

**The Lord's Command to Baptize:
Part II
A Disputed Ending of a Gospel**

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Introduction

What is regularly called the Greek New Testament is a text that does not come to us directly from the hands of the apostles. Rather, it is a critical compilation of what scholars deem to be the most original text, utilizing thousands of Greek manuscripts.¹ In addition to these manuscripts, scholars consult texts that are translated into other languages, church lectionaries, and both allusions and citations of the New Testament found in the church fathers. Manuscripts vary, of course, and sometimes a particular verse or set of verses may be included in one version and not another, but there are only a very few biblical texts that are disputed, whose inclusion or exclusion is in question. From a doctrinal standpoint, there are two biblical passages that get specific treatment in books introducing a reader to textual criticism. The first one is 1 John 5:7; the second is the passage that appears in the King James Version as the last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel. The 1 John text clearly does not have ancient evidence to support it.² The Markan text, however, is a different story, and there is more ancient evidence to support it.³

¹ There are approximately 5,500 Greek manuscripts, ranging in date from the second century AD into the middle ages. There are approximately 100 papyri, 300 uncials, 2,813 minuscule and 2,165 lectionary manuscripts of the New Testament. On this see p. 2364-5, *The NET Bible, First Beta Edition*. Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. 2001 and also, K & B. Aland's, *The Text of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1989.

² In the first two editions of Erasmus' Greek text, he did not include 1 John 5:7: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." The reason was simple. Although it was found in the Latin Vulgate, it did not appear in any Greek manuscripts. He promised to include it if any Greek manuscript could be found which supported it. One was apparently produced, and it is in his 3rd Greek edition of 1522 that was used as the basis for the King James Version. However, upon closer examination, this Greek manuscript was late and was dependent upon the Vulgate. On this, see p. 647ff. of Bruce Metzger's, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2nd Edition*. Stuttgart and New York: United Bible Societies, 2000.

³ The version of Mark that is utilized is alluded to by some second century church fathers as well as the Syriac Harmony of the Gospels made by Tatian in the second century. On this see p. 72 of George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism*. See also, p. 102-107 Bruce Metzger's, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2nd Edition*. Stuttgart and New York: United Bible Societies, 2000.

Some have argued that since the Markan text is disputed, this puts into question doctrines held by Pentecostals. After all, the words of Jesus in the Mark 16:17-18 prophesy:

“And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

Consider though, that no major biblical doctrine must rest on these verses alone.⁴ And this is as it should be.

Our concern in this paper, however, is a passage of Scripture not often considered to be in question. It is the classic text found in Matthew 28:19. In terms of doctrinal importance, this text arguably surpasses the Markan text, serving as a cornerstone in people’s conceptions about God, also supplying what most deem to be the normative formula for baptism. Yet, when the evidence for the inclusion of this Matthean text is examined closely, I believe it is found to be with less evidence than the disputed ending of Mark. If this is the case, then there are certain implications that should be drawn. We would suggest that questions should cause us to caution in either constructing Trinitarian theology or making normative a Trinitarian baptismal formula.

While there are those within the ranks of the apostolic movement who have pointed out the possible difficulty with the text, there seems always to be a certain reticence. This may well be for a couple of reasons. First, there are those whose faith is directly in the King James Version of the Bible. These do not understand that the KJV is itself a translation. Although it is a good translation, this does not disallow a critical examination of its meaning and translation.

⁴ Exorcism of demons in the name of Jesus is taught throughout the Gospels and Acts. Throughout the book of Acts, speaking in tongues accompanies the initial infilling of the Spirit. Consequently, the doctrine of speaking in tongues does not rest on this Markan text. The same could be said regarding prayer for the sick. It is practiced throughout the Gospels and Acts, and there is specific instruction given in James 5. Further, there is narrative evidence that Paul, when bitten by a poisonous snake in Acts 28 was unharmed. In the Old Testament there is Elisha and the school of the prophets eating poisoned stew during a famine, 2 Kings 4. These were not reckless challenges, (Deut. 6:16) but instances where inadvertent circumstances within the human condition demanded that man should rely upon God for intervention.

