

# Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints  
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages  
Volume 17, Number 3, August 2006

## Matthew 28:19

*"Go ye and make disciples of all the nations in my name, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I commanded you" (Matthew 28:19).*

Following is the seminal article frequently quoted in scholarly studies on the modifications of Christian doctrine after the Apostles slept. Published in 1902, the Hibbert Journal article by Conybeare draws together the scholarship for the close of Matthew's Gospel to show that the original wording, "go forth to all nations baptizing in my name," was rewritten after the Nicean council (325 AD) into the familiar "baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." In the 1970's Bro. Charles Thornton (Detroit, Michigan) tracked down the original article and provided offprints to the brethren in "Zion's Tower of the Morning." It is a marvelous blessing to pass this article along in clean form to the readers of "Beauties of the Truth." The original article presumed fluency in Greek and Latin and here a translation has been supplied. Also, the original article used Roman numerals and abbreviations which are here rendered in standard notation. The English spelling of the original has been maintained.

**F.C. Conybeare, "Doctrinal Modifications — Matthew 28:19," The Hibbert Journal, London, England (Volume 1, October 1902) pages 102-108.**

No other text has counted for so much in the dogmatic development of the Church as the text at the end of Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you."

Professor Swete, in the work already referred to, page 18, points out that the triple formula "forms the framework" of the so-called Apostle's creed. He writes: "Thus the Baptismal creed is seen to rest on the Baptismal words. It was the answer of the Church to the Lord's final revelation of the Name of God."<sup>1</sup>

And Professor Moberly of Oxford in a recent work refers to this verse as "a solemn precept to baptise in the name of

the holy Trinity, which fell from the divine lips of the newly risen Lord." I quote his words from memory.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century the text of the three witnesses of 1 John 5:7, 8 shared with Matthew 28:19 the onerous task of furnishing scriptural evidence of the doctrine of the Trinity. This text ran thus: "Three there are that bear witness *in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. And these three are one. And three are there that bear witness on earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood, and the three are in the one.*"

The words italicized are now abandoned by all authorities except the Pope of Rome, and are not admitted even marginally into the English revised version. By consequence the entire weight of proving the Trinity has of late come to rest on Matthew 28:19. This is also the sole saying of the Lord in which the duty of baptising is enforced; and divines have also found in it scriptural authority for the innovation of infant baptism.

Thus the late Dean Alford wrote in his Commentary as follows: "It will be observed that in our Lord's words, as in the church, the process of ordinary discipleship is from *baptism to instruction* — *i.e.*, admission in infancy to the cov-

### IN THIS ISSUE

<b>Matthew 28:19</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Ancient Papyri Disproving Critics</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>The Conversion of Nathanael</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Hastening the Presence</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Oxen and Wagons</b> .....	<b>6</b>

BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service to the brethren to stimulate their appreciation of the riches of God's Word. It is published free of charge. Subscriptions will be entered for all who request it. Address all correspondence to: Beauties of the Truth, 6748 Breckenridge, Lisle, IL 60532. Editorial Board: Brothers Richard Doctor (Managing Editor), Carl Hagensick, Raymond Luke, Michael Nekora, David Rice, Richard Suraci. Online, [www.BeautiesoftheTruth.org](http://www.BeautiesoftheTruth.org)

enant and growing up into τηρεῖν πάντα κ.τ.λ. [obeying in all things, etc.] — the exception being, what circumstances rendered so frequent in the early church, *instruction before baptism* in the case of *adults*.

### GARDNER, MARTINEAU, HARNACK

“There has been no general inclination on the part of divines to inquire soberly into the authenticity of a text on which they build superstructures so huge. Nevertheless, an enlightened minority had their doubts. Professor Gardner, in his *Exploratio Evangelica*, chapter 35, wrote that they were, “little in the manner of Jesus.”

James Martineau, in his *Seat of Authority*, remarks that, “the very account which tells us that at last, after His resurrection, he commissioned his apostles to go and baptise among all nations, betrays itself by speaking in the Trinitarian language of the next century, and compels us to see in it the ecclesiastical editor, and not the evangelist, much less the founder himself.”

