

DEAN FURLONG

The John also called Mark

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Mohr Siebeck

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The John also called Mark

Reception and Transformation
in Christian Tradition

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

This study will explore the reception in Christian tradition of John/Mark, an important early Christian figure spoken of in the book of Acts and (probably) in the Pauline corpus. In particular, it will examine the portrayals of John/Mark as both a Markan figure (i.e. as a figure identified with Mark the Evangelist) and as a Johannine figure (i.e. as a figure identified with the Beloved Disciple/John the Evangelist).

A shorter version of this study initially formed part of my doctoral dissertation undertaken at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, under the supervision of Professor Peter-Ben Smit and Professor Aza Goudriaan.¹ While the dissertation focused on the reception of John the Evangelist in early Christian writings, one section considered potential identifications of John with John/Mark. After completing my doctoral work, it became clear to me that the subject matter required a separate treatment focusing on the figure of John/Mark as both a Markan and Johannine figure rather than simply as a potential Johannine figure. This shift of focus, along with the discovery on my part of other sources, led to the study's considerable expansion. The main disadvantage, however, of separating this study from its original context is that the reader has not been familiarised with the arguments for the distinction of John the Evangelist and John the Apostle in early Christian sources which were discussed at length in the first section of the dissertation. Nevertheless, since this view has been widely disseminated,² and since a revised version of my own work on the subject is available,³ this need not be detrimental to the present study.

My own study of this question commenced in the winter of 2004/2005, with the reading of R. Alan Culpepper's *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend*, which discusses the reception of John the son of Zebedee in Christian tradition. In one section of the work, the author discusses scholarly proposals

¹ Dean Furlong, "John the Evangelist: Revision and Reinterpretation in Early Christian Sources," (Ph.D. dissertation, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2017).

² E.g. Jean Colson, *L'énigme du disciple que Jésus aimait* (ThH 10; Paris: Beauchesne, 1969); Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1989); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017).

³ Dean Furlong, *The Identity of John the Evangelist: Revision and Reinterpretation in Early Christian Sources* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington, 2020).

on the question of the identity of the Beloved Disciple. When I first saw the proposal for John/Mark, I at first turned the page, considering such a suggestion unworthy of serious consideration. I turned back, however, out of curiosity, and after reading the section I had to acknowledge, to my surprise, that the profile of John/Mark did indeed fit remarkably well with that of the Beloved Disciple, and probably more so than that of any other candidate. This started me on a scholarly journey on the question, which I was able to further explore for my undergraduate Honour's thesis at the University of Colorado (2009), under the supervision of Dr Andrew Cain. It was during this time that I came across two short articles by J. Edgar Bruns, who brought to the attention of scholarship potential evidence suggesting that John/Mark had at times been identified with John the Evangelist within Christian tradition.

Further research on this question was suspended for a few years while I was studying at the University of Minnesota, where I discovered an interest in the Qumran community and writings. Indeed, I had planned to pursue this latter line of research for doctoral work, but I eventually decided for various reasons to return to the Johannine Question, and particularly to the question of the early Christian reception of John the Evangelist (the question of the identity of the Beloved Disciple will perhaps provide the subject matter of a future work), which resulted in my dissertation at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam and, in turn, to the present study.

I would like to thank Professor Tobias Nicklas (Universität Regensburg) who read over the initial manuscript of this work and provided invaluable advice on improving it, and who recommended it for publication in the WUNT II series. I would also like to thank Dr Adel Sidarus (University of Évora, Portugal, emeritus), who made me aware of sources and in one case offered me his own private French translation of an Arabic work unavailable in English. I am also grateful to Dr Mark House of the Reformed Theological Seminary, who is engaged in translating the *Acts, Miracles, and Passion of Mark* into English and who graciously shared his work with me, which I was able to consult when working on my own translations. Gratitude is also due to Don Meredith, Bob Turner, and the rest of the staff at the Harding School of Theology Library in Memphis, TN, for all their help over the years.

Collierville, TN, October 2019

Dean Furlong

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. David Noel Freedman (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ACCSNT	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJT	<i>American Journal of Theology</i>
AnBoll	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
ANF	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325</i> , ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885–1897; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951–1956), 10 vols.
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BSAC	<i>Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie copte</i>
BTNT	Biblical Theology of the New Testament
CALP	The Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project
CBP	<i>Cahiers de Biblia Patristica</i>
EphMariol	<i>Ephemerides Mariologicae</i>
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
Hist. Einzel.	Historia Einzelschriften
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
MJS	Münsteraner judaistische Studien
Mon	<i>The Monist</i>
Mus	<i>Le Muséon</i>
NAKG	<i>Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis</i>
PNPF	<i>A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i> , ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1887–1900; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952–1955), 28 vols. in 2 series
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OTP	James H. Charlesworth (ed.), <i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i>
OTRM	Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs
PSBFMi	Publications of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum. Collectio minor
RE	Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft
Scr	<i>Scripture</i>
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigraphica
TDSA	Testi e documenti per lo studio dell' antichità
ThH	Théologie historique

