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## “Whom He Also Named Apostles”: A Textual and Narrative-Critical Solution to Mark 3.14

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Daniel B. Wallace, 22 January 2003

### I. Introduction

The textual reading of [Mark 3:14](#) in Nestle-Aland’s 27<sup>th</sup> edition of the Greek NT contains the phrase οὗς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὠνόμασεν placed in square brackets to indicate the “balance of probabilities” posited by the editorial committee.<sup>1</sup> While many modern English translations are split over the insertion of this phrase, the majority of modern commentators on the Second Gospel have been decidedly in favor of its omission.<sup>2</sup> Such a wide disparity among committees and commentators intimately acquainted with the nuances of NT textual criticism reflects the difficulties raised by the evidence for this verse and its various readings. There are a number of factors involved in evaluating this textual problem and the present study does not purport to offer the final word on the discussion. However, there does appear to be an acceptable solution to this problem that incorporates both textual and narrative-critical issues. This “two-pronged” approach to solving the textual problem in 3:14 is the focus of this short study.

### II. External Evidence

The witnesses attesting to the bracketed textual reading in [Mark 3:14](#) are B C\* Θ f<sup>13</sup> 28 pc sy<sup>hmg</sup> co. Some of the earliest and highest quality manuscripts are contained in this list. On the contrary, neither of the variant readings enjoys such widespread or such early manuscript

support. The phrase is completely omitted by A C<sup>2</sup> (D) L f<sup>1</sup> 33 latt sy sa<sup>ms</sup> and is placed after ἴνα ὤσιν μετ’ αὐτοῦ in W (Δ). Standing alone, the external evidence for the textual reading is practically insurmountable—a point almost conceded by the UBS committee.<sup>3</sup> Not only is the NA<sup>27</sup> reading attested to by a combination of some of the earliest and best witnesses, but the occurrence of the disputed phrase in W (late 4th/early 5th 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 bracketed textual reading. However, reliance upon external evidence alone does not represent the most balanced approach to an evaluation of this or any other textual issue.<sup>4</sup> Therefore an examination of internal criteria is necessary to tip the scales in favor of one reading or another.

### III. Internal Evidence

The primary contention of those who dispute the authenticity of the NA<sup>27</sup> reading is that the phrase containing ἀποστόλους—a prominent term in only Luke-Acts and Paul—may have been introduced into the Markan narrative by way of Lucan influence (cf. [Luke 6:13](#)).<sup>5</sup> That Mark consistently refers to the disciples as οἱ μαθηταί and as οἱ δώδεκα, rather than οἱ ἀπόστολοι is held to be implicit support for this assertion.<sup>6</sup> Thus, as the argument goes, the transcriptional probability favors the reading that omits the term and that variant must then be regarded as the earlier reading. Taken at face value, this point appears to provide internal evidence with the strength to rival that of the external attestation, and creates a conflict between the two sets of evidence that begs for resolution. At this point, one must either proceed with the external evidence as the starting point, or acquiesce to the argument for interpolation.

Since the external evidence is weighty, it would be risky to disregard it at the outset. Therefore, it is necessary to deal with the claim of interpolation on internal grounds by (1) accounting for the term ἀπόστολος in the Markan narrative; and (2) explaining the nature of the omission in the other manuscripts. This will either bolster the argument for interpolation or effectively overturn the idea that the omission of the phrase reflects the earlier reading.

First, the argument for Lucan interpolation is significantly weakened in light of the fact that the disciples are explicitly referred to as οἱ ἀπόστολοι in [Mark 6:30](#).<sup>7</sup> This is the only other occurrence of ἀπόστολος in Mark and while its presence in the narrative is problematic for an overall discussion of the disciples in Mark’s Gospel, this undisputed reading in 6:30 sets a clear precedent for Markan usage of the term.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is incorrect to flatly claim that Mark has no conception of “apostle”—however it is to be understood and however meager the evidence for it might be.<sup>9</sup> The recognition of this fact casts serious doubt upon the assertion that the term must have been introduced under Lucan influence in 3:14. In fact, it seems possible that the disputed phrase was first used by Mark and then brought over into Luke during the composition of the Lucan narrative. Therefore, there is no reason to strictly assume the introduction of the term into the text by way of Lucan influence in light of the indisputable proof of its use in [Mark 6:30](#).

