E. BARTON, D.D.

WHILE Jesus and his disciples were eating the Passover in the upper room the family who owned the house were observing the same festival in the living-rooms below. This family consisted of a widow, named Mary, her son John Mark, a large boy almost grown to manhood, and possibly other and younger children of whom we have no knowledge. Our interest centers chiefly in this boy John Mark. He was old enough to be considered the man of the house, yet young enough to be carrying water-pots and performing other services such as women and boys performed in making ready for the Passover. On the afternoon of that day Mark had gone to a public fountain to bring water for the Passover season. There he met two men known to him as disciples of Jesus, who said to him, "The Master saith, Where is my guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?" Jesus and his disciples were acquainted with the family and had some previous tentative arrangement concerning the room, but none of them had ever been to the house, and the meeting at the fountain was by appointment, for Jesus was in hiding from his enemies. It was because there was some occasion for secrecy that the plan was carried out in this fashion, and the two disciples had no conversation with Mark as they walked through the streets; they merely kept in sight the young man with the water-pot on his shoulder, and they followed him until he entered the courtyard and shut the outer door. Then he set down the water-pot, greeted them, led them up the outer stairway that opened from the courtyard, and showed them an upper room, which in this case must have covered practically the whole of the lower floor.

Mark himself describes it as "a large upper room, furnished and ready." Brief as is his account of things in general, his description of this room is far more minute than that of the other evangelists. Even those who copied them omitted some of the details which he gives. They meant more to him than to any of the others.

Mark had been busy during the rest of the afternoon and evening preparing for the

family's own celebration of the Passover. They doubtless had guests, for small families were accustomed to invite in enough people so that together they might consume the whole of the Passover lamb. Doubtless, also, they were accustomed to having guests in the upper room, for Jerusalem was full of people at the Passover time, and many of them had to make temporary arrangements for the observance of the Passover.

Mark had been accustomed to something of this sort through all the years of his boyhood; but this was an unusual occasion. Slight as was his acquaintance with the disciples of Jesus, he knew enough to feel a keen sense of apprehension in view of the plots and rumors that were current in Jerusalem that week. The family that ate the supper downstairs must have commented with many expressions of wonder and sympathy upon the other group that were eating the Passover supper beneath the same roof.

The Passover supper was ended downstairs and the guests took their departure. Mark gathered all that was left of the Passover lamb—the few shreds of flesh and the bones, which had been unjointed with care that none of them be broken—and burned them in the brazier in the courtyard, and was still standing there watching them being consumed when one of the disciples descended the outer stair and brought down the bones from the lamb that had been eaten upstairs and burned them in like manner; for this was the commandment of Moses, that nothing of the Passover lamb should remain until morning and that everything left should be consumed by fire; and there was a verse in one of the Psalms which had assumed the character of a divine command among them, "He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken."

Mark returned inside and went to bed. His mother had already retired, and he lay down for what was left of the night, but he could not get to sleep. He still heard conversation upstairs. Jesus was talking to his disciples, and now and then they interrupted him with questions. Mark could not distinguish the eager word of Philip, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," nor

that of Thomas, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" But he knew when one of the disciples was asking Jesus a question and when Jesus spoke in answer.

Shortly after midnight Jesus and his disciples descended the outer stair and passed into the courtyard. Mark wondered where they were going and what was about to happen. Jerusalem had been so full of inquiry and conjecture and vague rumor, the boy could not help feeling apprehensive.

He rose to bolt the door that led from the courtyard into the street after the disciples had passed out. At the moment he had no thought of going farther, and merely wrapped himself in a linen coverlet which he snatched from the cot; but his curiosity impelled him to follow the Lord and his disciples from the courtyard into the street, around the first turn, and as they went farther he followed them. He thought he would turn back at the city gate, but as they continued through the valley of the Kedron he still followed at a distance. It was a bright moonlight night, and he was full of interest and curiosity.

He followed them as far as the gate of a garden at the base of the Mount of Olives, and then, having seen them inside, he turned back towards the city. But half-way back he met another company coming from the city in the direction of the garden—a group of officers and Temple servants and hangers-on—bearing torches and armed with clubs. He stood out of the way and let them pass; then, with his curiosity kindled to the highest pitch, he turned again and followed them. He may have had some thought of warning Jesus and the disciples that their enemies were coming, but he found no way to get past them in the road and reach the garden first. They were at the gate as soon as he was, and he arrived in time to see Judas's kiss of betrayal and Jesus in the hands of the mob.