Second, there are those within our movement who feel quite strongly that the Greek text underlying the King James Version, the *Textus Receptus*, is in some way inspired or especially protected in the process of the transmission of its text. We do not want to affect anyone's faith, nor do we want to unnecessarily question what should not be questioned. But we should recall there is not simply one Greek manuscript that makes up the TR, but that it is also a compilation of various texts.⁵ Nor is there a claim on my part of a particular expertise in textual criticism. I come today not as an expert but as a student. The interesting thing to me is if we can readily discover academic sources that point to this particular conclusion, then it seems to me we are compelled to explore and make known that which we have discovered.

On the face of it, Matthew 28:19 should not be considered as a variant, for there are no early Greek manuscripts that have Matthew 28:19 without the inclusion of the words "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." But there is another point that should be considered. There is not a single manuscript in existence that includes the ending of Matthew's Gospel, prior to the fourth century Trinitarian Controversy. The best African Old Latin and Old Syriac manuscripts are also defective in this point.⁶ In comparing it to Mark's disputed ending, neither ending has manuscript evidence extant today before the fourth century!⁷

⁵ The Bibles we use today are all "eclectic" text from my perspective. Eclectic means "choosing or consisting of what appears to be the best from diverse sources" (Webster, 225). There is not one manuscript that is completely superior to all others. The manuscripts Erasmus used were all from the Byzantine family so thus some argue that the *Textus Receptus* is not eclectic. However, Erasmus first used about six different manuscripts to complete his first Greek New Testament. In his later editions he added portions from a couple more manuscripts. His most notable addition was I John 5:7, from MS 61, a 16th century manuscript. Later, Stephanus (1546-51), consulted at least 14 different manuscripts. Then Bèza used Codex Bezae and Codex Claromontanus. (Wegner, 269) The 54 scholars who prepared the 1611 version consulted numerous sources before completing the King James Version. Thus numerous manuscripts played a part in the compiling of what we know today as the *Textus Receptus* (TR), or the Received Text. Thus, prior to 1611 the text we know as the King James did not truly exist in one Bible. In 1881 the Revised Version NT was completed. Every New Testament Version produced since then has used the Critical Text, (CT) except the NKJV and the Majority Text. Zane Hodges and Arthur Farstad have produced what they call the Majority Text, (MT). The MT is compiled of the majority of the manuscripts supporting any given text. "The *Textus Receptus* differs from it (MT) in almost 2,000 places." (Wallace, 155)

⁶ On this, see p. 380 of *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. II*. New York: Charles Scribner & Sons.

Further, there is some considerable doubt among scholars that Matthew 28:19 was original.⁸ Our method, then, will be to take a critical look at the secondary manuscript evidence, utilizing scholarly critiques of the material. While not every scholar should be given equal weight, there is significant scholarly weight such that it should give us pause before coming to a firm conclusion.

Second Century Evidence

The earliest possible evidence for the Trinitarian formula comes in the early second century in the Letters of Ignatius and in *The Didache*. In neither case is the reading undisputed; that is to say, there are known and alleged recensions involved in both documents, and evidence of an alternate reading that may be more original. Scholars have assessed that *The Didache* was “written in a time of transition” where an unknown author sought to “harmonize and revered traditions of the church with new ecclesial necessities.” Nor was the book intended to “regulate the behavior of the entire church” but was rather written with a local situation in view.⁹ Thus, there is an unevenness about the book. In chapter 7, there is instruction about baptism using a trinitarian formula. The *Didache* 7 is at the earliest c.100 A.D. but could be later, and it is often mentioned as being either a quote from, or the source of Matthew 28:19.¹⁰ Yet in chapter 9, the

⁷ See pages 6 & 13 of *The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1999, 2001. Edited by Phillip Comfort and David Barrett. It is interesting that in William Burgeon’s *The Tradition Text of the Holy Gospel*, he presents the earliest attestation of both Matthew and Mark’s ending. Mark’s disputed ending has 20 references and Matthew’s disputed ending has 21. However, Mark has 3 from the second century to Matthew’s 1! And two of the three are of earlier dating than Matthew’s. Thus Mark has more and earlier attestation than Matthew’s disputed ending!