*Trad**Traditio*

UCOP

University of Cambridge Oriental Publications

*VL**Vetus Latina: die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel*

WGRW

Writings from the Greco-Roman World

Introduction

While it is often thought that early Christian tradition identified John/Mark, the assistant of Paul and Barnabas spoken of in Acts, with Mark the Evangelist, the putative author of the Gospel of Mark, this study will argue that these figures were originally differentiated; furthermore, it will examine evidence that John/Mark was sometimes identified instead with John the Evangelist. In so doing, it builds primarily upon the work of J. Edgar Bruns, who drew the attention of scholarship to the apparent “confusion” between John and Mark in some Christian sources.¹

The first part of this study will examine the various conflations of John/Mark with other Markan figures. Chapter 1 will begin with a survey of the three earliest, and apparently unconflicted, depictions of a figure named Mark in early sources: that of John/Mark, Mark the Evangelist and the Mark who was associated with the founding of the churches of Egypt.

Chapter 2 will examine the reception of Mark the Evangelist in sources of Syrian, Greek and western provenance, with attention given to the apparent conflation of this figure with John/Mark.

Chapter 3 will discuss the traditions of Mark of Alexandria found in Coptic sources, as well as the various permutations of Coptic narratives which arose from the conflation of this figure with Mark the Evangelist and/or John/Mark.

Chapter 4 will examine a number of Cypriot sources which depict John/Mark’s later ministry in Cyprus with Barnabas, culminating in the latter’s martyrdom. The variations found in these narratives will be explained as differing attempts at conflating the Cypriot traditions with the narratives associated with Mark the Evangelist and the Alexandrian Mark.

Lastly, chapter 5 will discuss the *Acts of Mark*, a Greek work of unknown date and provenance which preserves a lengthy account of the Judean John/Mark and which shares a number of features in common with the Coptic and Cypriot Markan narratives.

The second part of this study will turn its attention to the lesser-known depictions of John/Mark as a Johannine figure. Chapter 6 will discuss sources which place John/Mark in narratives drawn exclusively from the Fourth Gospel, sometimes in roles associated with the “disciple whom Jesus loved” of the

¹ J. Edgar Bruns, “John Mark: A Riddle within the Johannine Enigma,” *Scr* 15 (1963): 91; idem, “The Confusion between John and John Mark in Antiquity,” *Scr* 17 (1965).

Fourth Gospel (hereafter referred to as “the Beloved Disciple”), including the attribution to Mark’s gospel of either a doctrine of Christ’s divinity or of a Logos theology.

Chapter 7 will examine traditions that are attributed both to John/Mark and to John, which will be referred to as “reduplicated traditions.” These include the description of both as Levitical, aristocratic Jerusalemites, each of whom are said to have had a father named Aristobulus, and the identifications of both as the young man who fled naked and as the one carrying the jar of water to the house in which the Last Supper was eaten. This chapter will also discuss the Church of Holy Mount Zion in Jerusalem, which was said to have been the location of the house of both Mark and John.

There will be a discussion in Chapter 8 of the separate portrayals of both John and Mark as priestly figures who are said to have worn the high-priestly or sacerdotal plate (πέταλον or *petalum*). This chapter will also examine a third figure, James the Just, who is described similarly. A case will be made for considering the possibility that a single source, to be identified as Hegesippus’ *Memoirs*, lies behind all three depictions.

Chapter 9 will evaluate the theory of Harris and Mingana that Polycrates’ portrayal of John as a priest wearing the sacerdotal plate derived from the *Odes of Solomon*. Attention will also be given to the potential of this theory for elucidating the conclusions of the previous chapter.

Chapter 10 will survey the life and movements of John the Evangelist, as provided by early and medieval Johannine sources. This will lay the groundwork for Chapter 11, in which these traditions will be correlated with the John/Mark narrative. It will be concluded in Chapter 11 that the correlations between these figures are unlikely to have resulted from chance configuration, suggesting that both arose from a single, common narrative.

In the final chapter, an attempt will be made at accounting for the evidence by positing that in the earliest strata of the traditions, John/Mark was identified and not merely confused with the Beloved Disciple and/or John the Evangelist. This identification, it will further be posited, was eventually displaced by a later identification of John/Mark with Mark the Evangelist. A possible theory of transmission will then be laid out to explain how the traditions came to be related under both the name of Mark and of John.