He pressed closer than was altogether prudent—his boyish curiosity and his interest getting the better of his judgment—and before he knew it he was in the outskirts of the mob. Suddenly a rough hand was laid upon him and somebody demanded of him what was his business there. Then in an instant terror overtook him; he wrested himself loose from his captor and ran homeward, leaving the linen sheet in the hands of the man who had seized him. He reached his own home, entered the gate of the court-

yard, barred it behind him, listened a moment to be sure he was not pursued, and then crept back to bed, where he panted and shivered until he got his breath, and lay awake until almost morning. In the morning none of the family knew that he had been out, nor did he tell it immediately; but long years afterwards, when he heard the story of that night from Peter and wrote it down as Peter told it to him, he could not refrain from adding these words, which neither Matthew nor Luke thought worth keeping and which few people understood when they read them:

"And they all forsook him, and fled. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." (Mark xiv. 50-52.)

The disciples continued to assemble in the upper room. They were there on the next Sunday, and a week later, and had wonderful experiences there. In the days that followed the Resurrection this still was their meeting-place. When Peter was in prison and released one night, he stood for a moment outside the prison gate wondering which way to go, then turned straight toward the street where Mary lived and rapped at the door. It was a girl named Rhoda who opened the door that night, and she was so astonished at seeing Peter there that she left him standing outside while she ran back to tell the others. Peter knew where to come; he had been there before and had become an intimate friend of the family.

Mark had an uncle, named Joseph, who lived in Cyprus. He came to Jerusalem and became much interested in the things he heard concerning Jesus. He was a man possessed of considerable property, and he became so interested in the little colony of Christians residing in Jerusalem that he closed out his real estate and brought the proceeds and invested them in the new enterprise. He became an invaluable man. He had traveled farther than most of the disciples, and had better knowledge of the world and its ways. When a certain hot-headed young Pharisee who had been a persecutor of the Church became converted, and, after a three years' disappearance, returned to Jerusalem professing to be a Christian, and all the rest were suspicious of him, it was Joseph who had faith in him and brought him to the disciples and established an acquaintance be-

tween Paul and the disciples which, though it never grew very intimate or friendly, still obtained for Paul a recognition which he much needed, and secured to the Jerusalem colony some exceedingly important services which Paul later was able to render in certain preaching tours which he undertook into places where few of the Galilean disciples would have gone or could have done effective work.

This man Joseph, Mark's uncle, became so valuable and valued a member of the Christian community that they gave him a surname, Barnabas, "the Son of Consolation," a name which is a notable tribute to his worth and character.

The first notable missionary journey was undertaken jointly by Barnabas and Paul, and started from Antioch. Mark was with his uncle in Antioch and wished to go with them as general attendant. He was the more eager to do this because the journey took them, first of all, to Cyprus, his uncle's home, and this part of the journey the young man enjoyed, but when they returned to the mainland and toured Asia Minor he wearied of it, and he and Paul were not congenial. They reached Pamphylia and had some trouble, and Mark turned back to Jerusalem.

Paul did not like the young man very well, anyway, and after his desertion he liked him less. Paul did not know it, but it was the second time Mark had run away. If Paul had known of the first time, he would have liked him still less.

Some months later Paul and Barnabas were starting on a second preaching tour, and again Mark was with his uncle and wished to go along, but Paul objected strenuously. He contended that no good was to be expected from a young man who had deserted them as Mark had done. Barnabas stoutly asserted that the boy had good stuff in him and was not to be judged too harshly for one failure in duty. Paul would not hear a word of it, and the discussion grew into a sharp contention over which the two old friends quarreled, separated, and never worked together again. Paul had a lonely time of it for quite a while after that, and sorely missed his old friend Barnabas. Bitterly he reflected, as he thought of it, that they had quarreled about a young fellow who really never was worth it.