⁸ See Appendix I

⁹ See Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache*. Trans. Linda M. Maloney; Harold W. Attridge, ed. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998, 3. The dating of the *Didache* is complicated by the fact that it is in itself dependent on various sources, including the “Two Ways Tractate,” and apparent references to the *Didache* by Eusebius and Athanasius is in doubt (p. 6). A certain witness is the *Apostolic Constitutions*, which copied from the *Didache* in 300, making it a second century A.D. document (p. 17).

¹⁰ See p. 308 of Samuel Driver, Samuel, et. al., *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: The Gospel of Matthew*, third Edition. 1912.

text clearly states of those baptized that they “have been baptized in the name of the Lord...”¹¹ Indeed, *The Didache* may well be limited in its use as evidence.¹² Church fathers were not all in support of it. For instance, Eusebius of Caesarea, 265-340 A.D. while listing his Canon, speaks about various other books that were in some circles highly esteemed and some disputed. But Eusebius places *The Didache* in a category he calls “bastard” or “spurious!”¹³

As we suggested above, Ignatius also utilizes on one occasion the language of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.¹⁴ The relationship to Matthew 28:19, however, or a Trinitarian understanding, cannot be demonstrated. Indeed, he does not have three persons in mind.¹⁵ Although any number of Christological persuasions claimed Ignatius as their own,¹⁶ including Modalistic Monarchian;¹⁷ whatever else Ignatius is, he is not Trinitarian.

¹¹ See Larry Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship*, 81, note 44, who sees conflicting traditions in the text and thus the importance of the non-trinitarian reference to baptism in 9:5. See also Arthur Vööbus, who on pp. 36-39 of *Liturgical Traditions in the Didache*, (Papers for the Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1968), suggests that the trinitarian formula arose in the middle of the second century and was in fact an addition to both the *Didache* and Matthew 28:19; cited on p. 127, note 11 of Kurt Niederwimmer, *The Didache*.

¹² See p. 162-163 of B.J. Hubbard, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning*. Montana: Scholars Press. 1974

¹³ See p. 596 of A. S. Peake, *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, London, 1929.

¹⁴ *Letter to the Magnesians*. 13.1.

¹⁵ While it is possible for Ignatius to refer on a particular occasion to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit the occasional usage should be understood to glorify God through the work of Jesus Christ in the age of the Spirit. On this, see p. 80, note 1, of Adolph Harnack, *The History of Dogma*, vol. 1.

¹⁶ He has been identified as a gnostic; see Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church*, I, *The Beginnings of the Christian Church*, [English Translation] 1949, p. 247. Robert Grant, on pp. 107-108 of his *Gods and One God*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986, has pointed out the multiplicity of ways in which Ignatius was used. The Antiochenes appealed to Ignatius as authoritative to support their "two-natures" emphasis. However, the Alexandrians promptly replied by utilizing Ignatius for the contrary position which stressed the union of natures in Christ after the incarnation. Both Monophysites and those who held to the creedal position of Chalcedon also claimed Ignatius as an ally. On this, see Grant's "The Appeal to the Early Fathers", in *Journal of Theological Studies*, 11 (1960), 16f.

¹⁷ See p. 20 of William R. Schoedel's *Ignatius of Antioch. A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Helmut Koester, ed. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985. Schoedel argues that Daniélou has missed the mark in that there is nothing Jewish Christian about Ignatius. Yet the way that Ignatius speaks is primarily Monarchian modalism. But as we suggested of Oneness Christology and the biblical texts, Oneness Christology can in fact fit more than one category of speaking. As Schoedel points out, like the biblical writers before him, Ignatius may sound subordinationist (Eph 3:2); he may talk language that is on the surface adoptionist (*Sm.* 1.1. cf. *Mag.* 8:2). He may even speak of Christ as having existed with the Father before the ages (*Mag.* 6.1), but there is in fact no emphasis on a "pre-cosmic Christ". Thus, on the whole the texts which freely input suffering, overtly call Jesus God, even revel in it, lends the most support to modalist leanings. Here Schoedel is agreeing with Virginia Corwin's assessment on pp. 140-1 of her *St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960.

