

THE MESSIAH AS THE TUTOR: THE MEANING OF καθηγητής IN MATTHEW 23:10

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There is uncertainty as to the meaning of the term καθηγητής in Matthew 23:10 where it is stated 'Neither be called καθηγηταί, because one is your καθηγητής, the Messiah.' Translators and commentators are alike uncertain as to its precise meaning. The term has long been translated as 'master', AV, RV, RSV. More recently 'teacher' has been used, NIV, REB, even though διδάσκαλος occurs in verse 8 and the latter term is surprisingly rendered 'master' or 'rabbi'. Because this verse is readily paralleled with 23:8 'and you must not be called rabbi, for one is your teacher, διδάσκαλος', καθηγητής has been taken to be a rendering of רַבִּי for Gentile Christian readers and is therefore thought to be a synonym for the latter term. Recent translators have adopted this option because of a general consensus among scholars.¹ Spicq, after an extensive review of the meaning of the word in Greek literary and non-literary sources, suggested that the term referred to מוֹרֵה and could be a reference to the Teacher of Righteousness at Qumran,² but this has not commended itself to Matthean scholars.³

However, there is one non-literary source, first published in 1930, that could well help in understanding its meaning, namely *P.Oxy.* 2190 (c. AD 70–90).⁴ It is proposed in this short note to examine primarily this papyrus where the term occurs more

¹D.E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew* (Leiden, E.J. Brill 1979) 60 n. 99 for a summary.

²C. Spicq, 'Une Allusion au docteur de Justice dans Matthieu XXIII, 10?' *Revue Biblique* LXVI (1959) 391–6.

³See D.E. Garland, *op. cit.*, 60 n. 100 where he notes that there does not seem to be an Aramaic equivalent.

⁴Spicq did not examine it although he refers to other papyri. For the dating of the papyrus from the Principate of Vespasian to Domitian based on comparative handwriting, see E.G. Turner, 'Oxyrhynchus and Rome' *HSCP* 79 (1975) 5–6. For further possible evidence see n. 7.

frequently than in most literary sources,⁵ and to argue that καθηγητής in Matthew 23:10 refers to a tutor.⁶

P.Oxy. 2190 was rather hastily written by Neilus, an advanced student of rhetoric in Alexandria, to his father in Oxyrhynchus. In it he expressed relief on having just received a letter noting that his misbehaviour in the theatre had not evoked parental anger. In *P.Oxy.* 2190 he mentioned again the smashing of his father's chariot about which he had written home just two days previously. Neilus noted his despondency over schooling which he claims is affecting his health. It appeared also to be connected with his lack of money *ll.* 37–40. His slave attempted to aggravate with the authorities his young master's problems connected with the theatre incident, *ll.* 40–49.⁷ His father must have been unimpressed as his son related the excuses for his progress or lack thereof in education. What is of interest as this young man unfolded his unhappy experience in this second 'Athens'—perhaps the problems did not rest entirely with the system of education—is his use of καθηγητής on five occasions, *ll.* 7–8, 15, 24, 26, 31 and the mention of other educative terms

⁵ See *TLG* where apart from near contemporary writers such as Philodemus, Plutarch and Galen *P.Oxy.* 2190 uses the term more frequently.

⁶ καθηγητής as 'tutor' is a *hapax legomenon* not to be confused with παιδαγωγός who was a 'guardian' i.e. a slave who disciplined and protected a child accompanying him to school and morally shepherding him, see N.H. Young, 'Paidagogos: the Social Setting for a Pauline Metaphor' *Nov.T.* xxix (1987) 157–165 for a helpful discussion of that role. Cf. 1 Cor. 4:15 where some translated παιδαγωγός as 'tutor' rather than 'guardian'. See *P.Oxy.* 930 where both καθηγητής and παιδαγωγός are used to refer to a tutor and guardian respectively.

⁷ On the misbehaviour of Alexandrians in the theatre which resulted in the 'war-like' intervention by the Roman authorities see Dio Chrysostom's 'Alexandrian Oration', *Or.* 32:72–4, and for the dating of the oration in the early seventies see C.P. Jones, 'The Date of Dio of Prusa's Alexandrian Oration' *Historia* 22 (1973) 302–9 and his discussion of the oration 'Alexandria', *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, Harvard 1978) ch. 5. If the incident involving Neilus is the same, then it explains why the young man is so worried by his slave 'gleefully spreading reports in the city about the incident in the theatre and telling lies' and after having been released by the authorities now 'behaves in every respect like a free man'. The son's seeking out of protectors may indicate the seriousness of the incidents, *ll.* 12–14 and may help date the letter more precisely to the early years of Vespasian's Principate, given Dio's mention of 'excellent Colonus', see *Or.* 32:72 and J.D. Thomas 'L. Peducaeus Col(nus), Praefectus Aegypti' *ZPE* 21 (1976) 153–6.

such as σοφυστής, *l.* 18 and οἱ ἐπιδεικνύμενοι, *l.* 35.

