

A Collection of the Evidence For and Against the Traditional Wording of the Baptismal Phrase in Matthew 28:19

So arranged that the reader may judge for himself which phrase was written by Matthew, whether “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” or “In my name”

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INTRODUCTION

“Every word of God is pure.” - Proverbs 30:5
Therefore spurious scripture is vile.

David wrote:

***“Through Thy precepts I get understanding.
Therefore I hate every false way.”***
- Psalm 119:104

Note the force of the word “therefore.” If, as David, we love God’s Word, we shall, as he, hate spurious scripture. (See also Jeremiah 15:19; Exodus 22:26; 44:23).

Many have had difficulty concerning the phraseology of Matthew 28:19 and have written to editors of periodicals. Most of the editors wrapped up the difficulty with words, phrases, ideas, exposition and exhortations, all of which are good in their place, but not as wrapping to hide away a difficulty.

A glowing exception to the general rule was that of Dr. Thomas. A letter from J.R.Lithgow on this subject and dated 28th May 1855 (published in “The Herald.” October 1855) remained unanswered for a long time. We do well not to rush for the first possible “explanation.”

It is now known, and without the slightest uncertainty, that the verses 1 John 5:7-8 in the A.V. contain spurious scripture.

“Until the middle of the nineteenth century the text of the three witnesses 1 John 5:7- 8 shared with Matthew 28:19 the onerous task of furnishing scriptural evidence of the trinity... (the spurious words) are now abandoned by all authorities except the Pope of Rome. By consequence the entire weight of proving the Trinity has of late come to rest on Matthew 28:19.” - F.C.Conybeare.

But is the Name-phrase in Matthew 28:19 likewise spurious, or is it genuine? Let the reader judge after examining the evidence.

On Textual Criticism generally

The evidence here presented will be of four kinds: -

- (1) MSS.
- (2) Versions.
- (3) Quotations.
- (4) Internal Evidence.

Most Bible Helps contain a brief description of the methods of Textual Criticism. For example, Swete, in the “Aids to the Student” in the Variorum Bible, says:- “The text of the New Testament rests upon the combined testimony of streams of documentary evidence - extant MSS. of the Greek original, ancient versions, and ‘patristic’ quotations, i.e. passages cited by a succession of ancient Christian writers known as ‘The Fathers.’”

And concerning the MSS:- “The autographs of the New Testament Scriptures were probably lost within a few years after they were written. No early Christian writer appeals to them as still existing...men...could not anticipate their importance to posterity.”

And concerning the Versions: “Next in importance to MSS. as channels for the transmission of the text of the Greek Testament, must be placed the ancient Versions, which were made from Greek manuscripts, in most cases older than any which we now possess. The Old Latin and Syriac Versions belong to the second century, and carry us back to the lifetime of some of the immediate successors of the Apostles.”

And concerning the patristic writings:- “So extensive are the quotations of the New Testament in the Greek and Latin Christian writers of the first five centuries that it would have been possible, in the event of all the MSS. of the Canon having perished, to recover nearly the whole of the text from this source alone... there remains a large number of instances in which patristic authority goes far to turn the scale in favour of a disputed reading, or against it.”

As to Matthew 28:19, the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics says:- “It is the central piece of evidence for the traditional view... If it were undisputed, this would, of course, be decisive, but its trustworthiness is impugned on the grounds of textual criticism, literary criticism and historical criticism.

(The presence of the word for “baptising” in Matthew 28:19 is also disputed, but we are not now concerned with this point: many other passages uphold the truth concerning Baptism.)

Whether or not the Name-phrase of Matthew 28:19 is genuine or spurious can be decided only by the evidence of the MSS., of the Versions, of the Patristic Writings, and by what is styled ‘Internal Evidence.’

Let us therefore consider the evidence of the MSS.

The Evidence of The MSS-

For the Threefold Name:- The two earliest MSS extant (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus), written in the 4th century, both include the threefold name. All the later MSS. that include the end of Matthew also contain the threefold name.

“In all extant MSS. “the text is found in the traditional form.” - Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.

Against the threefold Name - There is no evidence in the MSS. But it must be remembered that we have no manuscript that was written in the first, or in the second, or in the third century. There is a gap of three whole centuries between the writing of Matthew and the earliest of our MSS.

It must also be remembered that no single MS. is free from textual error. Some have errors peculiar to themselves, and some whole families of MSS. have the same errors. The textual critic aims to reproduce from an examination of all the evidence what was probably the original words.

But from the facts stated, it is within the possibility that all the existing MSS. May have one or more textual errors in common. That fact must be admitted, however reluctantly.

Another fact that we have to face is that during that time gap of three hundred years false teaching thrived and developed into the Great Apostasy. Moreover, "The Greek MSS. of the text of the New Testament were often altered by scribes, who put into them the readings which were familiar to them, and which they held to be the right readings." – Dr C.R.Gregory, one of the greatest textual critics. But this aspect is dealt with in a later chapter.