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 3:16.<sup>10</sup> It is notable that the majority of witnesses omitting the disputed phrase in v. 14 also omit the second occurrence of καὶ ἐποίησεν δώδεκα in v. 16.<sup>11</sup> Second, the term ἀποστέλλη also appears in the final phrase of 3:14. The appearance of

this repeated phrase (καὶ ἐποίησεν [τοὺς] δώδεκα) along with these two cognate terms (ἀποστόλους /ἀποστέλλη) all in such close proximity to one another would likely have been problematic for a copyist. There is the possibility then that parablepsis occurred resulting in scribal omission of both phrases in the weaker manuscripts.<sup>12</sup> This would account for the rise of the omission and accords well with the weightiness of the external attestation for the NA<sup>27</sup> reading.

Another point in support of the textual reading is the well-documented tendency of both Sinaiticus and Vaticanus to abbreviate rather than conflate. This is not infallible but is certainly an established rule of thumb to remember when approaching these two great uncials. In light of this tendency in both manuscripts, and in light of their agreement in attesting to the inclusion of the disputed phrase, the claim to an original shorter reading becomes even more difficult to maintain. Therefore, the bracketed textual reading stands out.

There is then, overwhelming external evidence in favor of the bracketed textual reading as well as a plausible answer on internal grounds for the rise of the variant which omits the disputed phrase. Before offering a final conclusion, there is one more internal issue that needs to be addressed. The intrinsic probability also strongly favors the NA<sup>27</sup> reading but this can only be introduced in the context of an exegetical and narrative-critical discussion of the passage in question. It is to this area that we now turn.

#### IV. Exegetical Evidence

Discipleship is one of the more prominent themes in the Second Gospel and “the twelve” are often the vehicle for communicating the evangelist’s theology of the role and function of discipleship. At the narrative level, 3:13-19 is—along with 6:6b-30—a critical text for understanding the nature of discipleship within Mark. These texts constitute a set of bookends that picture the appointment of the twelve (3:13-19) and the consummation of their ministry (6:6b-30) in the overall context of the Gospel. Also, in these passages there exists 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. It is necessary then, to demonstrate the relation of these texts in order to show the linking of concepts and the exegetically significant use of the term ἀπόστολος in both texts. This helps to further establish the authenticity of the textual reading on internal grounds.

According to 3:14, there was a dual purpose in Jesus’ appointment of the twelve. Jesus appointed them ἵνα ὠσιν μετ’ αὐτοῦ but also ἵνα ἀποστέλλη αὐτοὺς κηρύσσειν καὶ ἔχειν ἐξουσίαν ἐκβάλλειν τὰ δαιμόνια.<sup>13</sup> The twelve are thus observers of Jesus’ ministry from 3:20-6:6a and are participants in that ministry from 6:6b-30.<sup>14</sup> After 6:30, the twelve are never again explicitly associated with the message of Jesus in the course of the gospel. This serves as a tacit reminder to the astute reader of the ongoing incomprehension of the twelve.

Between these two units there is the hope, the glorious success and ultimately, the failure of the disciples in the ministry to which they have been entrusted. Mark 3:13-19 represents the promise and the potential of the twelve, as they are hand picked by Jesus according to his two specific purposes. Mark 6:6b-30 represents the carrying out of that ministry by the disciples —“sandwiched” with the Baptist’s death—which culminates in a demonstration of the spiritual dullness of the twelve. This key Markan theme of failure rears its head once again in 6:30, in the

disciples’ response after their ministry success: “the apostles came to Jesus and reported to him all that *they* had done and all that *they* had taught.”<sup>15</sup> After having been μετ’ αὐτοῦ and after ministering by his authority, they have experienced great success, but have failed because they have taken credit for accomplishments that were brought about by an authority that was merely on loan from Jesus.

With the relation of these texts in exegetical and theological perspective, there are at least three clear internal links connecting these two pericopae. First, both sections begin with summary statements (3:7-12 and 6:6b) that are followed by material relating directly to the mission of the disciples (3:13-19 and 6:7-12, 30).<sup>16</sup> Second, the term προσκαλέω is used in 3:13 and in 6:7 to indicate the summoning of the disciples by Jesus—each time at the outset of the pericope. In the former passage Jesus summons them for the first time, appointing them for special ministerial purposes. In the latter passage, he summons them that they might finally carry out the ministry to which they had previously been appointed. These two links are important for developing an appreciation for the relation between these pericopae, but it is ultimately the lexical linking of the noun ἀπόστολος and its verbal cognate in both texts that helps to bolster the above text-critical conclusions.