Neilus had not been successful in enrolling himself in any school run by sophists which he regarded as suitable, and noted that there was a real shortage of sophists in Alexandria, *ll.* 18–19.⁸ Friends were also searching with him for a suitable tutor, since their former καθηγητής had died, *ll.* 23–25. They had been persuaded by one of their fellow students to enrol with Didymus who ran a school, σχολὴν ἔχοντα, *l.* 21.⁹ This was an option, but not as far as Neilus was concerned, for Didymus charged ‘useless and excessive fees’, *l.* 31. Further-more he disliked Didymus who was exceedingly boastful. In spite of being only a ‘country’ sophist, he had come to Alexandria promising to take proper care of students in his school by providing genuine supervision, and to do it better than any other teacher, *ll.* 21-2.¹⁰

But Neilus made private arrangements with Didymus aiming to maximize the benefit, without having to pay those excessive fees demanded of full time students. He informed his father that, rather than enrol with Didymus, he would learn by himself, but he added, hoping to assure his father, he would have some supervision as he

⁸For the meaning of the term ‘sophist’ as a virtuoso rhetor with a public following and normally running a school, see G.W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1969) 10ff.

⁹The editor of *P.Oxy.* 2190 has translated σχολὴν ἔχοντα *l.* 21 as ‘has time to spare’. However σχολή used with ἔχειν is attested elsewhere in connection with the running of a school, Epictetus, III.21.11. Furthermore, Neilus notes that Philonexus has persuaded others to enrol with Didymus παραβαλεῖν ἔπειθεν αὐτῷ, *l.* 23, see also Plutarch, *Moralia*, 846. For παραβαλεῖν the editor has suggested ‘go to’ Didymus *l.* 23 and in a comment has noted that in the transitive use it means ‘to send someone to school’ as in *P.Oxy.* 930. *l.* 21. The aorist in *P.Oxy.* 2190 suggests a definite step of enrolling. The editor was no doubt influenced in his decision on the meaning of σχολή as ‘leisure’ by the fact that in *ll.* 33-4 Philoxenus is reported as saying of Didymus that he always has ‘time to spend with me (Neilus)’ προσευκαιροῦντα, but σχολή is not used there. J. Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1978) 131 rightly translates the clause ‘has his own σχολή’. D.A. Russell expressed the opinion verbally that it refers to ‘having a school’.

¹⁰*P.Oxy.* 930 is a good example of the lack of care and concern a καθηγητής had for his pupil. He had literally ‘sailed away’ to seek his fortune leaving his pupil at the sixth book of *The Iliad* after promising the mother that he would look after her son to the best of his ability, κατὰ δύναμιν μέλλει σοι προσέχειν, *ll.* 10–11. She writes telling both her son and his παιδαγωγός to find a suitable καθηγητής with whom he can enrol (παραβάλλειν) *ll.* 20-1.

still ‘has Didymus’, ll. 31-4. ‘Having’ Didymus was explained by the comment that he was always ready to spend time on Neilus, and Didymus would do ‘everything that he is capable of’, πᾶν ὅτι δύναται παρεχόμεν.

In what sense was Didymus able to help Neilus? He would listen to his practice declamations and provide criticism.¹¹ This is implicit because of the following sentence which states that Neilus will listen to those who declaim in public, οἱ ἐπιδεικνύμενοι.¹² This course of action would help his own financial situation, as admission fees were minimal.¹³ Neilus hired this teacher of rhetoric as his καθηγητής for private tuition only and also used the opportunities to hear occasional public declamations by noted sophists.

καθηγητής is thus used in this papyrus to refer to a private tutor in rhetoric who would assist a student on an *ad hoc* basis even though the latter owned a school in which the former had not enrolled.¹⁴

This meaning accords with that in both literary and non-literary sources which show that the term refers to ‘personal tutors’ who were ‘an extremely common species of teachers in the Hellenistic-Roman world’.¹⁵ In Athens the young Cicero

¹¹Epicetetus observes the dichotomy of ‘attending lectures of the rhetors and declaiming yourself’ τῶν ῥητόρων ἤκουες καὶ ἐμελέτας, III.9.8.

¹²Quintilian, II.8.1 observes that fathers do not regard their sons as having learned anything unless they themselves are actually declaiming and not simply listening to professional declamations.

¹³On the scale of fees charged for public declamations as against those levied for enrolment in schools see the differences in costs, G.B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge, CUP 1981) 27-8, where they differ greatly between the single declamation or a series and those charged for a pupil of a sophist.

