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"WHOM HE ALSO NAMED APOSTLES": A TEXTUAL PROBLEM IN MARK 3:14

Christopher W. Skinner

IN NESTLE-ALAND'S 27TH EDITION of the Greek New Testament Mark 3:14 includes the phrase *οὓς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὠνόμασεν* ("whom He also named apostles"). It is placed in square brackets to indicate the "balance of probabilities" posited by the editorial committee.[1] While English translations are split over the insertion of this phrase,[2] the majority of modern commentators on the Gospel of Mark favor its omission.[3] Such a wide disparity among

Christopher W. Skinner is Associate Pastor, Perry Hall Baptist Church, Baltimore, Maryland.

1 Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 69.

2 English translations that omit the phrase include the ASV, JB, KJV, NASB, NKJV, and RSV. Conversely the CEV, ESV, NAB, NIV, NLT, NRSV, TEV, and NET Bible all retain the phrase.

3 The vast majority of commentators reject the phrase. These include C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark,* Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 127; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark,* New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 247; Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus,* 5th ed. (Zurich: Beniger, 1998), 139 n. 18; Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark,* Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 111; M.-J. Lagrange, *Evangile selon Saint Marc,* Etudes Bibliques (Paris: Gabalda, 1920), 58; William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark,* New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 131 n. 41; Simon Legasse, *L'Evangile de Marc,* Lectio Divina Commentaires (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1997), 1:229; Ernest Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus,* 17th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 74; Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 263; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 77, 120–21; D. E. Nineham, *The Gospel of St. Mark,* Pelican Gospel Commentaries (New York: Seabury, 1963), 116; Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (Freibourg: Herder, 1977), 1:203 n. a; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark,* 2d ed. (London: Macmillan, 1966), 230. See also John P. Meier, "The Circle of the Twelve: Did It Exist during Jesus' Public Ministry?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116 (1997): 638, 639 n. 11.

translation committees and commentators reflects the difficulties raised by the evidence for this verse and its various readings. Several factors are involved in evaluating this textual problem, and the present study does not purport to offer the final word on the discussion. However, there does seem to be an acceptable solution that addresses both textual and narrative-critical issues.

External Evidence

Several strong Alexandrian and Caesarean witnesses support the bracketed Nestle-Aland[27] reading. The witnesses attesting to the bracketed reading are ℵ B C* Θ f^{13} 28 *pc* sy^{hmg} co. Without question the reading enjoys the support of the earliest and most reliable manuscripts as well as the strongest geographical distribution. Also neither of the variant readings enjoys such widespread or such early manuscript support. The phrase is completely omitted by A C^2 (D) L f^1 33 𝔐 latt sy sa^{ms} and is placed after *ἵνα ὦσιν μετ' αὐτοῦ* in W (Δ). By itself the external evidence for the textual reading is practically insurmountable—a point almost conceded by the United Bible Society committee.[4] Not only is the Nestle-Aland[27] reading attested to by a combination of the earliest and best witnesses, but also the occurrence of the disputed phrase in W (late fourth or early fifth century) further bolsters a claim to the authenticity of the phrase on the grounds of early attestation. Thus the external evidence points strongly in the direction of the reading preserved in Nestle-Aland.[27] However, reliance on external evidence alone does not represent the most balanced approach to this or any other textual issue.[5] Therefore an examination of internal

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Dissenting from the majority are James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark,* Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 111–12, 113 n. 6; Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26,* Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1989), 154 n. a; Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 164; Dieter Lührmann, *Das Markusevangelium,* Hieronomy New Testament (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1987), 71; and Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 146.

4 "Although the words *οὓς . . . ὠνόμασεν* may be regarded as an interpolation from Luke (6.13), the Committee was of the opinion that the external evidence is too strong in their favor to warrant their ejection from the text" (Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament,* 69).

5 While agreement between Sinaiticus and Vaticanus is weighty, in some passages they together do not preserve the best reading. A prime example of this is Romans 8:35 where both uncials read *θεοῦ.* Though the two agree, that reading is almost universally regarded as a scribal change from *χριστοῦ* in order to create agreement with verse 39 (Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament,* 458). Thus the weight of these two uncials should always be measured with a

criteria is necessary.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

The primary contention of those who dispute the authenticity of the Nestle-Aland[27] reading is that the phrase containing the word *ἀπόστολος*—a prominent term in only Luke-Acts and the Pauline Epistles—may have been introduced into the Marcan narrative by way of Lucan influence (cf. Luke 6:13).[6] That Mark typically referred to the disciples as *οἱ μαθηταί* and as *οἱ δώδεκα*, rather than *οἱ ἀπόστολοι* is held to be implicit support for this assertion.[7] Thus, as the argument goes, the transcriptional probability would favor the reading that omits the term, and that reading must then be regarded as the earliest. Taken at face value, this point seems to provide internal evidence that is weighty enough to rival the external attestation, and it creates a conflict between the two sets of evidence.