But Paul changed his mind about this in after years as he heard how Mark had made good. He wrote to certain friends to whom he thought Mark might come and who might

be prejudiced against him on Paul's account. "Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas," he wrote, "if he come, receive him." It was a great concession for Paul to make. By this time he had made up his mind that Barnabas was right and he was wrong concerning Mark. There is a reference still more intimate and pathetic in the very last letter that Paul ever wrote, a letter which tells of his own disappointments and of those who had deserted him while he was in prison. Luke only had stayed with him, and was with him then. The situation was grave and he needed other help. He was writing to Timothy to come, and in casting about for some other young man whom he could trust implicitly he wrote, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he would be profitable to me in my present situation."

Whether Timothy found Mark and took him to Rome to assist Paul we do not know, but we are informed concerning Mark's later experience. He became the companion of Peter and was very intimately associated with him. Peter's first letter appears to have been written by Mark at Peter's dictation, and in it Peter affectionately calls him "Marcus, my son."

By this time there was growing up in the early Church a need which the first disciples may not wholly have realized. It did not occur to any of them at the beginning that it would become necessary for them to write down the story of the teaching and life of Jesus. All of them had known Jesus personally, and their first associates in the Church knew him and the character of his life and teaching. Their first sermons were not biographical. We have samples of them in the Book of Acts, and we know that they made somewhat meager use of the incidents in the life of Jesus. The first books of the New Testament were not the Gospels, but mere letters, and the first letters were not the more important ones. They grew out of the immediate exigencies, and were written by the apostles to personal friends in the churches which they had founded. References to Jesus were abundant, but incidents from his career were infrequent and quotations from his utterances were very few. The need of a written life of Jesus was not immediately apparent, even when Christianity went to other lands than Palestine.

Yet all the time there was growing up a biography of Jesus, and parallel with it a collection of his teachings. The two appear

to have grown up somewhat independently, though related; a body of tradition concerning what Jesus had done, and a compilation of sayings remembered by the apostles as the "logia," or words of the Lord.

As the number of those who had been associated with Jesus grew small and most of the early apostles had died, it came to Mark apparently before it came to any one else, as an important and compelling suggestion, that somebody ought to write a story of the life of Jesus. In all probability he did not begin this till after Peter had died; then, as people appealed to him with more and more frequency to know what Jesus had said and done, he set himself to remember as best he could what Peter and the rest had told him.

In the first half of the second century there lived a man named Papias, who gathered up a good many traditions then current concerning the apostles and their work. Particularly did he relate those which he had heard from one John the Presbyter, who was not the same as the apostle John, but one whose memory linked the memory of Papias to that of the immediate successors of the apostles. Relying upon this testimony, Papias tells us many things of great value. His writings as a whole have perished now, but Eusebius, a Church historian of the time of Constantine, has preserved valuable fragments of what Papias wrote, and in his own words. This is what the Presbyter John told Papias, and what Papias wrote and Eusebius quoted in Papias's own words, and it is a tradition which goes back to the later years of the first Christian century, for these words were written not later than 140 A.D.:

"Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately everything that he remembered, without, however, recording in order what was either said or done by Christ; for neither did he hear the Lord nor did he follow him, but after, as I have said, attended Peter, who adapted his instructions to the needs of his hearers, but had no design of giving a connected account of the Lord's oracles. So then Mark made no mistake while he thus wrote down some things as he remembered them, for he made it his one care not to omit anything he had heard, nor to set down any false statements therein."

This statement of Papias has been used in an attempt to disprove to every one that Mark could have been the boy in the linen

sheet who stood outside the gate of the garden on the night of the betrayal, for Papias distinctly says that Mark had not known or followed Jesus. But the word of Papias need not be understood as meaning so much that Mark had never seen Jesus, but only that for the main body of his teaching he had to rely upon others, and especially upon his intimate acquaintance with Peter.

Mark began to write his story of the Good News with extreme modesty and brevity. He began with the teaching of John, and hurried right into the heart of his record. His story included no account of the birth of Jesus, or of his early life, or of his parentage, or descent from David; and it contained no formal discourses, only a few parables, and not very many miracles. It was a concise and nearly colorless account of the story of Jesus as it had been received by a young man from those who were with Jesus, written with no attempt at precise historical order, but only to set down the main things which a young man had heard from those older than himself.