¹⁴*Contra* E.G. Turner, *op. cit.*, 9, n. 26 ‘holder of a chair’ citing *O.G.I.* 408, AD 150. This sophist did not hold a chair in Alexandria but ran a school.

¹⁵J. Glucker, *op. cit.*, 131.

declaimed in Latin or Greek before separate rhetors acting as his tutors, whereas at the age of eleven he had declaimed under a rhetor, Paeonius, who resided in the household in Italy. His relationship with his tutors in Athens was identical in some ways with that of Paeonius but was conducted outside the home at a more advanced stage of education, and his bilingual training in declamation and study required the use of a number of tutors.¹⁶ When students who came from the country to Alexandria were no longer being tutored by a member of their household but by an independent tutor, *καθηγητής* was appropriate. Vestiges of being a member of a *familia* were still present, hence gifts of food were sent to the *καθηγητής* with warm and encouraging greetings.¹⁷ These educational changes still found *καθηγητής* an appropriate term with the evolution of the advanced teaching function from the *familia* setting.¹⁸ *καθηγητής* was also used to describe relationships where some development in educational technique had occurred. What better term could one use in the Epicurean school to describe the relationship between one who guides in the tenets of their philosophy but does not teach in the normally accepted use of the term 'teacher'.¹⁹

¹⁶Cicero, *Family*, XVI.31.3-5 declaimed before Cassius in Greek and Brutus in Latin. He studied philosophy under Cratylus and he describes his relationship with him as that of a son to a father but was forced to dismiss Gorgias, a distinguished rhetor before whom he declaimed because of his father's objection to the bad influence he was having on his son.

¹⁷For example in *P.Osl.* 156 (second century AD) in a letter sent to a *καθηγητής*, Ammonius begins, 'Before all things I pray you and your family are in good health and that you rely on me for the things you need.' There follows a list of food being sent. While the editors suggest the tutor was paid in kind rather than cash, there is no evidence to support that. The tone of the letter suggests a gift expressing *φιλία*. The food was obviously also meant for the pupil. See also *P.Giss.* 8, and also the large amount of food described in *P.Oxy.* 2190, 58-64.

¹⁸For a recent survey of the occurrences of *καθηγητής* see J. Glucker, *op. cit.*, 127-33. Because of Glucker's concern to demonstrate the use of the term in the case of Ammonius, his conclusions are a little too rigid. His discussion does not allow for nuances in educational or philosophical development such as education conducted away from one's home or on Epicurean tenets. His conclusion that because Jesus did not charge fees as a teacher, *καθηγητής* was the appropriate term in Mt. 23:10, does not follow from the conclusions in his survey nor the context of Matthew, 448.

¹⁹J. Glucker, *op.cit.*, 132-3 refers to two Epicurean *καθηγηταί* who 'teach' and their former student, Philonides, who sets up his own private school in competition and is called *καθηγητής*. This example seems to undermine the rigid definition Glucker adopts which is crucial to the argument on Ammonius and the Academy.

The term should therefore be regarded as a ‘functional’ one, describing a relationship with a student without in any way defining the level, or nature, of the education in which private instruction was given.²⁰ This accords well with the occurrence of the term in Matthew 23:10. In verse 8 the relationship between Jesus the Messiah and his disciples brooks no intermediary Christian rabbis. He is the διδάσκαλος, and they are all brothers—presumably from one generation to the next. This relationship is even further defined in the highly personalized terms of a student to his καθηγητής, where Jesus, the Messiah, alone is to be *the* tutor.²¹

²⁰καθηγητής was not confined to any specific level of education. J.R. Rae, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Egyptian Exploration Society, (London, 1985) 189 pointed out in a discussion of *P. Oxy.* 3808 (first or second century AD) ‘The word can apply to teachers of quite advanced pupils, see (*P.Oxy.*) 2190 and this appears to be the case here where the young man is old enough to supervise and take part in business if not to manage them quite alone.’

²¹So translating in no way vitiates the OT background where God has promised to teach his people. For a discussion see J.D.M. Derrett, ‘Mt 23,8–10 a Midrash on Is 54,13 and Jer 31,33–34’ *Biblica* 62 (1981) 372–86, and 380–1 for his discussion of καθηγητής. This term which has been drawn from the semantic field of παιδεία in the first century Graeco–Roman world is apposite for a ‘Jewish’ context given its inroads in Palestine, see J. Goldstein, ‘Jewish Acceptance and Rejection of Hellenism’ in edd. E.P. Sanders *et. al.* *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (London, SCM 1981) ch. 4 and M. Hengel, ‘Greek Education and Literature in Jewish Palestine’ *The Hellenization of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (London, SCM 1989) ch. 3.