

From a comparison of these two seventh-century prophets then, we may deduce that both refer to an oracle according to which (a) Yahweh's people will be in tribulation until (b) there is born miraculously from a woman without the agency of a human father (c) the Messiah who will liberate them.

Some thirty-five years after the *Almah* Prophecy¹ Micheas still considered it not fulfilled. The general opinion seems to be that this latter seer makes explicit reference to Isaias' words. We think, however, that P. Boylan² is right in maintaining that the prophecy is actually pre-Isaianic. Isaias would then simply have invoked an already well-known prophecy in his solemn rejoinder to the House of David. This explains his use of the definite article before '*Almah*'. The casual way in which Micheas refers to the oracle indicates that it is already well known to his readers.³

If we accept this view of the texts we will see that St Matthew's use of the Isaianic passage is far from accommodation. The Angel's words to Joseph are in the true spirit of the original oracle. "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins". Now all this came to pass that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled; "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son; and they shall call his name Emmanuel"; which is interpreted, "God with us" (Mt. 1:21-4).

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JOHN MARK : A RIDDLE WITHIN THE JOHANNINE ENIGMA

There has recently been a renewal of interest in the person of John Mark (Ac. 12:12, 25; 13:13; 15:36-9; Col. 4:10; Phm. 24:2; Tim. 4:11). Serious and interesting attempts have been made to identify him as *the* John, the beloved disciple and evangelist,⁴ or as John the Presbyter to whom the editing and publishing of the fourth gospel is due,⁵ rather than as the son of Zebedee. Neither of these

¹ Or much later if the passage is not from Micheas

² 'The Sign of Isaias' *ITQ* VII (1912), p. 212. See also Kissane, *The Book of Isaias*, vol. I, Dublin 1941, p. 90

³ cf. S. Mowinckel, *He that Cometh*, Eng. tr. Oxford 1956, pp. 115f.

⁴ P. Parker, 'John and John Mark', *JBL* LXXIX (1960), pp. 97-110; J. Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, 2. New York 1959, pp. 787-8

⁵ J. N. Sanders, 'Who was the disciple whom Jesus loved?' in *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. C. H. Dodd), London 1957, pp. 72-83; and, more recently, 'St John on Patmos' *NTS* IX (1963), pp. 75-86

identifications is new,¹ but the fact that they have won new support invites us to re-examine the dossier of this rather obscure figure.

The New Testament writings tell us little about him, but what they do reveal is significant. He is not just a name as are, for example, some of the apostles. A name can of course tell us something, and we shall begin our inquiry with the two, one Hebrew and one Greek, borne by John Mark. The possession of two such names is not unusual, but it is noteworthy that Luke never refers to him simply as Mark but generally by both names and once by John alone (Ac. 13:13). St Paul, on the other hand, never calls him anything but Mark. This may indicate that it was only Paul who preferred to call him such. We know also that John Mark was related to Barnabas (Col. 4:10) who was a Levite (Ac. 4:36), and this suggests that John Mark may himself have belonged to a levitical, or perhaps even to a priestly family. His social position can be determined from the size of his home in Jerusalem—large enough to accommodate ‘many’—and from the presence in it of at least one servant (Ac. 12:12–13). We may surmise that the comfortable surroundings to which he was accustomed made the rigours of a missionary journey distasteful to him, and that this was the reason why he left Paul and Barnabas at Perge in Pamphylia (Ac. 13:13; 15:38). The last time that we meet him in the Acts, however, he and Barnabas are aboard ship on their way to Cyprus (15:39). This was in the year A.D. 50. When John Mark reappears, it is, surprisingly, in the company of Paul (Col. 4:10). Where and when was this? We cannot be sure, inasmuch as the place of composition of Colossians is still a matter of debate. It was either in Ephesus around A.D. 55 or in Rome some six years later.² Presumably Barnabas had died which makes it difficult to account for John Mark being with Paul before A.D. 57. In or shortly before that year Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in the course of which he speaks of Barnabas as someone still very much alive (1 Cor. 9:6). But there can be no doubt as to the location of John Mark during the final period of Paul’s Roman imprisonment (A.D. 64 or, if there was a second Roman imprisonment, later): he was at Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:11).³ Is the Mark mentioned in 1 Pet. 5:13, John Mark? No definite answer can be given on the basis of the name alone. Everyone who accepts

¹ J. Wellhausen identified John Mark with the beloved disciple in *Das Evangelium Johannis*, Berlin 1908, pp. 87ff. Baronius had given it as his opinion in the sixteenth century that John Mark was Papias’ John the Presbyter (*Annales Ecclesiastici*, t. ii, annus 97). As evidence of the interest in these questions in the early seventeenth century, cf. D. Tillemont: *Memoires pour servir à l’histoire ecclésiastique* t. ii, pp. 554ff. (Paris 1644).