As already seen, the external evidence is weighty. It seems prudent then to approach the issue initially by giving the external evidence strong consideration. Thus it is necessary to deal with the claim of interpolation on internal grounds by attempting to (a) account for the term *ἀπόστολος* in the Marcan narrative, and (b) explain the nature of the omission in some manuscripts. This will either bolster the argument for interpolation or overturn the idea that omission of the phrase reflects the earlier reading.

First, the argument for interpolation is significantly weakened in view of the fact that the disciples are explicitly referred to as *οἱ ἀπόστολοι* in Mark 6:30.[8] This is the only other occurrence of *ἀπόστολος* in Mark and while its presence in the narrative is problematic in the context of a theological discussion of the disciples in Mark's Gospel, the undisputed reading in 6:30 clearly establishes

consideration of other factors, both external and internal. Other notable examples where agreement between the two likely reflects a later development are Matthew 27:16–17; Mark 1:27; 12:23; 14:68; Luke 18:24; and Philippians 1:14.

6 Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament,* 69. See also Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark,* 111; Marcus, *Mark 1–8,* 263; Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark,* 77 n. 11; Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark,* 230; and Meier, "The Circle of the Twelve," 639 n. 11.

7 Mark used the term *μαθητής* fifty-two times when referring to all or part of Jesus' inner circle of disciples. The term *δώδεκα* is used twelve times in reference to Jesus' disciples (3:14, 16; 4:10; 6:7, 43; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:10, 17, 20, 43).

8 Discipleship is one of the major themes in Mark. Any discussion of this topic must include the use of *ἀπόστολος* in 6:30, despite the fact that it is found elsewhere in Mark only in the verse discussed in this article.

Mark's use of the term.[9] Therefore it is incorrect to claim that Mark has no concept of "apostle."[10] This recognition casts serious doubt on the assertion that the term was introduced in 3:14 under Lucan influence. In fact it seems likely that the disputed phrase was first used by Mark and then later included in the Gospel of Luke. In light of the use of *οἱ ἀπόστολοι* in Mark 6:30 there is no reason to assume introduction of the term in Mark 3:14 by way of Lucan influence.

Second, in evaluating the internal evidence there is more here than meets the eye. The phrase *καὶ ἐποίησεν δώδεκα* is found in 3:14 and 16.[11] It is notable that the majority of witnesses omitting the disputed phrase in verse 14 also omit the second occurrence of *καὶ ἐποίησεν δώδεκα* in verse 16.[12] In addition the term *ἀποστέλλῃ* appears in the final phrase of verse 14. The appearance of the repeated phrase *καὶ ἐποίησεν [τοὺς] δώδεκα*, along with the cognate terms *ἀποστόλους* and *ἀποστέλλῃ* in such close proximity would likely have been problematic for a copyist, creating the possibility for multiple errors of sight. Further, an uncial reproduction of the text reveals four instances in the span of eight lines of text where *καὶ* is followed by words beginning with *ἐπ-* or *ἀπ-*. Recognition of this fact helps elucidate the potential for scribal confusion.[13]

With these internal considerations factored into the equation, it seems a strong possibility that some manner of parablepsis was facilitated by the repetition of identical or similar terms, resulting in scribal omission of one or both phrases in the weaker manu-

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9 Moloney suggests that the occurrence of the titular form in 6:30 is solely for the purpose of creating an inclusio with the verbal form in verse 7 (Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark*, 77). However, assuming that the pericope begins with the summary statement in verse 6b, it would be more appropriate to see the double use of *διδάσκω* in verses 6b and 30 as creating an inclusio.

10 Gnilka, however, maintains that Mark did not have any concept of "apostle" (*Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 139 n. 18).

11 The second occurrence of the phrase in verse 16 is *καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς δώδεκα*.

12 See especially A C^2 D L f^1 33 𝔐.

13 The following is a hypothetical reproduction of the text of verses 14–16.

ΚΔΙΕΠΟΙΗCΕΝΔΩΔΕΚΔ
ΟΥCΚΔΙΔΠΟCΤΟΛΟΥC
ΩΝΟΜΔCΕΝΙΝΔΩCΙΝΜ
ΕΤΔΥΤΟΥΚΔΙΙΝΔΔΠΟC
ΤΕΛΛΗΔΥΤΟΥCΚΗΡΥC
ΕΙΝΚΔΙΕΧΕΙΝΕΞΟΥCΙ
ΔΝΕΚΒΔΛΛΕΙΝΤΔΔΔΙ
ΜΟΝΙΔΚΔΙΕΠΟΙΗCΕΝΤ
ΟΥCΔΩΔΕΚΔΚΔΙΕΠΕΘ

scripts.[14] This internal explanation provides a reasonable explanation for the omission and accords well with the weightiness of the external attestation for the Nestle-Aland[27] reading.

