

symbol” in most of these texts (275). In gnostic texts, he explains, the tree of knowledge takes center stage.

Beyond the biblical period, Pippa Salonijs writes on “The Tree of Life in Medieval Iconography” (ch. 12). Her visually rich presentation on the tree of life in medieval art documents the several ways in which the image was used in the period. The motif is found as part of texts, bowls, paintings, pavements, windows, walls, ceilings, monuments, and religious objects. A variety of meanings are expressed in these artistic designs, such as “a path towards God,” “terrestrial community, lineage, and power,” “longevity,” and “salvation,” among others (330–331). The tree of life was also used as “a meditative tool,” “a didactic instrument,” and “a way to propagandize” religious orders (332). In chapter thirteen, “The Tree of Life in the North,” G. Ronald Murphy discusses the tree of life motif in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian traditions, where the motif is reflected in ecclesial architecture. In chapter fourteen, Daniel J. Treier, Dustyn Elizabeth Keepers, and Ty Kieser discuss “The Tree of Life in Modern Theological Thought” in historical-critical, literal, theological, and symbolic readings.

As a whole, *The Tree of Life* presents readers with a wealth of information on the topic—from biblical and extrabiblical material to description of the ancient Near Eastern context, from early reception history to modern thought. It provides Bible students and researchers with access to much of the literature in a single volume. The book is an important resource for research on the tree of life motif.

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FLAVIO PRESTES III

Furlong, Dean. *The John Also Called Mark: Reception and Transformation in Christian Tradition*. WUNT 2/518. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020. 251 pp. Paperback. USD 79.00.

Dean Furlong’s study explores Christian traditions relating to “the John also called Mark” (Acts 15:37) and his portrayal as a Markan figure (i.e., a figure sometimes identified with Mark the Evangelist) and as a Johannine figure (i.e., a figure sometimes identified with the beloved disciple John the Evangelist). Furlong refers to John Mark as John/Mark in recognition that the figure in question was not called “John Mark” but rather “John” or “Mark.” Furlong suggests that the same individual is referred to as “John” in Acts 13:5, 13, as “Mark” in 15:39, and as “John, who was also called Mark” in 12:12, 25, and 15:37 (3). A shorter version of this study focusing on the reception of John the Evangelist in early Christian writings was submitted in 2017 as part of Furlong’s doctoral dissertation written at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, under the supervision of Professors Peter-Ben Smit and Aza Goudriaan.

Furlong's thesis is that while many assume a relationship between John/Mark and Mark the Evangelist, in early Christian sources, the two Marks were differentiated. Further, he builds on the work of J. Edgar Bruns, who drew attention to an apparent "confusion" in some early Christian sources between John and Mark ("John Mark: A Riddle within the Johannine Enigma," *Scripture* 15 [1963]: 88–92; "The Confusion between John and John Mark in Antiquity," *Scripture* 17 [1965]: 23–26). Furlong presents evidence additional to that presented by Bruns indicating that in some early sources John/Mark was sometimes identified with John the Evangelist. The "confusion" between John/Mark and John the Evangelist is deemed by Furlong to have originated in the second century, pointing to the possibility that John/Mark was identified with either John the Evangelist or the beloved disciple of John's Gospel in earlier Christian sources.

In part one (chs. 1–5), Furlong considers traditions associating John/Mark with other Markan figures. Chapter one surveys three depictions of a figure called Mark–John/Mark, Mark the Evangelist, and the Mark who founded churches in Egypt. The traditional view of scholarship is that John/Mark is Mark the Evangelist and/or Alexandrian Mark. Furlong surveys early Christian traditions relating to each of the three Marks and concludes that they are presented as three distinct figures.

Chapter two explores the reception of Mark the Evangelist and his conflation with John/Mark in Syrian, Greek, and Western sources. Furlong argues for a conflation that occurred "no earlier than the turn of the fourth century" between the John/Mark of the NT and the Mark of Papias, who is presented as a follower of Peter and who wrote the Gospel in Rome (23). Furlong rejects any historically valid basis for such conflation, arguing that the Jerusalem-based John/Mark is likely to have heard the living Jesus, whereas Papias describes the author of the Gospel as having "neither heard the Lord nor followed him" (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15). Appealing to Papias does not, of course, invalidate those traditions that equate John/Mark with the Evangelist without presuming that John/Mark was an early disciple of Jesus (e.g., Ephrem the Syrian, 306–373), whether it be one of the seventy-two of Luke 10:1 or a later honorary member of the seventy (e.g., *Liber Apis* 49.31).

Chapter three addresses the presentation of Mark of Alexandria in various Coptic sources and possible associations with Mark the Evangelist and/or John/Mark. The dominant trend in these sources is to identify all three Marks together. It is interesting to note that Egyptian interpreters were aware of a possible conflict between John/Mark's origin in Jerusalem and the Papian tradition that Mark neither heard nor followed Jesus, evidence of the wide circulation of traditions. Severus, bishop of the city of Nastrova in Egypt in the ninth century, describes John/Mark as being three years old at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus, an explanation that both accounts for John/Mark's

Jerusalem origin and his lack of experience as a disciple of Jesus (45). It may also account for why John/Mark deserted Paul in Acts 13:13, out of youthful fear or inexperience, although aging him in this manner results in him being martyred in his 30s around the year sixty two (50).