² cf. A. Wikenhauser: *New Testament Introduction*, New York 1958, pp. 417–19

³ This is considered part of a genuine ‘fragment’ of Paul’s last letter to Timothy even by those who reject the authenticity of the Pastoral epistles. In *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London 1955), p. 29, V. Taylor says: ‘The last Pauline reference to Mark is in the genuine note embedded in 2 Timothy iv 11.’

the authenticity of this letter assigns it a date prior to A.D. 64¹ and consequently even if it be supposed that they are the same individual, we are left with the fact that when John Mark is last spoken of in the New Testament he is residing at Ephesus.

This leads us to a consideration of the witness of later tradition. The earliest evidence of any belief that Mark the evangelist and John Mark were one and the same is to be found in the third century Monarchian prologue to the second gospel.² That this identification did not win general acceptance is clear from the fact that almost two centuries later St Jerome gives it as only his personal opinion that they are to be identified,³ and from the liturgical practice of the Greek Church which has always distinguished the two.⁴ Papias testified that Mark the evangelist had never heard Jesus and the Muratorian fragment (Hippolytus ?) implies that he had never even seen the Lord.⁵ Since John Mark, a resident of Jerusalem, accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey in 45 A.D., and so must have been at least eighteen at that time, and probably older, it is difficult to suppose that he had never once seen Jesus especially if, as is so generally supposed, the Last Supper took place in his house (cf. Mk. 14:12-16). The tradition that makes of Mark the evangelist the founder of the Church in Alexandria cannot be traced beyond Eusebius who does not seem to have considered it very reliable.⁶ Clement of Alexandria and Origen knew nothing of such a tradition. Were it to be accepted, however, it would—since it fixes the date of Mark's death in A.D. 62—further preclude the possible identification of John Mark with Mark the evangelist.⁷ Dionysius of Alexandria who had studied under Origen, and who was one of the first Christian writers to speak explicitly of John

¹ cf. Wikenhauser, op. cit., pp. 444, 506-9. V. Taylor (op. cit., p. 30) states : 'if the Epistle is petrine, the allusion is to Peter's association with Mark in Rome about A.D. 64 or a little earlier.'

² cf. D. de Bruyne 'Les plus anciens prologues latins des évangiles' *RBén* XL (1928), pp. 193ff., esp. p. 204. From the simple reminiscence (first given by Hippolytus, *Philosoph.* 7, 30) that Mark the evangelist was *kolobodaktulos*, the author of this prologue (a very poor historian in de Bruyne's estimation) invents the legend that St Mark amputated a finger in order to avoid serving as a priest in the Temple. By the time of the Venerable Bede the legend had developed to explain that Mark *ex eorum fuisse numero de quibus scribit Lucas, quia multa etiani turba sacerdotum obediebat fidei* (Act. vi) *P.L.* 92, 133.

³ *Marcum . . . quem puto Evangelii conditorem.* *Comment. in Epist. ad Philem.* *P.L.* 23, 763

⁴ In the Greek calendars John Mark is said to have ended his days as Bishop of Byblos in Syria. cf. *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. XLVII (Sept. t.vii) 354.

⁵ Papias is quoted by Eusebius to this effect in *H.E.* iii, 39. In the Muratorian fragment only part of the last sentence pertaining to the second gospel is extant, but in speaking of Luke the author says : *dominum tamen nec ipse vidit in carne et ideo prout asequi potuit ita et ad [sic] nativitate Johannis incipet dicere.*

⁶ Eusebius writes : 'And they say that this Mark was the first that was sent to Egypt' *H.E.* ii, 16.

⁷ *H.E.* ii, 24

Mark, clearly did not associate him with either the evangelist or with the see of Alexandria.¹

On the other hand, and this is very curious, Dionysius seems not to have realised that John Mark was the Mark of Col. 4:10 and 2 Tim. 4:11.² Far more strange is St John Chrysostom's apparent confusion of John Mark with John the Apostle. Commenting on Ac. 12:12, the great bishop of Constantinople asks: 'Who is this John? Perhaps,' he answers himself, 'that [John] who was always with them; for this reason he [St Luke] put down his surname' (i.e. Mark).³ There is no question that later Greek writers understood Chrysostom to have made this mistaken identification, for they specifically correct it.⁴ Out of this error, however, there grew the legend that John the Apostle bought a house in Jerusalem, that house which became the centre of Christian life in the holy city.⁵

