

Q. What evidence is there to justify accepting Mark 16:9-20 as an original and genuine part of the gospel?

A. Before answering the question two points must be made clear. The first is, that the historical accuracy of the matters contained in this passage has never been in question. If necessary it can be proved from other parts of the New Testament. The second is, that whatever their views concerning this passage, all authorities are agreed that Mark's gospel did not end at verse 8 of chapter 16. The question then to be decided is: are verses 9-20, as we have them in our Bibles to-day, the original ending?

*External evidence.* (a) Manuscripts. From the point of view of external evidence, the main objection against the genuineness of this passage is that it is not found in the two oldest manuscripts of the New Testament, the Codex Sinaiticus, and the Codex Vaticanus, both of the fourth century. It is also not found in the Codex Regius, of the eighth century. The evidence of the first two seems at first sight to be of great weight. Against this, however, is set the fact that the Vatican manuscript leaves a space for an ending to Mark's gospel. As great an authority as Tischendorf believes that both the Sinai and Vatican manuscripts are work of the same scribe. But the overwhelming evidence for the genuineness of the passage is the fact that all other manuscripts include it as genuine, including the Codex Alexandrinus of the fifth century. This has led one authority justly to remark, 'Such agreement is extremely rare in disputed passages.'

(b) Versions. All the most ancient versions, without exception, recognise the disputed passage as genuine.

(c) Early Writers. The passage is alluded to without question by all the earliest of the Early Fathers who make mention of it in their writings. The writers or writings that do so between 70-150 A.D. are: the Epistle of Barnabas, Papias, Justin Martyr (who mentions it four times) and the Shepherd of Hermas; between 150-200: Irenæus and Tatian; between 220-250: Hippolytus and Dionysius of Alexandria. Only Eusebius (260-339), who was to be the first to cast doubt on the passage, and Jerome (340-420) reject the verses as ungentine. Jerome, however, could not have been very certain of his ground, for he allowed the passage in the Vulgate, his Latin version of the Bible.

*Internal evidence.* The internal evidence against the genuineness of the passage rests on the claim that there is a difference in style between these verses and the rest of Mark. Alford, for instance, says that the passage contains twenty-one words and expressions not found elsewhere in the gospel. This at first sight looks convincing, but when such 'evidence' is examined it is found to have little value. Prof. J. A. Broadus has shown that the twelve verses prior to the disputed passage contain seventeen words never used before by Mark. Bro. J. A. McGarvey treated the last twelve verses of Luke in the same way, and found nine words that the writer had never used before, four of them not found anywhere else in the New Testament. We ask: Are we going to reject another twelve verses of Mark and the last twelve verses of Luke also on these grounds? In the light of such evidence, therefore, we need have no doubt that the last twelve verses of Mark are as much the work of that writer, and as equally inspired, as the rest of the gospel.