Another writer has this to say:- "A great step forward is taken when we propose to allow MSS. weight, not according to their age, but according to the age of the text which they contain. To Tregelles must be ascribed the honour of introducing this method of procedure, which he appropriately called Comparative Criticism. It is a truly scientific method, and leads us for the first time to safe results... But a little consideration will satisfy us that as an engine of criticism, this method is far from perfect. It will furnish us with a text that is demonstrably ancient, and this, as a step towards the true text, is a very important gain. It is something to reach a text that is certainly older than the fourth century - that was current in the third or the second century, but this can be assumed to be the autographic text only if we can demonstrate that the text current in the second or third century was an absolutely pure text. So far from this, however, there is reason to believe that the very grossest errors that have ever deformed the text had entered it already in the second century... If our touchstone only reveals to us texts that are ancient, we cannot hope to obtain for our result anything but an ancient text. What we wish, however, is not merely an ancient but the true text."

Of course, when he speaks of "grossest errors" the writer is not speaking of errors of teaching, but, as a textual critic, of errors in the text itself. The subject of the corruption of the text of scripture concurrently with the corruption of teaching in the apostate churches is dealt with in a later chapter.

Before reaching any decision, let the reader consider the evidence of the Versions, as some of them are earlier than any of the MSS. But first let us see what happened to the ancient MSS.

What happened to the earliest MSS?

Why have we no copies of the Scriptures written earlier than the 5th Century (except for two which were written in the 4th Century)?

The following quotations will supply the answer:- "Diocletian ...in 303 A.D... ordered all the sacred books to be burnt... but enough survived to transmit the text." - Swete in *Variorum Aids*.

"One reason why no early MSS have been discovered is that they were, when found, burned by the persecutors of the Christians. Eusebius writes: I saw with mine own eyes the houses of prayer thrown down and razed to their foundations, and the inspired and sacred Scriptures consigned to the fire in the open market place." - H.E.viii 2.

"Among such scenes he could not fail to learn what books men held to be more precious than their lives." Dr Wescott: *General Survey of the History of the Canon of the N.T.* Page 383.

It would seem that the library at Caesarea had been severely damaged:- "About A.D. 350 two priests, Acacius and Euzoius, undertook the task of restoring the damaged library of Pamphilus at Caesarea, and replaced the old papyrus books with vellum copies." Jerome Ep. xxxiv. - *The Principal Uncial MSS. of the N.T. (Hatch)*.

Evidence of The Versions

For The Threefold Name:- All the extant versions which contain the end of Matthew 3 contain the Threefold Name. But "In all extant... versions the text is found in the traditional form... though it must be

remembered that the best manuscripts, both of the African Old Latin and of the Old Syriac versions are defective at this point.” - Ency. Rel. and Ethics.

Again:- “In the only codices which would be even likely to preserve an older reading, namely the Siniatic Syriac and the oldest Latin Manuscript - the pages are gone which contained the end of Matthew.” - F.C.Conybeare.

So that we have no MS. earlier than the 4th Century, and in the case of these two earlier versions the end page of Matthew has been destroyed!

In these circumstances we must turn to the early quotations, styled the “Patristic Writings” and examine their evidence to see how they quoted Matthew 28:19, and this we will proceed to do.

The Evidence of The Early Writers

“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 diviners 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.” - F.C.Conybeare in Hibbert Journal.

How true is this? What are the facts? While no MS. of the first three centuries is in existence, we do have the writings of at least two men who did actually possess, or had access to MSS. much earlier than our earliest. And there were others who quoted the passage of Matthew 28:19 in those earlier times.

Who were these men? When did they write? Had they access to very early MSS? Were they reliable and exact? How did they quote Matthew 28:19? These are questions that must now be answered.

It is proposed to bring forward evidence from the following, either by direct quotation from their writings, or indirectly through the writings of their contemporaries, viz., Eusebius of Caesarea, the unknown author of De Rebaptisemate, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Justyn Martyr, Mecedonius, Eunomius and Aphraates.

But first a clarification - Let it be stated emphatically, that if the question under consideration were one of theology, the evidence of these “Fathers” would be of no value whatever. Our doctrine must be obtained from the pure word of God alone, and not from any other source. These so-called “Fathers” lived in an age of theological darkness, and when we have the light of Scripture it is folly to search among the dim candle-lit darkness of the theologians. Our concern is to find out what Matthew wrote at the end of his book.

Before dealing with the other writers, let us examine Eusebius as to his integrity and reliability as a witness, seeing that in this enquiry he is a key witness.

Eusebius as a Witness

There were several men of this name. The one with whom we are concerned is known as Eusebius Pamphili, or Eusebius of Caesarea. He was born about 270 A.D. and died about 340 A.D. He lived in times of gross spiritual darkness, was a Trinitarian, and in later life assisted in the preparation of the Nicene Creed. Here follows the opinions of historians and others concerning him.

Robert Roberts: “Eusebius of Caesarea, to whom we are indebted for the preservation of so many contemporary works of antiquity, many of which must have perished had not he collected and edited them.” - Good Company, vol.3, page 10.