The second century is important, not only for what it says, but for what it does not say as well. Consider the words of Justin Martyr 100-165 A.D., in his *First Apology*, chapter 61, paragraph 1, gives instructions for baptism. And while he speaks of a triune formula, he does not quote Matthew! He then quotes John 3:3 and Isaiah 1:18 as his Scriptural authority for baptism. Is it possible that Justin Martyr did not know of a verse containing the triune formula? In his *Dialogue with Trypho* there is an echo of “a shorter form” of Matthew 28:19. (this shorter form will be discussed below) He says, “God has not yet inflicted nor inflicts 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 receive gifts each as they be worthy, being illuminated by the name of this Christ.”¹⁸ If in fact the Matthean text was available to him, no doubt Justin Martyr would have utilized it.

Historians’ Suspicions about Matthew 28:19

According to a number of historians, the weight of the historical evidence is against an early application of a triune baptismal formula. Arthur McGiffert has noted,

There is no reference to the triune formula in the literature of the apostolic or sub-apostolic age, except in Matthew 28:19, and in the Didache, chap. 7. While the formula seems to have been in use by the end of the second century, but there were many Christians even as late as the middle of the third up to the very end of the fourth who refused to use it and insisted on baptizing in the name of Christ alone, and their attitude is difficult to explain unless they were following an earlier custom which the church at large had outgrown.¹⁹

Let us consider now the work of Hans Kosmola, a scholar who wrote about a half a century ago, demonstrating that Eusebius knew a shorter formula than the norm for Matthew

¹⁸ On this, see especially Frederick C. Conybeare, *The Hibbert Journal*, Vol. 1. *Three Early Doctrinal Modifications of the Text of the Gospels*. London & Oxford: Williams and Norgate, 1903.

¹⁹ See p. 180 of Arthur Cushman McGiffert, *The Apostles Creed*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishing. 2001.

28:19. There are two reasons why Eusebius should not merely be utilized as a secondary source but should be considered seriously. First, as we suggested above, there is no early manuscript evidence of Matthew 28:19 in its longer form. Second, the standard Greek text utilized today argues for or against the inclusion of specific phrases and words based upon attestation by the church fathers. (UBS) 4th edition of their Greek New Testament, (GNT) they reference 116 different Greek, and 74 Latin Church Fathers. One of the most prominent Greek Church Fathers is Eusebius of Caesarea. He is quoted or referenced 189 times in the UBS's GNT. Eusebius is cited 116 times in the Gospels alone. The single Gospel he is cited most is Matthew, with 47 citations. But in spite of the fact that within the writings of Eusebius there is a form of Matthew 28:19 significantly different from the traditional form, it is ironic to me that Eusebius is not cited at this verse. One may well suspect that there is a doctrinal motivation to prevent this all-important text from being considered "disputed."

Elsewhere I argue that hermeneutically, Matthew 28:19 as it stands in its immediate context must point to a single name, the name of Jesus as being the correct hermeneutical interpretation for this passage.²⁰ But if in fact the passage is spurious, if in fact it should be possibly disallowed, then the text should be approached tentatively for doctrinal support of Trinitarian theology. We will now look at how Eusebius cited this verse most frequently in his writings. We will provide it in Scriptural context so one may get the true feel for how it flows.

*All power is given unto me in heaven and earth.
Go and make all nations disciples in my name,
Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
And behold, I am with you all the days till the consummation of the aeon.*

Hans Kosmola demonstrates that the verse as it is found in Eusebius makes considerable sense, more so than it does as it appears in modern versions of the biblical text. As Kosmala says, "The

²⁰ See my Part I: Hermeneutics of the Name of Jesus.

foregoing does not, of course, intend to be ‘scientific proof’ that the original Gospel of Matthew did not contain the Trinitarian baptism formula. Nobody can ‘prove’ this at the present stage. We can only demonstrate that it is highly unlikely that it was originally there.”²¹ With the Eusebian form, we find Matthew’s conclusion is reduced to four natural lines. The passage is now a hymnic piece instead of a prose. Kosmala goes on to comment,

The Eusebian conclusion has a definitely poetical and almost elegant form. It is a self-contained unit consisting of four lines. It is well-balanced in its structure and the lines follow one after the other in a logical sequence; this cannot be said of the traditional conclusion.²²

This poetic hymn now points with greater directness to the One with “all power,” to “all nations,” with “all” the “commands,” for “all the days!” Jesus! “And we are complete in Him!” Col. 2:10. And “He is to have the preeminence in all things.” Col. 1:18. The one in whom “all fullness dwells! Col. 2:9.

