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Mathetés with a Possessive in the New Testament

This article originally formed part of a paper delivered to the Synoptic Problem seminar at the 1978 meeting of Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas chaired by Professor Bo Reicke.

C. H. Turner in his Notes on Marcan Usage stated that hoi mathētaí qualified by autoù would be the normal way of describing Jesus' disciples at a time when John, the Pharisees and others had disciples. See Mark ii. 18 (3 times); John iii. 25; Luke v. 33; vii. 18, 19; Matt. ix. 14; xi. 2; xxii. 16. Only after "his disciples" most frequently came to mean Jesus' own followers could the possessive be omitted. Scribes of the New Testament consequently felt able to omit what they considered to be an otiose pronoun in such contexts and therefore tended to eliminate many such pronouns from the New Testament manuscripts they were copying. This was especially so in the case of post-positional possessives which were not considered desirable by stylistically-conscious scribes.

This two-fold motive for removing the post-positional possessive after mathētḗs accounts for many textual variants in our New Testament manuscripts whenever the word mathētḗs appears. It also encourages us to accept the originality of the possessive whenever it occurs as a variant. C. H. Turner's statistics on this matter need revising. He lists 32 places in Mark out of 40 where mathētḗs is qualified by autoû. Of the remaining eight Turner claims that Jesus' disciples are obviously being referred to because of the context. Had he consulted the apparatus criticus he would in fact have discovered that seven of the eight unqualified occurrences in fact have variant readings adding autoû in several manuscripts. These are:

Mark

vi. 41- P45 ADW et al.

viii. 1- ABW theta et al.

ix. 14- theta, fam. 13 et al.

x. 10- ADW gamma et al.

x. 13- D theta 565 700 pc.

x. 24- D delta theta 565 pc.

xiv. 16- C ADW theta et al.

Aland's Synopsis includes these variants in the apparatus with the strange exception of the variant reading at ix. 14.2 That variant is included in von Soden's and Legg's apparatuses. In all of these autoû should be printed as original. At vi. 41 the UBS text (3rd ed.) followed by Aland's Synopsis (9th ed.) should have the brackets removed.³ If we amend our printed texts in this way then the only place in which Mark leaves mathētes unqualified by autoû is iv. 34, but here it is qualified by ídios: autoû is not found in any manuscript nor is it expected. Whenever variants remove the autoû in the 32 occurrences in our printed editions these should be considered as secondary. That it is natural for Mark to write mathētaì autoû may be seen in the following places where it is peculiar to this gospel: Mark iii. 7, 9; v. 31; vi. 1; vii. 2; viii. 10, 33; x. 46; xi. 14; xii. 43; xiv. 13. There are no variants here. Mark uses other possessives to describe Jesus' disciples in accordance with the needs of the context. Sou is found at ii. 18; vii. 5; ix. 18; mou at xiv. 14. All these are firm except that some manuscripts have avoided the postpositional possessive at ii. 18 by replacing it with the possessive adjective (this reading appears in the printed editions), and some manuscripts at xiv. 14 omit mou.

- ¹ C. H. Turner, Notes on Marcan Usage: Journ. Theol. St. 26 (1925), p. 235 f.
- ² K. Aland, Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum, 9th ed., United Bible Societies (1975).
- ³ This variant reading is discussed by B. M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (1971).