It should be noted that other scholars have argued based upon the internal evidence of the Fourth Gospel for the identification of John/Mark with the Beloved Disciple.² This study, however, does not seek to address the historicity

² E.g. Daniel Völter, *Mater Dolorosa und der Lieblingsjünger des Johannesevangeliums* (Strasburg: Heitz, 1907), 16; idem, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (2nd ed.; Strasburg: Heitz, 1911), 56; Julius Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Johannis* (Berlin: Reimer, 1908), 87–88; Carl Erbes “Der Apostel Johannes und der Jünger, welcher an der Brust des Herrn lag,” *ZKG* 33 (1912): 159–239; Johannes Weiss, *Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period A.D. 30–*

of the tradition or to examine the profile of the Beloved Disciple for clues as to his identity, though I do hope to write such a study someday.

A Note on Terminology

When discussing the John who was also named Mark, the form “John/Mark” will be employed rather than the ubiquitous “John Mark” as better representing his Hebrew-Latin double name found in Acts (12:12). The form “John Mark” might wrongly suggest to a reader that the name of Mark was analogous to a modern surname,³ which is not the case. He was not known as “John Mark”: rather, Mark was an alternative name that he used in addition to John: he was called John (יוחנן [Yōḥanan], his Hebrew name), but he was also named Mark (*Marcus*, his Latin name). Thus, in Acts he is variously “John” (13:5, 13), or “Mark” (15:39), or “John, who was also called Mark” (12:12, 25; 15:37).

150, trans. Frederick Grant, vol. 2 (New York: Harper, 1959), 788; Pierson Parker, “John and John Mark,” *JBL* 79 (1960): 97–110; idem, “John the Son of Zebedee and the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 81 (1962): 35–43; John Marsh, *The Gospel of St. John* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 24–25; Wolfgang Eckle, *Den der Herr liebhatte: Rätsel um den Evangelisten Johannes. Zum historischen Verständnis seiner autobiographischen Andeutungen* (Hamburg: Kovac, 1991).

Oscar Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1976), 76–77, views John/Mark as a possible identification; Stephen Smalley, *John, Evangelist and Interpreter* (2nd ed.; London: Paternoster, 1997), 85, concedes that the view “is not as wild a suggestion as may at first appear”; while R. Alan Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), 77, notes that the view “has much to commend it”.

³ Cf. Alfred Plummer, *The Gospel according to St Mark* (CGTSC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), ix; Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 69.

Part 1

John/Mark as a Markan Figure

Chapter 1

Mark in Early Christian Writings

Three narratives concerning a figure named Mark are known in early Christian sources. There is the Mark who was also called John, spoken of in the book of Acts and probably in the Pauline corpus, who is said to have lived in Jerusalem and to have travelled with Paul and Barnabas to Cyprus; there is Mark the Evangelist, who is said to have been a follower of Peter and to have written a Gospel at Rome based upon Peter's preaching; lastly, there is the Mark who is held to have founded the churches of Egypt and to have been martyred in Alexandria.

The traditional view ¹ holds that early Christian sources identified Mark the Evangelist with John/Mark. ² Indeed, Guelich, addressing the theory that the two Marks were distinguished, goes so far as to claim: "We really do not have any basis for this distinction in the Church tradition."³ Some also associate the Evangelist with Alexandria. ⁴

¹ It should be noted that this identification has never been universally held, even before the advent of critical scholarship; notable traditionalist scholars who have questioned or rejected it include William Cave, *A Complete History of the Lives, Acts, and Martyrdoms of the Holy Apostles*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Solomon Wyatt, 1810), 348; Matthew Henry, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament*, vol. 5 (London: Bagster, 1811), n.p. (introductory comments on Mark's gospel); Antoine Calmet, *Dictionnaire historique, critique, chronologique, géographique et littéral de la Bible*, vol. 2 (2nd ed.; Geneva: Bousquet, 1730), 661; and Alban Butler, *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and Other Principal Saints*, vol. 2, (New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1903), 155.

² E.g. Donald A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 174; Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (2nd ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2014), 126; Jongyoon Moon, *Mark as Contributive Amanuensis of 1 Peter?* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2009), 36.

³ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26* (WBC 34A; Dallas: Word, 1998), xxviii.

⁴ Joseph B. Lightfoot, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Newly Discovered Commentary*, ed. Ben Witherington III, Todd D. Still and Jeanette M. Hagen (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2014), 208; Henry Barclay Swete, ed., *The Gospel according to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1898), xviii; Thomas C. Oden, *African Memory of Mark: Reassessing Early Church Tradition* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2011), 133.