The question may then be asked, and indeed it is inferred by Arthur McGiffert as to when this formula was changed. McGiffert writes, “From the simple formula, ‘into the name of Jesus Christ’ the step is a long one to the formula, ‘into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’”²³ Indeed, the acceptance of such a formula was disputed for centuries.²⁴ Motivation for change may be found in the need for biblical foundation for a developing church doctrine. Just such a claim is offered by Bart Erhman. He argues that alterations were made to limit the use of Scripture for: the Adoptionistic view, the Separationist view, the Docetic view,

²¹ Hans Kosmala, 7.

²² Ibid., 7-8. Ernst Loymeyer also presented this. See, *In Memoriam Ernst Loymeyer*. Stuttgart, 1951. pp 28ff.

²³ See p. 181 of McGiffert, *The Apostles Creed*. Also Hubbard’s *Matthean Redaction*. p. 162ff.

²⁴ Ibid. McGiffert goes on to point out that the fact there was a controversy indicates there was a change that took place. The fact there is no actual passage written in close conjunction with a baptism in which the Matthew 28:19 form is found, but instead the preponderance of occasions includes baptism “in the name of Jesus,” gives powerful testimony of the originality of the use of the single name Jesus! That Cyprian and Pope Stephen were in conflict indicates that at one point even the Pope was either against the Matthean form, or at the least considered Jesus name as a valid formula! (Cuneo, 5ff) Cyprian found it “necessary to forbid the use of any but the triune formula,” while Ambrose defended “the validity of the shorter formula” which indicates at some point in time a change was made! (McGiffert, 181)

and the Patripassianist view. He writes, “Scribes occasionally altered words of their sacred texts to make them more patently orthodox and to prevent their misuse by Christians who espouse aberrant views.”²⁵ Many of these alterations have been corrected through textual critical means and did not make it into our text today, but the precedent has been established.

Textual critic Erberhard Nestle also had questions. He writes,

Indeed, even so cautious an enquirer as Zahn speaks without hesitation of ‘the official recensions originating subsequent to the time of Origen.’ (*THLBl.*, 1899, 180). The vagueness of our conclusions with respect to these recensions does not look very promising for the result of our investigation of the text prior to the time of Origen, when activity in this field was more disconnected and might be said to run wild and unrestrained. And there is this further difficulty that some writers who fail to be considered in this period came in later times or less justly under the imputation of heresy, with the consequence that the result of their labors were less widely disseminated, if not deliberately suppressed. In circumstances like these any attempted revision of the text must have been equally mischievous, whether it preceded from the orthodox side or from the opposite. That there were d???? ta? who were supposed to correct the text in the interest of orthodoxy we have already learned from Epiphanius. Indeed, from our point of view the action of the orthodox correctors must be thought the more regrettable of the two, since the books without a doubt parted at their hands with many vivid, strange, and even fantastic traits of language.” (Nestle, 191-192)

While Nestle and Zahn may not have made a direct reference to Matthew 28:19, when viewed in light of scholarly opinion, one must consider it as possibly edited.

The Matthean text may have been one altered by church officials who imposed on the text the doctrinal developments of the fourth century. For instance, Burgeon cites Hort, who claimed, “...somewhere between 250-350 A.D. and edited revision of the N.T. text was made at Antioch, and imposed on the Church there by ecclesiastical authority.” Burgeon goes on to note that Hort “conjectured that Lucian (d. 312) may have been the leader in the first of these

²⁵ Bart Erhman, p xi. *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press. 1993. Also, Nestle confirms such goings on. He writes in a footnote on p. 183, “Without a doubt many readings which had a considerable circulation in the second and third centuries, some of them of no small importance and extent, were gradually ousted from their place in the text from the fourth century onwards, and some of them were dropped out of the later tradition all together. And it is equally true that many interpolations were current in these later centuries which were unknown in the second.”