E.K. in The Christadelphian Monatshefte. August 1923: “Eusebius, the greatest Greek teacher of the Church and most learned theologian of his time... worked untiringly for the acceptance of the pure word of the New Testament as it came from the Apostles... Eusebius... relies throughout only upon ancient manuscripts, and always openly confesses the truth when he cannot find sufficient testimony.” - Fraternal Visitor, June, 1924.

Mosheim: “Eusebius Pamphili, Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, a man of vast reading and erudition, and one who has acquired immortal fame by his labours in ecclesiastical history, and in other branches of theological

learning... Till about 40 years of age he lived in great intimacy with the martyr Pamphilus, a learned and devout man of Caesarea, and founder of an extensive library there, from which Eusebius derived his vast stores of learning.” - Editorial; footnote.

Dr. Westcott: “Eusebius to whose zeal we owe most of what is known of the history of the New Testament.” - Survey of the History of the Canon of the N.T. page 10.

Peake: “The most important writer in the first quarter of the fourth century was Eusebius of Caesarea... Eusebius was a man of little originality or independent judgment. But he was widely read in the Greek Christian literature of the second and third centuries, the bulk of which has now irretrievably perished, and subsequent ages owe a deep debt to his honest, if somewhat confused, and at times not a little prejudiced, erudition.” - Bible Commentary, page 596.

Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature: “Some hundred works, several of them very lengthy, are either directly cited or referred to as read (by Eusebius). In many instances he would read an entire treatise for the sake of one or two historical notices, and must have searched many others without finding anything to serve his purpose... Under the second head the most vital question is the sincerity of Eusebius. Did he tamper with materials or not? The sarcasm of Gibbon (Decline and Fall, c.xvi) is well known... The passages to which Gibbon refers do not bear out his imputation... Eusebius contents himself with condemning these sins...in general terms, without entering into details...but it leaves no imputation on his honesty.”

Mosheim: in an Editorial note; “Eusebius was an impartial historian, and had access to the best helps for composing a correct history which his age afforded.”

Conybeare: “Of the patristic witnesses to the text of the New Testament as it stood in the Greek MSS. from about 300-340 A.D., 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 that we have now in our libraries. - Hibbert Journal, October 1902.

So much for the honesty, ability and opportunity of Eusebius as a witness to the text of the New Testament. Now we are ready to consider his evidence on the text of Matthew 28:19.

The Evidence of Eusebius

Having introduced the first witness, it is time to ascertain what he wrote concerning the text of Matthew 28:19.

According to the Editor of the Christadelphian Monatshafte, Eusebius among his many other writings compiled a collection of the corrupted texts of the Holy Scriptures, and “the most serious of all the falsifications denounced by him, is without doubt the traditional reading of Matthew 28:19.”

Persistent enquiry has failed to trace the compilation referred to and Knupfer, the Editor, has left his last Canadian address without trace. But various authorities mention a work entitled “Discrepancies In The Gospels” or “Questions And Solutions On Some Points

In The Gospel History” and another work on “The Concluding Sections Of The Gospels.”

According to Conybeare: “Eusebius cites this text (Matthew 28:19) again and again in works written between 300 and 336AD, namely in his long commentaries on the Psalms, on Isaiah, his Demonstratio Evangelica, his Theophany...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*, 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, p.136):

'For He did not enjoin them "to make disciples of all the nations" simply and without qualification, 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 in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of things in heaven and on the earth and under the earth. It was right therefore that He should emphasise 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."

Conybeare proceeds (in *Hibbert Journal*, 1902):- "It is evident that this was the text found by Eusebius in the very ancient codices collected fifty to a 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 Nice was over, to his see of Caesarea."

In his *Textual Criticism Of The New Testament* Conybeare writes: "It is clear, therefore, that of the MSS. which Eusebius inherited from his predecessor, Pamphilus, at Caesarea in Palestine, some at least preserved the original reading, in which there was no mention either of Baptism or of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It had been conjectured by Dr Davidson, Dr Martineau, by the Dean of Westminster, and by Prof. Harnack (to mention but a few names out of the many) that here the received text could not contain the very words of Jesus - this long before anyone except Dr Burgon, who kept the discovery to himself, had noticed the Eusebian form of reading."

An objection was raised by Dr Chase, Bishop of Ely, "who argues that Eusebius found the *Textus Receptus* (traditional text) in his manuscripts, but substituted the shorter formula in his works for fear of vulgarising and divulging the sacred Trinitarian formula. It is interesting to find a modern Bishop reviving the very argument used 150 years before, in support of the forged text of 1 John 5 - "Bengel... allowed that the words (the Three Witnesses) were in no genuine MS... Surely, then, the verse is spurious! No: this learned man finds a way of escape. The passage was of so sublime and mysterious a nature that the secret discipline of the Church withdrew it from the public books, till it was gradually lost. Under what a want of evidence must a critic labour who resorts to such an argument!" - Person (Preface to his Letters).

Conybeare continues, refuting the argument of the Bishop of Ely: "It is sufficient answer to point out that Eusebius's argument, when he cites the text, involves the text 'in my name.' For, he asks, 'in whose name?' and answers that it was the name spoken of by Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians 2:10."