Also in support of the bracketed reading is the well-documented tendency of the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus manuscripts to abbreviate rather than conflate. While this is not infallible, it is certainly an established rule of thumb to remember when approaching these two prominent uncials. In light of this tendency in both manuscripts, and in light of their agreement in retaining the disputed phrase, the claim to an original shorter reading becomes even more difficult to maintain. Once again the bracketed Nestle-Aland[27] reading stands out.

Overwhelming external evidence stands in favor of the reading as well as a plausible explanation on internal grounds for how the disputed phrase was omitted. Before setting forth a conclusion, however, another internal issue needs to be addressed.

EXEGETICAL EVIDENCE

Discipleship is one of the more prominent themes in Mark's Gospel and "the Twelve" are often the vehicle for communicating the evangelist's theology of the role of a disciple of Christ. At the narrative level Mark 3:13–19 (along with 6:6b–30) is a critical text for understanding the nature of discipleship within Mark. Like bookends these texts mark the beginning (3:13–19) and end (6:6b–30) of the preaching ministry of the Twelve in Mark's Gospel. Also these passages include both a disputed (3:14) and an undisputed example (6:30) of the term *ἀπόστολος*—the only two such occurrences in the Gospel of Mark. A close look at the relationship of these texts in order to see the link of concepts and the exegetically significant use of the term *ἀπόστολος* in both passages will help further establish the authenticity of the bracketed reading on internal grounds.

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[14] Regarding this internal evidence a text-critical note in the first beta version of the *The NET Bible* reads, "It is possible, given this close range of two verses, that a scribe's eye could skip down to 'he appointed twelve' in v. 16 and cause him to miss the words 'whom he named apostles' in v. 14. Another factor which might increase this likelihood is the presence of *ἀποστόλους* here and *ἀποστελλῇ* [*sic*] in the next verse. The text would still read sensibly if a ms omitted both 'whom he named apostles' in v. 14 and 'he appointed twelve' in v. 16. Thus, the possibility of parablepsis arising from homoioarcton is likely" (*The NET Bible* [n.p.: Biblical Studies, 2001], 1797–98). While this is an attractive argument in favor of the position taken here, the manuscript evidence does not support the claim of homoioarcton. In support of this claim one would expect at least one manuscript to omit all of verse 15, but there is apparently no manuscript that does so. A new note in the second beta version replaces this earlier one and offers a stronger argument.

According to 3:14–15 Jesus had a dual purpose in appointing the Twelve. He appointed them *ἵνα ὦσιν μετ' αὐτοῦ* ("so that they would be with Him") but also *ἵνα ἀποστέλλῃ αὐτοὺς κηρύσσειν καί ἔχειν ἐξουσίαν ἐκβάλλειν τὰ δαιμόνια* ("that He might send them out to preach and to have authority to cast out the demons").[15] In 3:20–6:6a the Twelve were observers of Jesus' ministry, and in 6:6b–30 they became participants in that ministry.[16] After 6:30 the Twelve were never again explicitly associated with the message of Jesus in Mark's Gospel. This lack of association between the disciples and the message of Jesus serves as a tacit reminder of the ongoing incomprehension of the Twelve.[17]

These two units form an inclusio that pictures both the hope and the glorious success in the ministry to which they had been entrusted. Mark 3:13–19 represents the promise and the potential of the Twelve, as they were handpicked by Jesus according to His two specific purposes. Mark 6:6b–30 represents the carrying out of that ministry by the disciples, which is contrasted with the Baptist's ministry and death in a carefully intercalated passage. After having been with Him and after ministering by His authority, the Twelve experienced success as they participated in the activities for which they were appointed.

Clear internal links connect these two pericopae. First, both sections begin with summary statements (3:7–12 and 6:6b) that are

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[15] The disciples were appointed to two things, each designated by a *ἵνα* clause: to be "with Him" and to minister by His authority. Therefore the second and third activities pictured here and connected by *καί* both fall under the general category introduced by the second *ἵνα* clause.

[16] A growing number of recent commentators regard Mark 6:6b–30 as an intercalation or "Marcan sandwich" passage. Examples include J. R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark,* Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 10 (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 54; James R. Edwards, "Marcan Sandwiches: The Significance of Interpolations in Marcan Narratives," *Novum Testamentum* 31 (1989): 198, 205–6; Francis J. Moloney, "Mark 6:6b–30: Mission, the Baptist, and Failure," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (2001): 647–50; Tom Shepherd, "The Narrative Function of Marcan Intercalation," *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995): 522–23, 527, 530, 534. Whether Mark 6:6b–30 is regarded as an intercalation, the exegete must ultimately reckon with the fact that the ministry of the disciples in 6:7–13 remains unresolved until verse 30.