‘authoritative revisions.’”²⁶ Conybeare also claimed that those who fought the making of the Spirit a person “stoutly denied that any text in the N.T. authorized such a co-ordination of the Spirit with the Father and Son. Whence we infer that their texts agreed with that of Eusebius.”²⁷

If there was something going on within the church and if later texts were added, then is it not also possible that things were removed? While I offer this only as a point of conjecture, and I do not claim any expertise in this area, I find it remarkable that the first two (and only two) Greek manuscripts to omit the ending of Mark’s Gospel are also, believed to be the oldest or first to *include* the traditional ending of Matthew. These manuscripts (? & B) are generally dated as either 4th or 5th century.

Grammatical Consideration

There is a certain awkwardness to the participial construction in the Greek text of Matthew 28:19 as it stands in the Greek. In the NET Bible’s 2nd Beta Edition, their footnote acknowledges that the two participles that follow the main verb (“baptizonte,” “baptizontes,” “baptizing”; and “didaskonte,” “didaskontes,” “teaching”) “do not fit the normal pattern for attendant circumstance participles, since they are present participles and follow the aorist main verb.”²⁸ Otto Michel admits, “it is very difficult to explain the sequence of the participles βαπτίζοντες and διδάσκοντες, for the order should be the same as in Did. 7,1: ταῖς ταῖς

²⁶ See p. xliv of Burgeon, John and Jay Green, *Unholy Hands on the Bible, Vol. 1*. Lafayette, Indiana: Sovereign Grace Trust Fund. 1990.

²⁷ On p. 107 of Fredrick C. Conybeare, *The Hibbert Journal*, Vol. 1. *Three Early Doctrinal Modifications of the Text of the Gospels*. London & Oxford: Williams and Norgate, 1903, he writes, “As late as 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 *pneumato-machi* 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 N.T. authorized such a co-ordination of the Spirit with the Father and Son. Whence we infer that their texts agreed with that of Eusebius.”

²⁸ NET Bible’s 2nd Beta Edition, footnote on Matthew 28:19.

quotes Matthew 28:19 as “in my name.” Without the need of a great deal of thought, there is only one form that fits more clearly with the overall interpretation of the Bible! It is clearly “in my name!”

Conclusion:

We have demonstrated historically that there is considerable evidence for the omission of a trinitarian formula at the end of Matthews Gospel. While we have cited Scriptural and hermeneutical evidence for the importance of the centrality of the name of Jesus elsewhere, it would be remiss not to end with a return to the biblical text. It is evident that all of the New Testament speaks of the importance of Jesus name and includes it with baptism. Thus, one must wonder about the originality of Matthew 28:19 in light of the words of Paul: “1 Corinthians 1:13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” The text confirms what Acts records as well, that Paul baptized in the name of the one who was crucified for them, the name of Jesus Christ, Acts 19:5. If Jesus had issued the command to baptize in Matthew’s Gospel—surely if he had issued a command to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, then surely Paul would have felt inclined to obey it! But, as we have argued throughout, Matthew 28:19, is a disputed text, one for which there is much doubt. Most scholars agree that it “would be wise not to base a message or a point primarily on a disputed phrase.”³³ While it certainly is possible hermeneutically to understand Matthew 28:19 as a reference to the name of Jesus, its likely status as a text that has been manipulated should be considered prior to the question as to how to interpret it. Perhaps we should leave well enough alone and not trouble people’s faith with textual critical questions. It might well be enough to harmonize the text with the clearly stated general truth of the New Testament teaching. Still, are

³³ See p. 135, of David Bernard’s *God’s Infallible Word*. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press. 1997.

we not, as stewards of the gifts that God has given us, compelled to study, discern and teach what we can glean from such study? These are the questions that this disputed text raise to me.

A brief recap reveals:

For the shorter form

- Patristic quotes of Eusebius
- Form Criticism
- Hermeneutical Findings
- Patristic evidence that the text was not yet fixed or set, and close allusions
- *Lack* of Manuscript and Versional evidence of this verse prior to the 4th century
- Evidence that there was a change in practice, indicated by the controversy
- Evidence of the orthodox influence of Scribes on the text
- “Not possible to rule out” (Hubbard, 175)

For the Traditional form

- Patristic evidence
- Eusebius, at times quoted inexactly
- Manuscript evidence
- “It could possibly be authentic” (Hubbard, 175)

The panel may now offer their comments and recommendations on what at least I feel is, compelling evidence for classifying Matthew 28:19 as a disputed ending of a Gospel!