The *Ency. Rel. and Ethics* states: "The facts are, in summary, that Eusebius quotes Matthew 28:19 twenty-one times, either omitting everything between 'nations' and 'teaching,' or in the form 'make disciples of all nations in my name,' the latter form being the more frequent."

Now let us look at the other early writers who quoted Matthew 28:19.

Evidence of other Early Writers

Author of De Rebaptismate: "The anonymous author of *De Rebaptismate* in the third century so understood them, and dwells as length on 'the power of the name of Jesus invoked upon a man by Baptism.'" - *De Rebaptismate* 6.7- - *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol.1, p.352.

Origen: "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 'the nations;' and that in itself suggests that his text has been censored, and the words which followed, 'in my name,' struck out." - Conybeare.

Clement Of Alexandria: "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:- 'And to the apostles he gives the command:

Going around preach ye and baptise those who believe in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.’ (Excerpt cap. 76, ed. Sylb. p.287)” - Conybeare.

Justyn Martyr: “Justyn... quotes a saying of Christ...as a proof of the necessity of regeneration, but falls back upon the use of Isaiah and apostolic tradition to justify the practice of baptism and the use of the triune formula. This certainly suggests that Justyn did not know the traditional text of Matthew 28:19” - Ency. Rel. and Ethics.

And on the other hand - “In Justyn Martyr, who wrote between A.D. 130 and 140, there is a passage which has been regarded as a citation or echo of Matthew 28:19 by various scholars, e.g. Resch in his *Ausser canonische Parallelstellen*, who sees in it an abridgment of the ordinary text. The passage is in Justyn’s dialogue with Trypho 39, p.258:- “God hath not yet afflicted, nor inflicts the judgment, as knowing of some that still even to-day 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 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 Justyn is seen to have had the same text as early as the year 140, which Eusebius regularly found in his manuscripts from 300 to 340” - Conybeare (Hibbert Journal).

Macedonius: “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 of the orthodox. The 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 the popes of the seventh century from excommunicating the entire Celtic Church for its adhesion to the old use of invoking the one name). 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 of Macedonius, who were called ‘Pneumatomachi’ or fighters against the Holy Spirit, because they declined to include the Spirit in a Trinity of persons as co-equal, consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father and Son. They also stoutly denied that any text in the New Testament authorised such a co-ordination of the Spirit with the Father and Son. Whence we infer that their texts agreed with that of Eusebius.” - Conybeare (Hibbert Journal).

Eunomius: “Exceptions are found which perhaps point to an old practice dying out. Cyprian (Ep. 73) and the Apostolic Canons (No. 50) combat the shorter formula, thereby attesting its use in certain quarters. The ordinance of Canon Apost. 50 runs - If any bishop or presbyter fulfil not three baptisms of one initiation, but one baptism which is given (as) into the death of the Lord, let him be deposed.’ This was the formula of the followers of Eunomius (Socr. 5.24) - ‘for they baptise not into the Trinity, but into the death of Christ.’ They accordingly used single immersion only.” - Ency. Biblica (Art. Baptism).

Aphraates: “There is one other witness whose testimony we must consider. He is Aphraates.-who wrote between 337 and 345. He cites our text in a formal manner as follows: ‘Make disciples of all nations, and they shall believe in me.’ The last words appear to be a gloss on the Eusebian reading ‘in my name.’ But in any case, they preclude the *textus receptus* with its injunction to baptise in the triune name. Were the writing of Aphraates an isolated fact, we might regard it as a loose citation, but in the presence of the Eusebian and Justinian texts this is impossible.” - Conybeare.

How Biblical MSS. were altered when the Great Apostasy began

The following quotations will show the ease with which scribes freely altered the MSS. of the New Testament, so unlike the scribes and custodians of the Old Testament Scriptures who copied the holy Writings with reverence and strict accuracy.

These quotations will also show the early start of the practice of trine immersion at the time when the doctrine of the trinity was being formulated.

They will also show how the New Testament writings were made to conform to traditional practice.

Conybeare

“In the case just examined (Matthew 28:19), it is to be noticed that not a single manuscript or ancient version has preserved to us the true reading. But that is not surprising, for as Dr.C.R.Gregory, one of the greatest of our textual critics reminds us, ‘The Greek MSS. of the text of the New Testament were often altered by scribes, who put into them the readings which were familiar to them, and which they held to be the right readings’ (Canon and Text of the New Testament. 1907, page 424).”

“These facts speak for themselves. Our Greek texts, not only of the Gospels, but of the Epistles as well, have been revised and interpolated by orthodox copyists. We can trace their perversions of the text in a few cases, with the aid of patristic citations and ancient versions. But there must remain many passages which have been so corrected, but where we cannot to-day expose the fraud. It was necessary to emphasise this point, because Drs. Westcott and Hort used to aver that there is no evidence of merely doctrinal changes having been made in the text of the New Testament. This is just the opposite of the truth, and such distinguished scholars as Alfred Loisy, J.Wellhausen, Eberhard Nestle, Adolf Harnack, to mention only four names, do not scruple to recognise the fact.”