[17] Much has been written about the incomprehension of the disciples and the theological reasons for its prominence in Mark. Some helpful, relatively recent treatments of the topic are Frank J. Matera, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples and Peter's Confession" *Biblica* 70 (1989): 153–72; Donald H. Juel, *The Gospel of Mark,* Interpreting Biblical Texts (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 74–76, 184–86; Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 95–103; and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2000), 114–24.

followed by material relating directly to the mission of the disciples (3:13–19 and 6:7–13, 30).[18] Second, the term *προσκαλέω* is used in 3:13 and 6:7 to indicate the summoning of the disciples by Jesus—each time at the outset of the pericope. In the former passage Jesus summoned them for the first time, appointing them for special ministerial purposes. In the latter passage He summoned them that they might carry out the ministry to which they had previously been appointed. These links are important for developing an appreciation for the relationship between these pericopae, and the lexical linking of the noun *ἀπόστολος* and its verbal cognate in both texts helps bolster the above text-critical discussion on the basis of intrinsic probability.

Assuming the authenticity of the bracketed Nestle-Aland[27] reading, two corresponding halves of an inverted symmetrical structure bind the pericopae.

A. *οὓς καί ἀποστόλους ὠνόμασεν* (title), 3:14
  B. *ἵνα ἀποστέλλῃ αὐτούς κηρύσσειν κτλ.* (activity), 3:14
  B′. *καὶ ἤρξατο αὐτοὺς ἀποστέλλειν* (activity), 6:7
A′. *καί συνάγονται οἱ ἀπόστολοι* (title), 6:30.[19]

In this pattern the cognate terms *ἀπόστολος* and *ἀποστέλλω* are used in an alternating rhythm. This pattern begins with a titular form followed directly by a verbal form (both in 3:14). This serves to introduce the Twelve who are designated "apostles" and who will eventually be "sent" to minister. The corresponding passage reverses the previous pattern with a verbal form (6:7) followed by the titular form (6:30). This text pictures "the Twelve" who were previ-

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[18] This pattern is widely recognized in the recent commentary tradition. See, among others, Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, 176; France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 245–46; Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, 154; Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 381; and Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark*, 116.

[19] This is not to suggest that a formal chiasm was intended here by the evangelist. Rather the idea of chiasm elucidates the internal link between these two pericopae. A cursory glance at the alternating pattern may lead to the conclusion that there is a level of unevenness to the structure of the proposed chiasm. However, looking at the narrative from the perspective that it would have initially been heard and not read silently, the aural connection between these passages would likely have been evident to a listener. For more on the nature of Mark as an oral narrative see Joanna Dewey, "Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark," *Interpretation* 43 (1989): 32–44; idem, "Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 53 (1991): 221–36; and Robert H. Stein, "Is Our Reading of the Bible the Same as the Original Audience's Hearing It? A Case Study in the Gospel of Mark," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46 (2003): 63–78.

ously designated "apostles" returning from the ministry after having been "sent." This quasi-chiastic pattern frames the inclusio between the events of 3:13–19 and 6:6b–30, and the inclusio created by this pattern serves to further highlight the thematic symmetry already at work in the two passages.

Ultimately these bookend passages depict the beginning and the end of the disciples' ministry of proclamation within the Gospel of Mark. This pattern reveals the narrative artistry of the evangelist, but more importantly it provides internal support for the intrinsic probability of the reading bracketed in Nestle-Aland[27].

Conclusion

It is clear from the history of the discussion of this textual issue that one set of data is not enough to solve the problem. It has been established here that (a) strong external evidence favors the Nestle-Aland[27] reading; (b) plausible explanations may be given for the internal evidence, including reasons for the rise of the variant on internal grounds; and (c) exegetically several factors connect the text with the disputed use of the term *ἀπόστολος* (3:13–19) to the text containing the undisputed use of the term (6:6b–30). Most notable is the inverted structure that connects the two pericopae by creating thematic inclusion and marks the beginning and the end of the preaching ministry of the Twelve within Mark. These connections between the two texts as well as the undisputed use of *ἀπόστολοι* in 6:30 lend support to the authenticity of the bracketed reading in 3:14 on internal grounds.

This evidence goes a long way toward resolving a difficult textual problem. When everything is considered, the preponderance of the evidence suggests that *οὓς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὠνόμασεν* is the earlier reading and is probably authentic.