All of this shows how little was really known about John Mark in antiquity and how overshadowed he was by the son of Zebedee. The fullest account of him that we possess may be found in the sixth-century *Praise of the Apostle Barnabas* by Alexander the Monk.⁶ This work may preserve much older Cypriot traditions and the author does relate, at one point, that he is giving what 'the holy fathers' said. In it John Mark and his mother are described as having been introduced by Barnabas to Jesus at the time that he performed the miracle at the pool of Bezetha (Jn. 5:2ff.), and many visits by Jesus to the home of these two are stated to have taken place subsequently. There the Last Supper was held and there the risen Lord appeared to Thomas. It is surely interesting, if not significant, that in this account the house of John Mark becomes the background of the fourth gospel's narrative of the Jerusalem ministry. Alexander further states that after the martyrdom of Barnabas on Cyprus, Mark sailed to Ephesus where he informed Paul of his uncle's death. Here Alexander's local tradition—if it be such—ends, and he proceeds to identify John Mark with Mark the evangelist.

¹ *H.E.* vii, 25

² Of John Mark Dionysius wrote: 'For example, there is also another John, surnamed Mark, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, whom Barnabas and Paul took with them; of whom also it is said, "and they had also John as their attendant." But that it is he who wrote this (the Apocalypse), I would not say. For it is not written that he went with them into Asia, but "now when Paul and his company set sail for Paphos, they came to Perge in Pamphylia; and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem."'

³ *In Acta Ap., Hom. xxvi.* P.G. 60, 201

⁴ Oecumenius (P.G. 118, 197-8), and Theophylact (P.G. 125, 683-4). The latter simply adds *ouk* before Chrysostom's phrase: 'not that [John] who perhaps was always with them' (retaining the quite unnecessary *isd̄s*).

⁵ Elaborately set forth by Nicephorus Callistus in his *Ecclesiastical History*, ii, 3 (P.G. 145, 758-9)

⁶ P.G. 87 (iii), 4091-9

The little evidence that we have, at least permits us to say that John Mark is to be associated with Ephesus from about A.D. 57. He may have gone to Rome with Paul later, but if so he returned to Ephesus before A.D. 64. This may explain the tradition of the two Johns in that city¹ and it may justify the suspicion that John Mark was John the Presbyter. Polycrates of Ephesus refers to only one John who, for him, is the beloved disciple,² but his description of John as one 'who was born a priest, wearing the sacerdotal plate' has long puzzled scholars. In its own way this could be taken as a confused memory of the existence of John Mark at Ephesus, for the phrase is more likely to be true of him than of the son of Zebedee. For some reason John Mark was not well remembered, as we have seen. If we may rely on the very early tradition that John the Apostle also lived in Ephesus,³ the probability of a confusion in which even a Chrysostom could be involved, can hardly be denied.

Whether or not John Mark had some part in the editing of the Ephesian gospel and the Johannine epistles is another question, the answer to which, given the paucity of relevant documents and the complexity of the problem, could never exceed conjecture.⁴

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¹ Dionysius of Alexandria (cf. *supra*, n. 12) states: 'They say there are two cenotaphs in Ephesus and each one commemorates a John.' The *Constitutiones Apostolorum* vii, 46, recording the apostolic appointment of bishops, reads: *Ephesi Timotheus a Paulo, Joannes a me Joanne* (cf. F. X. Funk, ed., *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum I*, Paderborn 1905, 453-5). Nicephorus Callistus affirms that the two monuments still existed in his own time, though this is scarcely credible (*P.G.* 146, 252). St Jerome considered the tradition of two Johns 'the better view' (*P.L.* 23, 670), impressed, perhaps, by the conviction of Eusebius (*H.E.* iii, 39).

² Quoted by Eusebius, *H.E.* v, 24

³ Justin Martyr, speaking in Ephesus (*H.E.* iv, 18) around A.D. 130, refers to John 'one of the apostles of Christ' as someone who had been in their midst (*Dialogue* 81, *P.G.* 6, 669). This is the earliest testimony to the Ephesian residence of John the Apostle. It is not, of course, universally acknowledged that 'one of the apostles of Christ' necessarily means one of the twelve.

⁴ Yet it is difficult to refrain from pointing out that a well-born native of Jerusalem with Temple connections would have been especially qualified to recast the oral gospel of the son of Zebedee in precisely that form in which we have the fourth gospel. The suggestion of the late Dean Sanders ('John on Patmos', *supra*) that John Mark arrived in Ephesus for the first time after a thirty-year exile on Patmos—during which he wrote the Apocalypse—does not harmonise with our certain knowledge that he had been in Ephesus long before the time of Domitian.