(While this is perfectly true, nevertheless - “There are a number of reasons why we can feel confident about the general reliability of our translations.” - Peter Watkins in an excellent article “Bridging the Gap” in “The Christadelphian,” January 1962, pp 4-8).

Fraternal Visitor 1924, Page 148

Codex B. (Vaticanus) would be the best of all existing MSS... if it were completely preserved, less damaged, (less) corrected, more easily legible, and not altered by a later hand in more than two thousand places. Eusebius, therefore, is not without grounds for accusing the adherents of Athanasius and of the newly-arisen doctrine of the Trinity of falsifying the Bible more than once.” - Trans. from Christadelphian Monatshefte.

Whiston

“We certainly know of a greater number of interpolations and corruptions brought into the Scriptures... by the Athanasians, and relating to the Doctrine of the Trinity, than in any other case whatsoever. While we have not, that I know of, any such interpolation or corruption, made in any one of them by either the Eusebians or Arians.” - Second letter to the Bishop of London, 1719, page 15.

Smith’s Dictionary of Christian Antiquities: Art. Bap. Sec. 50

“While trine immersion was thus an all but universal practice, Eunomius (circ.360) appears to have been the first to introduce simple immersion “unto the death of Christ”... This practice was condemned on pain of degradation, by the Canon Apost. 46 (al 50). But it comes before us again about a century later in Spain; but then, curiously enough, we find it regarded as a badge of orthodoxy in opposition to the practice of the Arians. These last kept to the use of Trine immersion, but in such a way as to set forth their own doctrine of a gradation in the three Persons.”

Oxford Dictionary of The Christian Church

“In the Two Ways’ of the Didache, the principle duties of the candidates for Baptism and the method of administering it by triple immersion or infusion on the head are outlined. This triple immersion is also attested by Tertullian (Adversus Prax 26)... The most elaborate form of the rite in modern Western usage is in the Roman Catholic Church.” pp. 125-126

Hasting’s Dictionary of The Bible

“In the Eastern Churches, trine immersion is regarded as the only valid form of baptism.” - Vol. 1, p.243 fn.

Catholic Encyclopaedia

“The threefold immersion is unquestionably very ancient in the Church... Its object is, of course, to honour the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity in whose name it is conferred.” - p. 262.

Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics

“If it be thought, as many critics think, that no MS. represents more than comparatively late recensions of the text, it is necessary to set against the mass of manuscript evidence the influence of baptismal practice. It seems easier to believe that the traditional text was brought about by this influence working on the “Eusebian” text, than that the latter arose out of the former in spite of it.” - Art. Baptism.

Conybeare

“The exclusive survival (of the traditional text of Matthew 28:19) in all MSS. Both Greek and Latin, need not cause surprise... But in any case, the conversion of Eusebius to the longer text after the Council of Nice indicates that it was at that time being introduced as a Shibboleth of orthodoxy into all codices... The question of the inclusion of the Holy Spirit on equal terms in the Trinity had been threshed out, and a text so invaluable to the dominant party could not but make its way into every codex, irrespective of its textual affinities.” - Hibbert Journal.

Robert Roberts

“Athanasius... met Flavian, the author of the Doxology, which has since been universal in Christendom: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, etc.” This was composed in opposition to the Arian Doxology: “Glory to the Father, by the Son, in the Holy Spirit.”

- Good Company, Vol. in, p.49.

Whiston

“The Eusebians... sometimes named the very time when, the place where, and the person by whom they (i.e. forms of doxology) were first introduced... Thus Philoflogius, a writer of that very age, assures us in ‘Photius’s Extracts’ that A.D. 348 or thereabouts, Flavius. Patriarch of Antioch, got a multitude of monks together, and did there first use this public doxology, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.” – Second letter concerning the Primative Doxologies, 1719, p. 17.

Hammond 1890

“There are two or three insertions in the New Testament which have been supposed to have their origin in ecclesiastical usage. The words in question, being familiarly known in a particular connection, were perhaps noted in the margin of some copy, and thence became incorporated by the next transcriber; or a transcriber’s own familiarity with the words might have led to his inserting them. This is the source to which Dr. Tregelles assigns the insertion of the Doxology at the close of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6, which is wanting in most of the best authorities. Perhaps also Acts 8:37, containing the baptismal profession of Faith, which is entirely wanting in the best authorities, found its way into the Latin text in this manner.” - Textual Criticism applied to the New Testament, p.23.

The Reader, having reviewed the evidence of the MSS., of the Versions and of the patristic writings, will no doubt have reached the conclusion that in the early centuries some copies of Matthew did not contain the triune-name clause. In legal practice, where copies of the same lost document vary, resource is had to what is called “Internal Evidence,” that is, a comparison with the rest of the text of the document that is not in dispute, in order to ascertain which of the variant readings is the more likely.

Our next chapter, therefore, will set forth some of this Internal Evidence.

Internal Evidence

This method is useful in ascertaining the original text of Scripture where two or more readings obtrude.