Chapter four covers three Cypriot sources—the *Acts of Barnabas* (late fifth century), the *Encomium of Barnabas* (sixth century), and the *Life of Auxibius* (early seventh century)—that expand on the visit of Barnabas and John/Mark to Cyprus in Acts 15:39 and conclude with the martyrdom of Barnabas in Salamis, at which point Mark left the island. The first two of these sources rework Mark's martyrdom in the Egyptian *Martyrdom of Mark* (second to the fourth century) as a template for the martyrdom of Barnabas. All three works identify John/Mark with the Papian and Alexandrian narratives although the order of events varies between accounts.

Finally, chapter five addresses a little-known thirty-five chapter account of Mark in the *Acts, Miracles, and Passion of Mark*, the earliest extant version being a thirteenth-century codex. The account weaves together the narratives of the Lukan John/Mark (chs. 1–8), the Papian Mark (ch. 9), and the account of the Alexandrian Mark as found in the *Martyrdom of Mark* and other independent sources (chs. 10–35). Throughout this first part of the study, Furlong seeks to show that John/Mark, Mark the Evangelist, and the Alexandrian Mark were originally three distinct figures and that they were only conflated from the fourth century on.

In part two (chs. 6–12), Furlong turns to those traditions depicting John/Mark as a Johannine figure. Chapter six covers traditions that Furlong believes present John/Mark, his house, or his mother in narratives drawn from the Gospel of John, sometimes alluding to him as the beloved disciple (e.g., *Witness of Holy John the Precursor and Baptist*, possibly fifth century; *Acts of Mark*, thirteenth-century codex). In addition, Furlong discusses possible Johannine depictions of Mark in later traditions (e.g., the Monarchian prologue to Mark, late fourth century) that identify the source of John the Evangelist's Logos theology and doctrine of Christ's divinity in the Gospel of Mark. Underlying Furlong's argument is the assumption that certain theological motifs are specifically Johannine and outside the parameters of normal Markan thinking.

In chapter seven, Furlong addresses traditions that portray John/Mark and John the Evangelist in similar terms, as Levitical aristocratic Jerusalemites, both with a father called Aristobulus, and as the young man who fled naked at the arrest of Jesus (Mark 14:51–52). Furlong finishes the chapter by raising the possibility that these traditions relate to the same figure, later obscured by the conflation of John/Mark with Mark the Evangelist and John the Evangelist with John the son of Zebedee (121). Chapter eight addresses other early Christian traditions that portray John and Mark in similar terms. Around the year 190, the bishop of Ephesus, Polycrates,

describes John the Evangelist as a priest who wore the sacerdotal plate (*apud* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.24.2). A fragment from a lost Latin work of unknown date and provenance describes Mark likewise as a priest who wore the sacerdotal plate. James the Just is described in like manner by Epiphanius in the late fourth century. Furlong proposes that Hegesippus's *Memoirs* lies behind these three depictions.

Chapter nine expands on chapter eight with a discussion of the thesis of Rendel Harris and Alphonse Mingana that Polycrates's portrayal of John the Evangelist as a priest wearing the high-priestly plate derives from the depiction in the *Odes of Solomon*, dated between 100 and 125, of the odist as a prominent Christian leader, portrayed as a priest wearing a wreath or crown. Furlong modifies this thesis to suggest that Polycrates derived his imagery from Hegesippus, who used Johannine odist imagery to cast the episcopal office in terms of the Israelite high priesthood and rejects the possibility that the common imagery might simply be a shared literary stereotype. Furlong's goal is to establish an early Johannine source to later traditions associated with John/Mark and John the Evangelist.

In chapter ten, Furlong discusses early and medieval Johannine sources on the life and movement of John the Evangelist and then correlates these traditions in chapter eleven with the John/Mark narrative. He proposes that these correlations, which include "an Antioch mission shortly after Stephen's death, a short stay in Seleucia, a journey to Cyprus, a final departure from Judea in the 40s and a residence in Ephesus and Asia Minor" (175), are not the results of chance but rather that they arose from the identification of John/Mark with John the Evangelist. Furlong argues in chapter twelve that (1) the earliest traditions associate John/Mark with the beloved disciple and/or John the Evangelist and assume that John/Mark, Mark the Evangelist, and the Alexandrian Mark were three separate figures and (2) later sources conflate John/Mark with Mark the Evangelist and the Alexandrian Mark. While he recognizes that some scholars have identified John/Mark with the beloved disciple, Furlong does not seek to assess the historicity of such traditions or to posit a thesis concerning the identity of the latter.

In terms of his overall thesis, Furlong is most likely correct in asserting, considering the very late dating of many of his sources, a degree of conflation in many of the traditions he presents, whether Markan or Johannine. However, I would have liked to have seen more discussion on the nature of and motives for conflation and possible alternative explanations for the development of shared literary motifs. If we assume conflation, what social locations and literary conventions permitted authors to conflate traditions relating to well-known individuals of high reputational status that earlier generations and even contemporaries understood to relate to three separate figures? In many of the sources Furlong presents, there are traditions that may either be explained as expansions of earlier traditions or conflations of origi-

nally disparate traditions. How are we to tell the difference between the two when any reconstruction of the transmission of traditions is tentative at best?