C. H. Turner's statements also need amending for Matthew's gospel. According to Turner, Matthew writes hoi mathētaì autoû consistently up to xiii. 10. Thereafter he says hoi mathētaî in the nominative is often found without autoû. In fact had Turner looked at his apparatus here too he would have found these apparent exceptions had the variant reading adding autoû. Again the longer text should be accepted as original. Matthew like Mark preferred qualifying mathētaí.⁴ The variant reading adding autoû is printed in the apparatus to Aland's Synopsis⁹ unless otherwise stated, and concerns the following:

```
Matthew
 viii. 21* - C W 0250 et al.
 xiii. 10 - C pc
 xiv. 15 - CDW et al.
 xiv. 19a - theta 047 892 fam. 13
 xiv. 22 - BEF theta pi et al.
 xiv. 26* - E (according to Legg) kaì idóntes autòn hoi mathētaì autoû
 xv. 12* - CW pl.
 xv. 33 - CDW theta pm
 xv. 36a - CW pm
 xvi. 5* - EFGH most mins.
 xvi. 20* - W theta most mins.
xvii. 6* - 659 1402 2145 (Apparatus in von Soden)
xvii. 10* - BCD most mins.
xvii. 13* - 039 ff sy (s.c.) (apparatus in von Soden)
 xix. 10* - P25 C D W 078 et al.
 xix, 13 - (apparatus in von Soden gives only versional evidence; Legg adds 59)
 xix. 25* - C3 W X most mins.
 xx. 17 - 13 28c 892mg 1010 1216
 xxi. 1 - 245 pc (also v.l. genitive plural + autoû - most mins.)
 xxi. 6* - (only versional evidence according to Legg)
 xxi. 20* - 238 pc
xxiv. 3* - CW delta 157 1241 1424 et al.
xxvi. 8* - AW 0133 0255 most mins.
xxvi. 19 - (apparatus in von Soden gives only versional evidence; cf. xix. 13)
xxvi. 26* - (plerique according to von Soden; why is this absent from Syn9 apparatus?)
xxvi. 36 - aleph ACDW et al.
xxvi. 40 - Dcorr. 047 pc
xxvi. 45* - D W pm
xxvi. 56* - B pc (autoû appears in WHmg)
```

An asterisk indicates mathētēs has no parallel in the Synopsis, and is therefore peculiar to Matthaean usage.

Metzger's Commentary discusses the variant readings at viii. 21; xiv. 22; xv. 36; xvi. 5; xvii. 10; xix. 25; xx. 17. At xiv. 22 and xv. 36 Metzger argues that autoû in Matthew has been introduced by scribes through assimilation to the Markan parallel, but this is unlikely in view of the firm and peculiar instances of mathētaì autoû in Matthew elsewhere.

As with Mark therefore Matthew normally qualifies mathētés. At viii. 21 the brackets should be removed from the text of Syn⁹ and UBS³. Although there are exceptions these are explicable. Autoû is absent from xiv. 19b and there is no variant reading but as mathētaí there picks up mathētaîs autoû in 19a it is not expected. The same is true at xv. 36b which

⁴ We except from this discussion of course the non-specific references to discipleship as a concept (Matt. x. 24 f. = Luke vi. 40 and Matt. x. 42).

is unqualified but picks up the full title from the earlier occurrence in the sentence. At xvii. 19, and xxvi. 17 tô Iēsoû follows immediately, rendering the autoû in Mark's parallel unnecessary. At xviii. 1 tô Iēsoû again makes autoû unnecessary. At xxi. 1 the two disciples referred to are obviously Jesus' in the context, but some manuscripts have autoû either after the accusative mathētás or genitive mathētôn. The latter variant is possibly original to Matthew (as in the parallels) but this is debatable. At Matthew xxvi. 35 mathētaí has no autoû, but as it is preceded by pántes and the context makes it clear Jesus' disciples are meant perhaps this is not a real exception. If the versional evidence is unacceptable in the variants at xxi. 6 (two disciples only) and xxvi. 19 and these readings rejected, then again mathētaí in the contexts can stand without qualification as being unambiguously Jesus' disciples, and as such cannot be cited as real exceptions to our general rule. At xxvi. 19 mathētaí follows closely on mathētôn mou of verse 18 unlike the parallel in Mark which has another verse interpolated. Elsewhere, as in Mark, the context in Matthew sometimes demands that Jesus' disciples are qualified not by autoû but by mou (xxvi. 18) or sou (ix. 14; xii. 2; xv. 2; xvii. 16). These are firm in the text.

When we turn to Luke's gospel the general rule can again be made to apply if we accept not just the printed text but the evidence from the apparatus. Variants adding autoû can be found at all the following places where the printed texts usually have mathētés without a possessive:

```
ix. 16 - pler according to von Soden including L 33 ix 18 - pler according to von Soden
```

ix. 18 - pler according to von Soden ix. 54* - CADW theta most mins.

x. 23* - U 1424 latt. according to von Soden

xii. 22* - most mss. ex. P75 B

xvi. 1* - AW theta most mins.

xvii. 22* - pler according to von Soden

xviii. 15 - pler according to von Soden

xix. 29 - ADW gamma delta most mins.