Assuming the authenticity of the bracketed textual reading, there is a lexical link created by two corresponding halves of an inverted symmetrical structure that binds the pericopae:

[A] οὓς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὠνόμασεν (**TITLE** – the twelve are named *apostles*; 3:14)

[B] ἵνα ἀποστέλλῃ αὐτοὺς κηρύσσειν (**ACTIVITY** – with the purpose of being *sent*; 3:14)

[B] καὶ ἦρξατο αὐτοὺς ἀποστέλλειν (**ACTIVITY** – the twelve are *sent*; 6:7)

[A] καὶ συνάγονται οἱ ἀπόστολοι (**TITLE** – the *apostles* return; 6:30)

There is here a quasi-chiastic pattern where four cognate terms are used in reference to the twelve and their ministry activity. This pattern begins with a titular form followed directly by a verbal form (both in 3:14). This verse serves as an introduction to the twelve as “apostles” 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 “apostles” returning from the ministry after having been “sent.” The inclusion created by this pattern serves to further highlight the thematic symmetry already at work in the two passages and depicts both the beginning and the end of the disciples’ ministerial career within the Second Gospel. Not only does this pattern reveal the narrative artistry of the evangelist, but more importantly, it provides internal support for the intrinsic probability of the reading bracketed in NA<sup>27</sup>.

## V. Conclusion

It is clear from the history of the discussion on this textual issue that one set of data is not enough to solve the problem. It has been established here that: (1) there is strong external evidence in favor of the NA<sup>27</sup> reading; (2) there are several plausible explanations of the internal evidence and a more than reasonable solution for the rise of the variant on internal grounds; and (3) exegetically, there are several critical links between the text containing the disputed use of the term ἀπόστολος (3:13-19), and the text containing the undisputed use of the term (6:6b-30)—a

fact which lends support to the intrinsic probability that the bracketed textual reading is authentic. The most notable feature is the inverted structure that connects the two pericopae, creates thematic inclusion and pictures both the beginning and end of the ministerial career of the twelve within Mark.

The combination of this evidence goes a long way toward resolving this difficult textual problem. When everything is considered, the preponderance of the evidence in this case suggests that the textual reading οὐς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὠνόμασεν is the earlier reading and is probably authentic.

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

<sup>2</sup> Translations that omit the phrase include KJV, ASV, RSV, NKJV, JB and NASB. Conversely, the NRSV, NAB, TEV, CEV, NIV, NLT, ESV and NET Bible all retain the phrase. Among the vast majority of commentators who reject the phrase are: C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark* (CGTC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 127; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 247; Joachim Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 5th ed., (EKKNT II; Zurich/Neukirchen/Vluyn: Beniger/Neukirchener, 1998), 139 n:18; Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark* (BNTC 2; 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* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 131 n. 41; Simon Legasse, *L'Évangile de Marc* (Lectio Divina Commentaires 5; Paris: Les Editions Du Cerf, 1997); 1:229; Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, 17th ed., (Meyers Kommentar; Gttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 74; Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8* (AB 27; 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* (HTKNT: Freiburg, Basel and Wien: Herder, 1976, 1977), 1:203 note a; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, 2d. ed. (London: Macmillan, 1966), 230. Cf. also John P. Meier, "The Circle of the Twelve: Did it Exist During Jesus Public Ministry?" *JBL* 116 (1997): 638, 639 n. 11. Dissenting from the majority are James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: 2002), 111-12, 113 n. 6; Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26* (WBC 34a; Dallas: Word, 1989), 154, note a; Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 164; Dieter Lührmann, *Das Markusevangelium* (HNT 3; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1987), 71; and Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 146.

<sup>3</sup> "Although the words οὐς... 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, *Textual Commentary*, 69).

<sup>4</sup> Much current text-critical methodology leads exegetes to consistently side with readings where there is agreement between  $\kappa$  and B, apart from a consideration of other factors. While the agreement between these two great uncials is weighty, there are clear examples of passages where together, they do not preserve the best or earliest reading. A prime example of this is Rom 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 Rom 8:39 (cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 458). Thus, the weight of these two uncials should always be

tempered with a consideration of other factors, both external and internal. Other notable examples where agreement between these two uncials likely reflects a later development are Matt 27:16-17; Mark 1:27; 12:23; 14:68; Luke 18:24; and Phil 1:14.

<sup>5</sup> Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 69. See also Gnllka, *Markus*, 139; Hooker, *Saint Mark*, 111; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 263; Moloney, *Mark*, 77 n:11; Taylor, *St. Mark*, 230; and Meier, “The Circle of the Twelve,” 639 n:11.