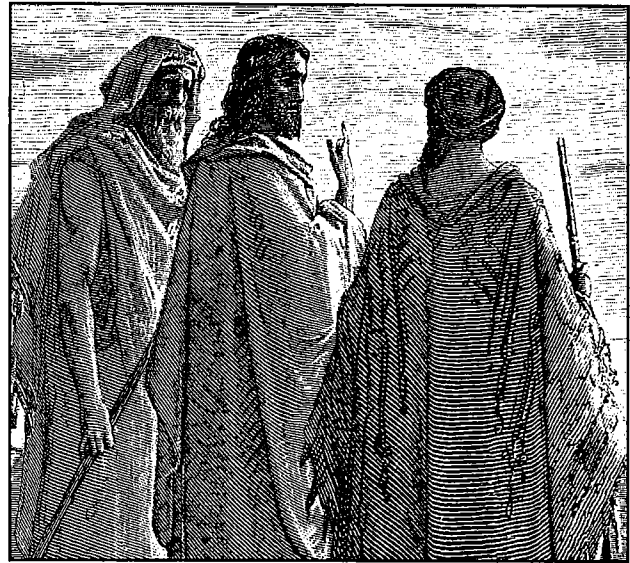
Harnack, in his *History of Dogma* (German edition, 1.68) dismisses the text almost contemptuously as being “no word of the Lord.” Lastly, Canon Armitage Robinson, a cautious critic, in his article on Baptism in the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, inclines to the view that Matthew “does not here report the *ipsissima verba* [the actual words] of Jesus, but transfers to him the familiar language of the church of the Evangelist’s own time and locality.”

In the course of my reading I have been able to substantiate these doubts of the authenticity of the text, Matthew 28:19, by adducing patristic evidence against it so weighty that in future the most conservative of divines will shrink from resting on it any dogmatic fabric at all, while the more enlightened will discard it as completely as they have its fellow-text of the three witnesses.

### EUSEBIUS

Of the patristic witnesses to the text of the New Testament as it stood in the Greek manuscripts from about 300-340 AD, none is so important as Eusebius of Caesarea, for he lived in the greatest Christian library of that age, that namely which Origen and Pamphilus had collected. It is no exaggeration to say that from this single collection of manuscripts at Caesarea derives the larger part of the surviving ante-Nicene literature. In his library, Eusebius must have habitually handled codices of the gospels older by two hundred years than the earliest of the great uncials than we have now in our libraries. He was also familiar with the exegesis of Origen, of Clement of Alexandria, of Pantaenus, and of many another ancient exegete whose works have only come down to us in fragments or in uncertain Latin versions.

It therefore imports to ask how Eusebius read this text. He cites it again and again in works written between 300 and 336, namely in his long commentaries on the Psalms, on Isaiah, his *Demonstratio Evangelica* [Description of the Gospels], his *Theophany* [God’s manifestation] only pre-



*Christ with two disciples after his resurrection.*

served in an old Syriac version in a Nitrian codex in the British Museum written in AD 411, in his famous history of the Church and in his panegyric of the emperor Constantine. I have, after a moderate search in these works of Eusebius, found eighteen citations of Matthew 28:19, and always in the following form: “Go ye and make disciples of all the nations in my name, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I commanded you.”

I have collected all these passages except one which is in a catena published by Mai in a German magazine, the *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, [Journal for the Exegesis of the New Testament] edited by Dr. Erwin Preuschen in Darmstadt in 1901.

And Eusebius is not content merely to cite the verse in this form, but he more than once comments on it in such a way as to show how much he set store by the words “in my name.” Thus in his *Demonstratio Evangelica* he writes thus (col. 240, page 186):

“For he (*i.e.*, Jesus Christ) did not enjoin them ‘to make disciples of all the nations’ simply and without qualifications, but with the essential addition ‘in his name.’ For so great was the virtue attaching to his appellation that the Apostle says, God bestowed on him the name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of things in heaven and on earth and under the earth. It was right therefore that he should emphasize the virtue of the power residing in his name but hidden from the many, and therefore say to his Apostles, Go ye and make disciples of all the nations in my name.”

The Greek words are: πορευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι μου [Go ye and make disciples of all the nations in my name].

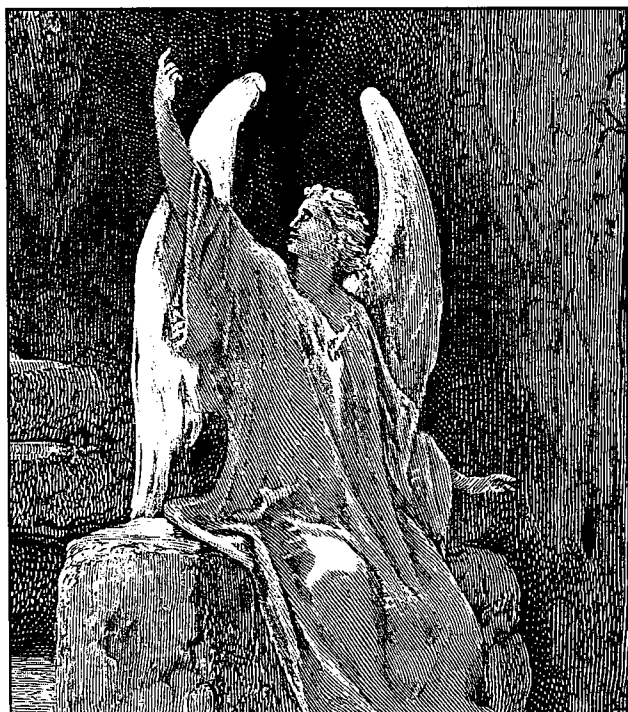
It is evident that this was the text found by Eusebius in the very ancient codices collected fifty to one hundred and fifty years before his birth by his great predecessors. Of any other form of text he had never heard, and knew nothing