As an example, take the word “broken” in 1 Corinthians 11:24. Most versions include the word (in Greek) but the best MSS. at their first writing (i.e. before being altered by later hands) omit the word.

Which is correct?

Now the following Scriptures are sufficient to decide this point:- Exodus 12:46;

Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20; John 19:36.

But in addition we have a verbatim record of the exact words of Jesus in Luke 22:19

- “This is my body which is given for you.” So that the word “broken” is shown by Internal Evidence to be spurious, and should therefore be struck out of the Authorised Version and excluded from exhortations and prayers at the Breaking of Bread.

Certain ancient Greek MSS. leave a blank space where this word appears in other copies. The structure of the sentence in Greek requires some word to be inserted.

Evidently, some scribe, seeing this space (honestly left blank by other copyists who refrained from inserting a word of their own to fill the gap) made a guess and slipped in the word for “broken” thus starting an error which has continued right up to the Authorised Version, and persists in church services throughout the whole of Christendom.

The Revised Version reads “which is for you.” It would have been more correct. however, to have left the gap that is found in the early MSS.

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So, having found that in the first three centuries there existed copies of Matthew which at 28:19 did not include the triune-name, and being very well aware that other copies of Matthew, and in fact, all the later copies, did include the threefold name, we must have recourse to Internal Evidence to decide which is the true reading.

One Test is that of The Context

Examining the context, we find that in the Authorised Version the sense of the passage is hindered, but if we read as under, the whole context fits together and the tenor of the instruction is complete;

“All power is given unto ME... go therefore... baptising in MY name, teaching them... whatsoever I have commanded... I am with you...”

Another Test is that of Frequency

Is the phrase “in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” used elsewhere in Scripture? - Not once.

Did Jesus use the phrase “in my name” on other occasions? - Yes:- Matthew 18:20;

Mark 9:37,39,41; John 14:14, 26; 15:16; 16:23, etc.

Another Test is that of Argument

Is any argument in Scripture based on the fact of the threefold name, or of baptism in the threefold name? - None whatever!

Is any argument in Scripture based on the fact of baptism in the name of Jesus? - Yes! This is the argument in 1 Corinthians 1:13:-

“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were ye baptised in the name of Paul?”

From this argument, if carefully analysed, it will appear that believers ought to be baptised in the name of that One who was crucified for them. The Father, in His amazing love, gave to us His beloved Son, who by the Spirit was raised to incorruptibility, but it is the Lord Himself who was crucified, and in His name, therefore, must believers be baptised in water.

Dr Thomas says: “There is but one way for a believer of ‘the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus the Christ’ to put him on, or to be invested with His name and that is, by immersion into His name. Baptism is for this specific purpose.” - Revealed Mystery. Art. XLIV.

“There is none other name under heaven” - no other name or names - “given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12). “As for its significance; baptism is linked inseparably with the death of Christ - it is the means of the believer’s identification with the Lord’s death.” - God’s Way. page 190.

Now the Father did not die, nor yet the Spirit.

“Buried with Him” (not with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) (Romans 6:3-5).

R. Roberts used this argument: “According to trine-immersion, it is not sufficient to be baptised into the Son... Thus Christ is displaced from His position as the connecting link - the door of entrance - ‘the new and living way.’ And thus there are three names under heaven whereby we must be saved, in opposition to the apostolic declaration, that ‘there is none other name (than the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth) under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.’” - *The True Nature of Baptism*, page 13.

This of course, is the same argument as Paul’s (see above), and although Robert Roberts did not so intend, his argument is as equally effective against the use of the triune name as against the practice of trine-immersion. Were ye baptised in the name of Paul, or the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit, or in any other name that displaces Christ from His position as the connecting link, as the ONLY name for salvation? That is the argument, and confirms the genuine text of Matthew 28:19 to contain the phrase “in my name.”

Another Test is that of Analogy

Is there anything in Scripture analogous to baptism in the Triune name? - No!

Is there anything analogous to baptism in the name of Jesus? - Yes. The Father sent the holy spirit and baptised the waiting disciples with the spirit in the name of Jesus. (John 14:26). There is a reason for this. The holy spirit is the Promise (Acts 2:33) which Christ received on ascending to the Father and only those who were in the corporate body of Christ, the Ecclesia which is His Body - only those could receive the Gift, and only because they were in that one Body. The Lord Jesus Christ is the connecting link both for baptism in water and for baptism in spirit. (John 3:5).

Another Test is that of Consequence

In being baptised, do we put on the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? - No’

Do we put on the name of JESUS? - Yes. Dr. Thomas wrote: “Believers of the Gospel Jesus preached are justified by faith through His name; that is, their Abrahamic faith and disposition are counted to them for repentance and the remission of sins, in the act of putting on the name of Jesus, the Christ.” - *Revealed Mystery*. Art. XLIII

The Lord said: “I am in my Father, and ye in me” (John 14:20). Not until the Thousand Years have passed, and the Lord Jesus Christ returns His “Kingdom to God, even the Father” (1 Corinthians 15:24-28), shall God be all and in all. Till then we may not aspire to be “in the Father.”

