The mysterious pericope (ALAND, s. 269) is doubted by some ¹) and rejected by others ²), on the footing that the influence of Old Testament prophecy is demonstrably so great that little or nothing of the factual background can be recovered. Even those who are not ready to reject it must recognise that it is full of difficulties (especially in the Matthaean version) to which no solution has yet been forthcoming. The latest short and at the same time comprehensive treatment ³) leaves it an open question whether Jesus really did send for a colt in the manner described; and no commentator finds a criterion whereby to determine whether Jesus deliberately worked out, or mimed, as it were, the prophecy in Zech. ix 9; or whether things fell out, by coincidence, so as to appear, on later reflection, to have fulfilled the prophet’s words ⁴).


⁴) St. John Chrysostom believed the events fulfilled many prophecies. EDERHEIM and GORE saw the ass-drivers willingly cooperating with Jesus.
St. John's account seems to support the latter solution, and yet his words 'finding the colt of an ass' do not deny the story as the synoptic gospels outline it, a story he must have had before him.

Lately there has been a recrudescence of an opinion unhappily mooted by Eisler ¹), that what really happened was a deliberate political demonstration with messianic overtones, intended to capture the holy city with the object of ousting the Roman and pontifical governments ²) It seems, at first sight, not implausible that Jesus might have led his followers in a rash movement, which culminated in a riot. Holy men are known to have led rash uprisings ³).

Yet it is not beyond our powers to clarify what St. Mark was trying to say. We can even conjecture why St. Matthew and St. Luke differed from their predecessor. The commentaries available to us give no useful details about the underlying motifs in Mark xi I-7. The skill and precision with which St. Mark tells his story has gone utterly without recognition. Let us reconstruct the scene as the first hearers will have understood it. This is the only way open to us to conjecture what Jesus's mind must have been at that time; bearing in our own minds, as we must, that the episode of the Cleansing of the Temple, which is a companion piece to this periscope, has been identified as a practical application, a kind of midrash in action, of Zech. xiv 21 ⁴). In this article our account of the factual background will be supplemented by a reexamination of the

¹) R. Eisler, ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ (Heidelberg, 1929), II, 439ff., 450ff.; Messiah Jesus (London, 1931), 47ff., 480ff. W. Grundmann, Das Evangelium nach Markus (Berlin, 1959), 226, has no time for Eisler's ideas, but he stresses the allegedly legendary aspect of the story.


³) Josephus, Bell. II. 262 (Thackeray, ii, 425); Ant. XX. 169 (Feldman, ix, 481.)