It was so brief that it came to be undervalued. Matthew used it and copied almost the whole of it into his longer Gospel, which circulated freely among the Jews; Luke copied very nearly all of it in his beautiful story, written for the Gentiles; and these two became so popular, one among the Jews and the other among the Gentiles, that they quite overshadowed the shorter and simpler Gospel on which both of them had depended. There came a time, indeed, when there appears to have been only a single copy of Mark's Gospel that was known to exist in the possession of the early Church, and that was mutilated, for the last part of the last chapter had been torn off. We do not know how Mark finished his story of the Resurrection, for his account ends apparently at the eighth verse of the sixteenth chapter, and the remaining twelve verses are a later addition written by some one in an attempt to supply the missing verses of Mark's narrative.

Thus lightly did Mark come to be esteemed in comparison with the two longer and more highly colored narratives, for which he supplied much valuable material. But not only is Mark of exceeding great value as the earliest of our written sources of the story of Jesus, but it is also exceedingly improbable that without it either Matthew or Luke would have been written. Certainly we should have had neither of them in its present form but for

the earlier story of Mark. In a way, all three of the synoptic Gospels depended upon the story picked up and preserved for us by the young man who ran away once, and maybe twice.

Tradition tells us that Mark afterward preached in Egypt. This is by no means impossible, for Egypt became a great center of Christian activity, and the teachers at Alexandria grew numerous in the century after the apostles and continued for several centuries thereafter. It is believed by many that Mark lived his later years and died in Egypt, and that his body was buried there. For centuries a tomb was pointed out as that of the evangelist Mark. In the ninth Christian century, when Venice was queen of the Adriatic and commercial mistress of the world, the Venetians wished to build in their city the most beautiful church in Christendom, and they counted it a serious oversight that all the twelve apostles had died without visiting Venice, for they wanted the bones of some notable saint to bury underneath their high altar. So they sent to Alexandria and obtained a human body believed to be that of the evangelist Mark. Very secretly they

smuggled it out of Egypt, but received it in Venice amid great rejoicing and buried it with pomp and circumstance. Above it they erected that marvelous cathedral, glorious in its rich decorations and adorned with relics for whose sake they plundered temples in many lands. Over this temple Ruskin poured out his superlatives of praise until he fairly beggared the English language. This splendid church that bears the name of St. Mark's is a monument to the man from whom Paul thought no good could ever be expected, and in resentment at whose homesickness and desertion Paul quarreled with his best friend.

But this is not Mark's noblest monument. The second Gospel, his own literary masterpiece, stands an imperishable monument to his fidelity, and the quotations which both the first and third evangelists made from it add an eloquent testimony to its fidelity to apostolic tradition. In a very real sense the first three Gospels are the monument to the young man John Mark, and show to us how much of good may sometimes be expected from a young man who one time failed.

THE UNDERTOW

BY GEORGE S. WASSON

JIM ATHERTON and I were on our annual trip in the thirty-foot sloop *Gulnare* towards that fabulous spot where they are said to pry up the sun each morning with a crowbar. Fooled into leaving harbor by a vain promise of clearing weather, we groped our way in thick fog till three o'clock in the afternoon, when the wind suddenly struck spitefully from the northeast, dead ahead. "Hang it all," said Atherton finally, "let's get in out of this, somewhere. Let's make a fair wind of it, and try for False Island Harbor. That's about the only place we've never been in, and there'll be some novelty to it, anyhow."

Luckily, a long-looked-for buoy gave us a definite idea of our present position, and accordingly the sloop was kept off on a new course, with sheets well started and a big bone in her teeth. False Island lay several miles off the coast, and from the chart its

harbor appeared a small indentation on the southwest side, with abundant depth of water, and good holding ground. The only obstruction was a sunken ledge known as the Old Proprietor, lying near the entrance, but plainly marked by a tall iron spindle. A tiny cluster of black spots on the chart indicated something of a settlement at the head of the harbor, and in agreeable anticipation of soon gaining cozy shelter from the fast rising sea, we sped on through a dense shroud of fog already containing a cheerless drizzle of rain.

In due time the tall outlying spindle was made directly ahead, yet we were somewhat puzzled by the simultaneous appearance in the fog of what seemed two additional spindles or spar buoys in close proximity, and also of a dark object which at first was taken to be a ledge awash, though the chart denoted nothing of the sort visible at any time of tide.