The claim that early Christian sources identified John/Mark with the Evangelist has not, however, gone without challenge,⁵ and this chapter will reopen this question by surveying the earliest forms of these three Markan traditions in early Christian writings. It will commence with sources relating to John/Mark, principally drawn from the New Testament; it will then proceed to discuss the figure of Mark the Evangelist in early Christian writings; lastly, the earliest apparently unconflicted account of Mark of Alexandria, entitled the *Martyrdom of Mark*, will be summarised and discussed. It will be concluded that all three Markan traditions likely originated quite separately and in connection with distinct figures.

1.1. John/Mark

1.1.1. John/Mark in the New Testament

The New Testament speaks of a figure named Mark four times in Acts (12:12, 25; 15:37; 39), three times in the Pauline corpus (Col 4:10; Phlm 24; 2 Tim. 4:11) and once in 1 Peter 5:13. All have been suggested at one time or another as references to John/Mark, and the evidence for this will be evaluated below.

1.1.1.1. The Acts of the Apostles

In the book of Acts, John/Mark is indirectly introduced midway through the narrative when Peter, newly freed from prison, is said to have made his way to “the house of Mary the mother of John, the one also called (ὁ ἐπικαλούμενος) Mark” (Acts 12:12). Weiss suggests that the addition of ὁ ἐπικαλούμενος to the name of John was employed to distinguish this John from John the son of Zebedee; this qualification shows, he adds, that he would have normally been known to the readers as John rather than Mark.⁶

The Latin *praenomen* Mark (*Marcus*), which is otherwise unattested among Palestinian Jews,⁷ may indicate that John/Mark belonged to the wealthy upper echelon of society whose position depended upon Roman power.⁸ As Keener

⁵ E.g. Johannes Weiss, *Das älteste Evangelium: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markus-Evangeliums und der ältesten evangelischen Überlieferung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1903), 385–86; Francis Pritchett Badham, “The Martyrdom of John the Apostle,” *AJT* 8 (1904): 543–44; Dieter Lüthmann, *Das Markusevangelium* (HNT 3; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1987), 5–6; Culpepper, *John*, 78.

⁶ Weiss, *Das älteste Evangelium*, 387.

⁷ Margaret H. Williams, “Palestinian Jewish Personal Names in Acts,” in *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, ed. Richard Bauckham (BAFCS 4; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 105.

⁸ Cf. Keener, *New Testament*, 356.

observes, “the use of the name hardly indicates antipathy toward Rome or its interests in Jerusalem”.⁹

The house, which is said to belong to John/Mark’s mother Mary, was used as a meeting place for the Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 12:13). Nothing else is related concerning this Mary, though the omission of any mention of her husband may indicate that she was a widow.¹⁰ The mention of the outer gate of the house and the servant girl likely connote wealth.¹¹

Mark himself is directly introduced a little later in the narrative, accompanying Barnabas and Saul to Antioch (Acts 12:25), where he is again referred to as the “John also called Mark”. He then travels with them to Cyprus (Acts 13:1–5), with the narrative referring to him this time simply as “John,” and describing him as Barnabas and Paul’s assistant (ὕπηρέτης) (Acts 13:5). Possibly this suggests that he was responsible for the catechetical instruction of new converts,¹² though it may only mean that he was responsible for taking care of the more menial responsibilities such as making travel arrangement or baptising new converts.¹³

The Acts narrative goes on to relate that Barnabas and Paul sailed to Pamphylia in Asia Minor from Cyprus, at which point John/Mark, again referred to as “John,” abandoned the mission and travelled back to Jerusalem, though a reason for this is not provided (Acts 13:13). Black provides “scraps of circumstantial evidence” that indicate he might have been offended at Paul’s preaching of the gospel to Gentiles: John was clearly a Jerusalemite; his departure occurs following the conversion of a Gentile proconsul; and his re-entry into the narrative follows the endorsement of the Gentile mission by the apostles at Jerusalem.¹⁴ To these may be added one more: it is following John’s return to Jerusalem that a law-observant party said to be from James visits Antioch, from whence Paul’s mission originated (cf. Acts 12:12, 17), which was perhaps prompted by a negative report of Paul’s preaching on John/Mark’s part.

⁹ Keener, *New Testament*, 356.

¹⁰ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 386; cf. Charles K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1 (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 583.

¹¹ Parker, “John Mark,” 98; C. Clifton Black, *Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 27; Keener, *New Testament*, 356.

¹² R. O. P. Taylor, “The Ministry of Mark,” *ExpT* 54 (1942–43): 136; cf. Rainer Riesner, “Once More: Luke-Acts and the Pastoral Epistles,” in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis for his 80th Birthday*, ed. Sang-Won (Aaron) Son (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 255; Michael J. Kok, “The Gospel on the Margins: The Ideological Function of the Patristic Tradition on the Evangelist Mark” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Sheffield, 2013), 138–39.

¹³ Swete, *St. Mark*, xvi.

¹⁴ Black, *Apostolic Interpreter*, 40–41.