Believers bear the name of Jesus now, and so that name is not mentioned in Revelation 3:12- Believers do not now bear the name of the Father, nor the new name of Jesus, nor the name of the City of God, but these three names are promised to the faithful. Then, not now, shall we bear the name of the Father.

(See also the excellent article entitled “Notes on an Interesting Bible Idiom” by H.A.Whittaker in “The Christadelphian” for September 1959, pp 393-4).

Another Test is that of Practice

Did the disciples afterwards baptise in the threefold name? - Never! Did they baptise in the name of Jesus: - Always! (Acts 2:38; 19:5; 8:16, etc.

Another Test is that of Similarity of Action

Baptism is a symbolic rite. The only other rite of the Ecclesia is that of Breaking of Bread.

The latter is the Communion of those who have experienced the former: and for none else.

The Weekly Memorial is the Lord's Supper, not that of a trinity ("My body, My blood").

Another Test is that of Significances

One significance involved is that of the forgiveness of sins.

John did "preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." Jesus had no sins to be remitted. Neither had He whereof to repent.

When a man brought his lamb to the priest, he laid his hands upon the lamb, and the lamb was slain, and so the man received a remission of his sin. Without the laying on of hands the sin could not have, been transferred to the lamb.

This is the significance in the baptism of Jesus by John. When we were baptised (as when John's disciples were baptised) our sins were loosed, remitted, washed away, and we arose sinless. The Lord entered the water of baptism to take upon Himself those very sins. He entered sinless and emerged bearing the sins of the world.

How do we know? It was revealed to John, who exclaimed - "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). It was Jesus alone (and not the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) who was baptised, and became the Lamb of God to take away sins.

So that the significance here outlined requires the phrase in Matthew 28:19 to be "in my name."

Another Test is that of Parallel Accounts

Now it happens that Matthew was not alone in recording the words of Christ before His Ascension. Let us compare the parallel account of Luke 24:46,47: who writes in the third person.

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations."

This passage therefore restores the correct text to Matthew 28:19 - "in my name."

Furthermore, the last twelve verses of Mark record the last discourse of Jesus before His Ascension. If these verses are to be regarded as the inspired writing of Mark himself, then we have yet another witness to the correct text, for Mark, after using similar words to those of Matthew :- "go ye...all the world...preach... every creature...baptised..." includes not the triune name but the phrase "in my name."

Another Test is that of a Complementary Citation

There is a striking resemblance between Matthew 28:19 and Romans 1:4-5; the former contains the Commission of Christ to His Apostles, while the latter is Paul's understanding and acceptance of his own Commission as an Apostle.

Matthew 28:19: "all power is given unto me. Go ye...teaching them to observe... all nations..."

Romans 1:4-5: "the Son of God with power... received... Apostleship... for obedience to the faith... all nations..." and then follows, not the triune name, but the phrase - "His name."

Another Test is that of A Principle

It is written - "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17).

Now here is a principle laid down, and the comprehensive word "whatsoever" certainly includes baptism, which is a rite involving both word and deed.

Now of the alternative readings of Matthew 28:19, the threefold name is clearly not in accordance with the above principle. The shorter phrase is. This item of Internal Evidence, therefore, proves which of the two variant readings is the spurious one.

That this is correct, is proved by other Scripture, it was Paul who enunciated the Principle. Did it in his opinion, include Baptism? Acts 19:3-5 supplies the answer. The Baptism of John, like the Baptism of Jesus (then and now), was a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Mark 1:4; Acts 2:38-39. And John preached also the coming of the Messiah who should baptise with Holy Spirit. The difference between the baptism of John and baptism after Pentecost is that the latter was in the name of Jesus.

No other difference is shown in Scripture. Now it is written of the disciples at Ephesus that although they had been baptised unto John's baptism, they were later baptised again, in the presence of Paul, but "in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 19:3-5).

This test, therefore, provides a doubly-strong proof of the authenticity of the phrase "in my name" in Matthew 28:19.

God foreknew that the record of the parting words of Jesus to his disciples would be tampered with, and in His wisdom He provided a remedy for those who have eyes to see in providing the Principle enunciated by Paul in Colossians 3:17, and the record of Paul's application of that Principle in Acts 19:3-5.

The Opinions of Others

Sufficient evidence has been produced to enable the reader to decide whether or not the triune-name in Matthew 28:19 is spurious. The following opinions are given by way of interest. But the reader should not be influenced by them. He should make his own judgment on the evidence before reading further.

Hastings Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics: "The cumulative evidence of these three lines of criticism (Textual Criticism, Literary Criticism, Historical Criticism) is thus distinctly against the view that Matthew 28:19 (in the A.V.) represents the exact words of Christ." - Art. Baptism: Early Christian.

Dr Peake: "The command to baptise into the threefold name is a late doctrinal expansion. Instead of the words 'baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost' we should probably read simply 'into my name.'" - Bible Commentary, page 723.