(xix. 37* - theta 440 according to von Soden)

xx. 45 - most mss. except BD pc

xxii. 39 - gamma delta* most mins.

xxii. 45 - fam 1 latt.

The asterisk indicates that mathētēs has no parallel in the Synopsis and is therefore peculiar to Lukan usage.

Again the ninth edition of Aland's Synopsis prints the variants in its apparatus with the exception of those variants found only in von Soden and so marked in the list above. If von Soden is accurate here (and this is always open to suspicion) it is regrettable that Aland's Synopsis has not seen fit to include these vital and significant variants too.

As with Matthew and Mark the above readings in Luke which include autoû ought to be printed, with the possible exception of xix. 37 where to plêthos precedes (cf. Matt. xxvi. 35 above), and a group larger than the twelve is probably intended. At xii. 22 and xx. 45, both of which are discussed in Metzger's Commentary, the brackets around autoû in UBS³ and Synopsis⁹ ought to be removed. Mathētés in Luke is therefore always qualified, usually by autoû but by sou at ix. 40, xix. 39 and by mou at xiv. 26, 27, 33; xxii. 11. These are firm.

As far as the Fourth Gospel is concerned it is interesting to see that John too maintains the normal New Testament practice of qualifying mathētés, although unlike the Synoptics John has a greater range of pronouns. As far as autoû is concerned this possessive occurs about forty times as the original text in the printed editions and in most instances autoû is undisputed in the manuscripts. In the following places our printed texts need correcting, and autoû added from the apparatus:

```
John
 iv. 31 - W theta 33
 iv. 33 - 1071, 245, 1513 (in von Soden's apparatus)
 xi. 7 - AD gamma delta pm
 xi. 8 - D gamma et al.
 xi. 12 - FGLS gamma delta pm
 xi. 54 - A X theta fam. 1 fam. 13 pm
xiii. 5 - D pc
xiii. 22 - P66 fam. 13 1241
xx. 18 - D
xx. 19 - L delta psi et al.
xx. 20 - D pc
xx. 30 - P66 aleph CDLW et al.
xxi. 1 - C3DGX psi et al.
xxi. 4 - 69 f (in von Soden's apparatus)
xxi. 12 - 245 (in von Soden's apparatus)
xxi. 14 - D gamma delta most mins.
```

Again we should accept the longer text. Only at xx. 30 does Metzger discuss this type of variation in John. A firm decision to print the longer text should again result in the removal of the ubiquitous brackets in Syn. 9 and UBS3.

If we accept the variants above in John which restore autoû to the text then there are no examples of unqualified mathētaí in the Fourth Gospel except at xxi. 12 where tôn mathētôn is itself a dependent noun and at xx. 10 where "the disciples" are Peter and the beloved disciple – again a possessive is not expected. Sometimes of course the noun is qualified by another possessive or adjective depending on the context. In the plural mathētaí is qualified by "of this man" at xviii. 17; by pleíonas at iv. 1; by álloi at xx. 25; xxi. 8; by mou at viii. 31; by the possessive adjective emoí at xiii. 35; xv. 8; by sou at vii. 3. In the singular mathētēs is unqualified at xix. 27 (bis) but here it refers to the beloved disciple in the context. (This mathētēs is defined at xix. 26; xxi. 20 as hon ēgápa.) At xxi. 24 "the disciple" is the author. Elsewhere the singular mathētēs is qualified – by állos in xviii. 15, 16; xx. 2, 3, 4, 8; by ekeînos at ix. 28; xviii. 15; xxi. 7, 23; by "of Jesus" at xix. 38; by "of Moses" at ix. 28.

As far as the Synoptic gospels are concerned, accepting the originality of autoû throughout the gospel even when it is not textually certain means that the synopsis so printed will result in more similarities being created between the gospels than is conventionally the case. Normally one would be suspicious of such a text insofar as scribes because of their general tendency to assimiliate gospel with gospel make parallel passages more similar. Thus it is normally a useful rule of thumb to propose that variants which make parallels more dissimilar are likely to be original. Here though our authors' respective usages agree in qualifying mathētés, and as scribes would have good reason to remove the possessive from time to time that rule of thumb has here been superseded by the criterion of author's usage.