In chapter one, I would have liked to have seen greater critical engagement with those scholars who hold that when Papias was describing the author of the Gospel of Mark, he was likely referring to John/Mark and/or the Alexandrian Mark (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15, in Furlong, 14). This would have strengthened Furlong's thesis. Also, some of the traditions he discusses need not require three separate Markan figures. For example, while the *Martyrdom of Mark* does not explicitly refer to Mark of Alexandria as the author of the Gospel of Mark, it does refer to a time "when the apostles were being dispersed throughout the inhabited world," during which it was the "the lot of the most holy Mark to go into the environs of Egypt by the will of God" (*Mart. Marc.* 1; in Furlong, 19). The identification of Alexandrian Mark as an apostle of equivalent status and origin to the other apostles and as "most holy" indicates a figure of preeminent standing appropriate to one of the four Evangelists.

I struggled somewhat with the argument in chapter six because many of the proposed allusions to John/Mark as the beloved disciple seem tenuous at best, even if we allow that such allusions are vestiges of earlier traditions obscured by a later conflation of Markan figures. For example, Furlong appeals to Mahwub (*Hist. Patr. Eccl. Alex.* 1.1), the *Encomium of Barnabas* (229–230), and the *Acts of Mark* (6), which seem to portray John/Mark as the host of the Last Supper, "a position sometimes associated with the Beloved Disciple, based on the seating arrangements (the Beloved Disciple was to the right of Jesus, the guest of honor; John 13:23)" (90). Furlong describes this as "another possible identification of John/Mark with the Beloved Disciple" (90). This seems quite a stretch.

Furlong proposes that the conflation of John/Mark with Mark the Evangelist and the Alexandrian Mark obscures the fact that historically they were three separate figures. I remain to be convinced that our earliest sources allow us to be so certain that they were three separate figures. Furlong's reconstruction partly rests on his conviction that he can tell the difference between those parts of a source text that reflect purported earlier obscured Johannine traditions and those parts that reflect later Markan accretions. This opens him to a potential critique that either the obscured Johannine traditions are less present than he asserts or that the Johannine and Markan traditions developed in a different sequence than that which he proposes. Furlong remains coy as to whether his proposed identification of John/Mark with John the Evangelist and/or the beloved disciple represents an equivalent obscuration of originally separate figures or whether there was a single figure standing behind such traditions.

Furlong's study presents a wealth of traditions relating to the various Marks and Johns that is truly commendable. The breadth and depth of

research are exemplary, and Furlong has done us a great favor in drawing our attention to such a rich collection of traditions. He writes clearly and engagingly, necessary corrections being “figure” rather than “finger” (12) and “have been merged” instead of “have had to merged” (185). His study is a valuable contribution to our understanding of tradition history relating to important early Christian figures.

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CEDRIC VINE

Gupta, Nijay K. *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Studies: Understanding Key Debates*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020. xii + 196 pp. Softcover. USD 24.99.

Nijay K. Gupta is an associate professor of NT at Northern Seminary in Lisle, Illinois. A prolific author, Gupta has published numerous books and commentaries on the NT, the most recent being *The New Testament Commentary Guide: A Brief Handbook for Students and Pastors* (Lexham Press, 2020). In addition to his professional responsibilities, Gupta has a significant online presence through his popular blog *Crux Sola*, dedicated to the NT.

In *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Studies*, Gupta discusses thirteen topics. Starting with the Synoptic problem, Gupta takes a look at the historical Jesus, the writings of Paul, the interpretation of the book of Revelation, and the use of the HB in the NT, to mention a few. Not surprisingly, Paul's corpus takes up three chapters (“Jesus and Paul,” “Paul's Theological Perspective,” and “Paul and the Jewish Law”). Major thought leaders on each topic are discussed and their views summarized. Some chapters are divided into two or more “debated topics” (e.g., ch. 6, “Paul and the Jewish Law” presents two subtopics: “Why Was the Torah Given to Israel?” and “What is Paul's Problem With the Works of the Law?”). Chapters are intuitively organized, and subtopics are clearly titled and succinctly addressed, rarely running for more than one page per subtitle. Discussions move forward nimbly, and a final reflection recaps the main points. Further reading recommendations for both beginner and advanced readers are placed at the end of each chapter, along with the resources used.

As an example of the approach offered, one could mention the chapter titled “Interpreting the Book of Revelation,” which reflects the current renaissance in scholarly interest in Revelation. Gupta briefly lays out basic principles for the interpretation of Revelation (88–91), followed by a nine-part thumbnail sketch of the book (91–94) and a discussion of the four main schools of interpretation: preterist, historicist, futurist, and idealist (94–99). A reflection section ties up the loose ends and helps the reader stay focused on Revelation's overall rhetorical thrust rather than getting lost in the details.