<sup>6</sup> Mark uses the term μαθητής 52 times when referring to all or part of Jesus’ inner circle of disciples. See 2:15, 15, 23; 3:7, 9, 20; 4:34, 35, 38, 40; 5:31, 40; 6:1, 35, 41, 43, 48; 7:2, 5, 17; 8:1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 27, 33, 34; 9:14, 18, 28, 31; 10:10, 13, 23, 24, 26, 32, 46; 11:1, 14; 12:43; 13:1; 14:12, 14, 16, 22, 32, 37; 16:7. The term δώδεκα is used twelve times in referring to Jesus’ disciples. See 3:14, 16; 4:10; 6:7, 43; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:10, 17, 20, 43.

<sup>7</sup> To be sure, the use of the term is problematic for an overall discussion of discipleship in Markan theology. Discipleship is one of the major themes in Mark—as attested to by the sheer volume of material written on the subject—and any discussion of this topic must include the use of the term in 6:30 (even though it is not found anywhere else in Mark except in the present text under discussion).

<sup>8</sup> Some commentators attempt to get around this by suggesting that the occurrence of the titular form in 6:30 is used solely for the purpose of creating inclusion with the verbal form in 6:7 (cf. e.g., Moloney, *Mark*, 119).

<sup>9</sup> *Contra* Gnllka, *Markus*, 139 n:18.

<sup>10</sup> The second occurrence of the phrase in v. 16 is καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς δώδεκα.

<sup>11</sup> See especially A C<sup>2</sup> D L f<sup>1</sup> 33 .

<sup>12</sup> Regarding this internal evidence, a text-critical note in the first beta version of 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 ἀποστειλλῆ [*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 homoiarcton is likely” (*The NET Bible*, Biblical Studies Press, 2001, 1797-98). While this is certainly an attractive argument in favor of the position taken here, the manuscript evidence does not support the claim of homoiarcton. In support of this claim, we would expect at least one manuscript to completely omit all of v. 15, but there is apparently no manuscript that does so. [Editor’s note: the **tc** note in the NET Bible has been corrected here; indeed, the entire note has been reworked in light of Chris Skinner’s essay.]

<sup>13</sup> There are two things being appointed here, each designated by a ἵνα clause. The first thing to which the disciples are appointed is that they might be “with him.” It is here that they receive the authority to minister. The second thing to which they have been appointed is that they might minister by his authority. Therefore, the second and third activities pictured here and connected by kai both fall under the general category introduced by the second ἵνα clause.

<sup>14</sup> A growing number of recent commentators regard Mark 6:6b-30 as an intercalation or “Markan sandwich” passage. Cf. for instance, J. R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 10: Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 54; James R. Edwards, “Markan Sandwiches: The Significance of Interpolations in Markan Narratives,” *NovT* 31 (1989): 198, 205-06; H. C. Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark’s Gospel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 54; Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 128-31; Robert M. Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 54: Chico: Scholars, 1981), 114-32; Francis J. Moloney, “Mark 6:6b-30: Mission, the Baptist, and Failure” *CBQ* (2001): 647-50; Tom Shepherd, “The Narrative Function of Markan Intercalation,” *NTS* 41 (1995): 522-23, 527, 530, 534. Whether 6:6b-30 be regarded as an intercalation or not, the exegete must ultimately reckon with the fact the ministry of the disciples in 6:7-13 remains unresolved until 6:30.

<sup>15</sup> There are three elements of this passage that support this picture of self-exaltation among the twelve. First, the verb ἀπαγγέλλω is a strong verb typically used in contexts of public revelation. Second, while personal pronouns that would bolster this reading are conspicuously absent from the text, there is a double use of the relative pronoun ὅσα. Mark uses the relative pronoun at least four other times in the Gospel to make a clarifying point (2:26; 6:16; 13:20; 15:12). Therefore, there is good precedent for an understanding of its double use in this verse as making a clarifying point about the self-exaltation of the twelve. Third, the incomprehension of the twelve in the overall context of the Gospel easily lends itself to such a reading (not to mention, this “failure” occurs against the contrastive backdrop of the faithfulness of John the Baptist unto death). For a helpful exposition of several aspects of this reading, cf. Moloney, “Mark 6:6b-30: Mission, the Baptist, and Failure,” 660-61.

<sup>16</sup> This pattern is widely recognized in the recent English commentary tradition. Cf. Edwards, *Mark*, 176; France, *Mark*, 245-46; Hooker, *Saint Mark*, 154; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 381; Moloney, *Mark*, 116.

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