F.Whiteley in The Testimony: "There is the 'triune' baptismal formula, which may prove a very broken reed when thoroughly investigated, but...we leave it for separate treatment. The thoughtful may well ponder, meantime, why one cannot find one single instance, in Acts or Epistles, of the words ever being used at any of the many baptisms recorded, notwithstanding Christ's (seemingly) explicit command at the end of Matthew's Gospel." - The Testimony, October 1959, page 351. Art. Back to Babylon (4).

R.R.Williams: "The command to baptise in Matthew 28:19 is thought to show the influence of a developed doctrine of God verging on Trinitarianism. Early baptism was in the name of Christ. The association of this trinitarian conception with baptism suggests that baptism itself was felt to be an experience with a Trinitarian reference." - Theological Wordbook of the Bible, page 29.

Dean Stanley: "Doubtless the more comprehensive form in which baptism is now everywhere administered in the threefold name... soon superseded the simpler form of that in the Name of the Lord Jesus only." - Christian Institutions.

E.K. in the Fraternal Visitor: "The striking contrast and the illogical internal incoherence of the passage...lead to a presumption of an intentional corruption in the interests of the Trinity. In ancient Christian times a tendency of certain parties to corrupt the text of the New Testament was certainly often imputed. This increases our doubt almost to a decisive certainty concerning the genuineness of the passage." - Art. The Question of the Trinity and Matthew 28:19. 1924, pp. 147-151, trans. from the Christadelphian Monatshefte.

Dr Robert Young. In his Literal Translation of the Bible, Young places the triune name in Matthew 28:19 in parenthesis, thus indicating the words to be of doubtful authenticity.

James Martineau: "The very account which tells us that at last, after His resurrection, He commissioned His disciples 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.” - Seat of Authority.

Black’s Bible Dictionary: “The Trinitarian formula (Matthew 28:19) was a late addition by some reverent Christian mind.”

Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics: “The obvious explanation of the silence of the New Testament on the triune name, and the use of another formula in Acts and Paul, is that this other formula was the earlier, and that the triune formula is a later addition.”

Professor Harnack dismisses the text almost contemptuously as being “no word of the Lord.” - History of Dogma (German edition i.68).

F. Whiteley in The Testimony; “Clerical conscience much troubled (see Companion Bible Appendix 185) that apostles and epistles never once employ the Triune Name of Matthew 28:19. Even Trinitarians, knowing Trinity idea was being resisted by Church in 4th century admits (e.g. Peake) ‘the command to baptise with the threefold name is a late doctrinal expansion,’ but prior to oldest yet known Ms (4th Century). (Its sole counterpart, 1 John 5:7, is a proved interpolation). Eusebius (A.D.264-340) denounces the Triune form as spurious, Matthew’s actual writing having been ‘baptising them in my name.’“ Footnotes to Art. Baptism (5) in The Testimony, August 1958.

Is It Important?

That is to say, is it important whether we amend the text of Matthew 28:19 or not?

The man whose standard of judgment is his own ideas will answer in the negative. But those who acknowledge that God’s thoughts are not our thoughts will carefully consider the matter in the light of Scripture, and remember that in the matter of divinely-appointed symbolic actions, the details are of the greatest importance. Matthew 28:19 has to do with such a symbolic action.

For example:

- (a) Cain’s offering lacked blood and was rejected.
- (b) The Sabbath stick-gatherer forfeited his life
- (c) Uzzah died on touching the Ark.

Maybe God was displeased because they marred the portrait-in-type of the Son of His Love, as to

- (a) His atonement by blood,
- (b) His millennial rest, and
- (c) His chosen ones.

Now every symbolic action required by God has not only one or more significances, but is the actual cause of very real end-effects.

- (1) When Joshua pointed his spear there was victory. (Joshua 8:18,19).
- (2) Only three victories were given to Joash when he struck the ground but thrice. (2 Kings 13:19-25).
- (3) The Passover Lamb or Kid had to be without blemish, Exodus 12:5, (even as was Christ), if the household were to be preserved from the Destroying Angel.

Nothing in God’s ritual is without meaning or result. When He speaks it is done! Christ called Lazarus and Lazarus came forth! In matters of ritual (Baptism and the Breaking of Bread) we are dealing with God’s ritual, not man’s, such as the Ritual of the Roman Catholic Church which, being man-made, has no further effect or result.

So that, on the one hand, any deviation from the appointed details is displeasing to God, and very definitely so, and, on the other hand, obedience to the divinely appointed details will accomplish that whereunto they were sent.

Now in the matter of our Enquiry, it is important to settle what is the Word of God, in order that we may obey. This is the purport of Deuteronomy 4:2, “Ye shall not add... neither... diminish ought...that ye may keep the commandments.” First of all, therefore, we should expunge the spurious phrase in Matthew 28:19 (A.V.) and with a zeal like that of our Master is expelling those who ought not to have been in God’s Temple, or like that of Nehemiah in casting out Tobiah’s “stuff.”

A Ploughman.

Comment

The Trinitarian formula wasn’t formulated until about the third century A.D., so it must have been a later insertion.