Where Matthew, Mark and Luke are in parallel mathētaì autoû occurs in all three gospels in the following passages:

```
Matthew Mark Luke
a) xii. 1 = ii. 23 = vi. 1
b) xiv. 19 = vi. 41 = ix. 16
c) xix. 13 = x. 13 = xviii. 15
d) xxi. 1 = xi. 1 = xix. 29
```

For (b) Aland's Synopsis⁹ prints the shorter text in Matthew and Luke, and brackets autoû in Mark thus showing an apparent agreement of Matthew and Luke against Mark. For (c) Aland shows all three gospels agreeing in having the shorter text. In (d) Aland has only Mark with autoû.

Where two gospels only are in parallel our acceptance of autoû makes twelve more agreements between these gospels:

```
Mark viii. 27 pr = Luke ix. 18
Matthew xiii. 10 = Luke viii. 9
Matthew xxiii. 1 = Luke xx. 45
Matthew xxvi. 40 = Luke xxii. 45
Matthew xiv. 15 = Mark vi. 35
Matthew xiv. 22 = Mark vi. 45
Matthew xv. 12 = Mark vii. 17
Matthew xv. 32 = Mark viii. 1
Matthew xv. 33 = Mark viii. 4
Matthew xv. 36 = Mark viii. 6
Matthew xxvi. 19 = Mark xiv. 16
Matthew xxvi. 36 = Mark xiv. 32
```

But lest it be thought that such a practice is alien to the habits of the original authors, it ought to be remembered that there are at least fourteen places where our printed synopses show that two gospels agree in having mathētaì autoû in parallel. These are for the most part verses in which the possessive stands firm in the manuscript tradition:

```
Matthew ix. 10
                 = Mark ii. 15
                 = Mark ii. 16
Matthew ix. 11
Matthew xiv. 12 = Mark vi. 29
Matthew xvi. 13
                = Mark viii. 27 (sec.)
Matthew xvi. 24
                = Mark viii. 34
                 = Mark x. 23
Matthew xix. 23
Matthew xxiv. 1 = Mark xiii. 1
Matthew xxviii. 7 = Mark xvi. 7
Luke v. 30
                 = Matthew ix. 11
Luke vi. 13
                 = Matthew x. 1
                 = Matthew v. 1
Luke vi. 20
Luke viii. 22
                 = Matthew viii. 23
Luke ix. 43
                 = Mark ix. 31
```

Appendix

An additional instance of "his disciples" should probably be Matthew xxvi. 20. Autoû here is read only by 106 (according to Legg) and the old Latin (according to von Soden). Mathētôn is read by aleph ALW 33 and others and was included in Nestle-Aland²⁵ = Aland Synopsis⁸. The parallels here are Mark xiv. 17 metà tôn dốdeka and Luke xxii. 14 kaì hoi apóstoloi syn autô. The shorter text in Matthew as it appears in Synopsis⁹ (metà tôn dốdeka) seems therefore to be the result of scribal assimilation to the firm text of Mark. Matthaean style demands both mathētôn and autoû. Matthew unlike Mark and Luke never writes hoi dốdeka simpliciter. Except at xxvi. 14; xxvi. 47 heîs tôn dốdeka, and hoûtoi hoi dốdeka at x. 5, "the twelve" is used with either mathētaí or apóstoloi, see x. 1; xi. 1 where both the noun mathētês and the possessive stand firm in the manuscript tradition.

A situation similar to Matthew xxvi. 20 is xx. 17 where some manuscripts remove the noun and the possessive to assimilate Matthew to Luke and Mark. Here too the longer text mathētàs autoû should be read with 13 28c 892mg 1010 1216, the lectionaries and some versional evidence. The Aland Synopsis does not show the evidence for the adding of autoû.

When Matthew xxviii. 16 speaks of the "eleven disciples", mathētaí is not followed by a possessive in any manuscript as far as I can discover.

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