until he had visited Constantinople and attended the Council of Nice. Then in two controversial works written in his extreme old age, and entitled, the one "Against Marcellus of Ancyra," the other "About the Theology of the Church," he used the common reading. One other writing of his also contains it, namely a letter written after the Council of Nicea was over to his see of Caesarea. Socrates the historian preserves this letter, but the portion of it in which the citation of Matthew 28:19 is made does not seem above suspicion.

#### ORIGEN AND CLEMENT

In the writings of Origen and Clement of Alexandria there is no certain instance of Matthew 28:19 being cited in its usual form. In Origen's works, as preserved in Greek, the first part of the verse is thrice adduced, but his citation always stops short at the words τὰ ἔθνη, "the nations;" and that in itself suggests that his text has been censored, and the words which followed "in my name" struck out. In the pages of Clement of Alexandria a text somewhat similar to Matthew 28:19 is once cited; but as from a Gnostic heretic named Theodotus, and not as from the canonical text, as follows (Excerpts, Chapter 76, Syllabus edition, page 987): "And to the Apostles he gives the command. Going around preach ye and baptise those who believe in the name of father and son and holy spirit."

In Eusebius' citations there is also some trace of περιιόντες "going around" having been read for πορευθέντες [going — "Go ye"]. And the word explains the title given to the early Gnostic romances in which the lives and activity of the Apostles were decked out with miracles and absurd legends. For these romances were called περιοδοι or "periods," i.e., "going around" of the Apostles, or "circuits."



An Angel at the empty tomb.

In Justin Martyr, who wrote between AD 130 and 140, there is a passage which has been regarded as a citation or echo of Matthew 28:19 by various scholars, i.e., Resch in *Ausser Canonishche Parallelstellen*, [From the Canon Parallels] who sees in it an abridgment of the ordinary text. The passage is in Justin's dialogue with Trypho 39, page 258:

"God hath not yet inflicted nor inflicts the judgment, as knowing of some that still even today *are being made disciples in the name of his Christ*, and are abandoning the path of error, who also do receive gifts each as they be worthy, being illumined by the name of this Christ." The words italicised are in the Greek: μαθητευομενος εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ χριστοῦ [being made disciples in the name of "his" Christ].

The objection hitherto to these words being recognised as a citation of our text was that they ignored the formula "baptising them in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit." But the discovery of the Eusebian form of text removes this difficulty; and Justin is seen to have had the same text as early as the year 140, which Eusebius regularly found in his manuscripts from 300-340.

#### THE ORDINARY TEXT

That the ordinary text is of great antiquity no one will deny. We find it twice in Tertullian, in slightly divergent forms, in the treatise on Baptism, chapter 13, thus: "*Ite, inquit, docete nationes, tinguentes eas in nomen Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti*" [Go, says he, disciple the nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, "Son," and Holy Spirit].<sup>2</sup>

And in the *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* [About Heretical Objections], chapter 20, thus: "*Undecim digrediens ad patrem post resurrectionem iussit ne et docere nationes tinguendas in Patrem et in filium et in Spiritum Sanctum*" [The eleven were commanded that they should not depart for their homeland after the resurrection; and that they should disciple the nations baptizing them in (the) Father, and in (the) Son, and in (the) Holy Spirit].

Here he omits the words in nomen [in the name], also in his work against Praxeas, chapter 26: "*Novissime mandans ut tinguerent in Patrem et filium et Spiritum Sanctum*" [Finally, they were given charge for the manner of baptism — in Father and Son and Holy Spirit].

We may infer that the text was not quite fixed when Tertullian was writing early in the third century. In the middle of that century Cyprian could insist on the use of the triple formula as essential in the baptism even in the orthodox. Pope Stephen answered him that the baptisms even of heretics were valid, if the name of Jesus alone was invoked. However, this decision did not prevent popes of the seventh century from excommunicating the entire Celtic Church for its adhesion to the old use of invoking the one name.

#### MACEDONIUS

In the last half of the fourth century the text "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Ghost" was used as a battle-cry by the orthodox against the adherents