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Appendix I

Listed below are various quotations relating to the text of Matthew 28:19:

Talmadge French. *Our God Is One.* 1999, Page 216.

“Generally, the Oneness position has been the complete harmonization of the Matthean expression with that of the Jesus' name form. But, interestingly, some Oneness arguments have appealed to textual critical scholarship that denies Jesus ever spoke the words recorded in the Matthew 28:19 account. More typically, it is maintained that the one apostolic formula is 'in the name of Jesus,' and the account in Matthew was interpreted by the apostles, including Matthew himself, to be the invocation of the name of Jesus.”

The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. 1. 1992, page 585.

“The historical riddle is not solved by Matthew 28:19, since, according to a wide scholarly consensus, it is not an authentic saying of Jesus, not even an elaboration of a Jesus-saying on baptism.”

The Dictionary of the Bible, 1947, page 83.

“It has been customary to trace the institution of the practice (of baptism) to the words of Christ recorded in Matthew 28:19. But the authenticity of this passage has been challenged on historical as well as on textual grounds. It must be acknowledged that the formula of the threefold name, which is here enjoined, does not appear to have been employed by the primitive Church, which, so far as our information goes, baptized 'in' or 'into the name of Jesus' (or 'Jesus Christ' or Lord Jesus': Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5, 1 Cor. 1:13, 15).

A. S. Peak, *Peake's Commentary on the Bible,* 1929, page 723.

Matthew 28:19, “the Church of the first days did not observe this world-wide command, even if they knew it. The command to baptize into the threefold name is a late doctrinal expansion. In place of the words “baptizing... Spirit” we should probably read simply “into my name,” i.e. (turn the nations) to Christianity, “in my name,” i.e. (teach the nations) in my spirit.”

S. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. Briggs. *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament: A Critical & Exegetical Commentary of St. Matthew Third Edition,* 1912, pages 307-308.

“On the text, see Conybeare, *Zeitsch. Fur die Neutest. Wissensch.* 1901, 275 ff.; *Hibbert Journal*, October 1902; Lake, *Inaugural Lecture*; Riggensbach, *Der Trinitarische Taufbefehl*; Chase, *Journal Theo. Stud.* Vi. 481 ff. The evidence of Eusebius must be regarded as indecisive, in view of the fact that all Greek MSS. and all extant VSS., contain the clause (S1 and S2 are unhappily wanting). The Eusebian quotation: “Go disciple ye all the nations in my name,” can not be taken as decisive proof that the clause “Baptizing...Spirit” was lacking in copies known to Eusebius, because “in my name” may be Eusebius' way of abbreviating, for whatever reason, the following clause. On the other hand, Eusebius cites in this short form so often that it is easier to suppose that he is definitely quoting the words of the Gospel, than to invent possible reasons which may have caused him so frequently to have paraphrased it. And if we once suppose his short form to have been current in MSS. of the Gospel, there is much probability in the conjecture that it is the original text of the Gospel, and that in the later centuries the clause “baptizing...Spirit”

supplanted the shorter “in my name.” And insertion of this kind derived from liturgical use would very rapidly be adopted by copyists and translators. The Didache has ch. 7: “Baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”: but the passage need not be dependent on our canonical Gospel, and the Didache elsewhere has a liturgical addition to the text of the Gospels in the doxology attached to the Lord's Prayer. But Irenaeus and Tertullian already have the longer clause.”

Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 33B, Matthew 14-28*. 1975, pages 887-888. “The disciples are further told to “baptize” (the second of the participles functioning as supplementary imperatives) new disciples. The command to baptize comes as somewhat of a surprise since baptism is referred to earlier only in chap. 3 (and 21:25) where only John's baptism is described (among the Gospels only in John 3:22; 4:1-2 do we read of Jesus' or his disciples' baptizing others). Matthew tells us nothing concerning his view of Christian baptism. Only Matthew records this command of Jesus, but the practice of the early church suggest its historicity. (cf. Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 38; 9:18; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; etc.). The threefold name (at most only an incipient Trinitarianism) in which the baptism was to be performed, on the other hand, seems clearly to be a liturgical expansion of the evangelist consonant with the practice of his day (thus Hubbard; cf. Did. 7.1). There is a good possibility that in its original form, as witnessed by the ante-Nicene Eusebian form, the text read “make disciples in my name” (see Conybeare). This shorter reading preserves the symmetrical rhythm of the passage, whereas the triadic formula fits awkwardly into the structure as one might expect if it were an interpolation (see H. B. Green; cf. Howard; Hill [IBS 8 (1986) 54-63], on the other hand, argues for a concentric design with the triadic formula at its center). It is Kosmala, however, who has argued most effectively for the shorter reading, pointing to the central importance of “name of Jesus” in early Christian preaching, the practice of baptism in the name of Jesus, and the singular “in his name” with reference to the hope of the Gentiles in Isa. 42:4b, quoted by Matthew in 12:18-21. As Carson rightly notes of our passage: “There is no evidence we have Jesus' ipsissima verba here” (598). The narrative of Acts notes the use of the name only of “Jesus Christ” in baptism (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; cf. Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27) or simply “the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16; 19:5).”

Adolph Harnack, *History of Dogma, Vol. 1*, 1958, page 79 fn.

“It cannot be directly proved that Jesus instituted baptism, for Matthew 28:19 is not a saying of the Lord. The reasons for this assertion are: (1) It is only a later stage of the tradition that represents the risen Christ as delivering speeches and giving commandments. Paul knows nothing of it. (2) The Trinitarian formula is foreign to the mouth of Jesus and has not the authority of the Apostolic age, which it must have had if it had descended from Jesus himself. On the other hand, Paul knows of no other way of receiving the Gentiles into the Christian communities than by baptism, and it is highly probable that in the time of Paul all Jewish Christians were also baptized. We may perhaps assume that the practice of baptism was continued in consequence of Jesus' recognition of John the Baptist and his baptism, even after John himself had been removed. According to John 4:2, Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples under his superintendence. It is possible only with the help of tradition to trace back to Jesus a “Sacrament of Baptism,” or an obligation to it *ex necessitate salutis*, through it is credible that tradition is correct here. Baptism in the Apostolic age was in the name of the Lord Jesus (1

Cor. 1:13; Acts 19:5). We cannot make out when the formula in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit emerged.”

James Martineau, *The Seat of Authority in Religion*, 1905, page 568

“The very account which tells us that at the last, after his resurrection, he commissioned his apostles to go and baptize among all nations (Mt 28:19) betrayed 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. No historical trace appears of this baptismal formula earlier than the “Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” (ch. 7:1,3 *The Oldest Church Manuel*, ed. Philip Schaff, 1887), and the first Apology of Justin (Apol. i. 61.) about the middle of the second century: and more than a century later, Cyprian found it necessary to insist upon the use of it instead of the older phrase baptized “into Christ Jesus,” or into the “name of the Lord Jesus.” (Gal. 3:27; Acts 19:5; 10:48. Cyprian Ep. 73, 16-18, has to convert those who still use the shorter form.) Paul alone, of the apostles, was baptized, ere he was “filled with the Holy Ghost;” and he certainly was baptized simply “into Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 6:3) Yet the tri-personal form, unhistorical as it is, is actually insisted on as essential by almost every Church in Christendom, and, if you have not had it pronounced over you, the ecclesiastical authorities cast you out as a heathen man, and will accord to you neither Christian recognition in your life, nor Christian burial in your death. It is a rule which would condemn as invalid every recorded baptism performed by an apostle; for if the book of Acts may be trusted, the invariable usage was baptism “in the name of Christ Jesus,” (Acts 2:38) and not “in the name of the father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” And doubtless the author (Luke) is as good a witness for the usage of his own time (about 115 A.D.) as for that of the period whereof he treats.”

Fredrick C. Conybeare, *History of New Testament Criticism*, 1910, pages, 98-102.

“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 present Dean of Westminster, and by Prof. Harnack (to mention but a few names out of many), that here the received text, could not contain the very words of Jesus? this long before any one except Dr. Burgon, who kept the discovery to himself, had noticed the Eusebian form of the reading.”

Fredrick C. Conybeare, *History of New Testament Criticism*, 1910, pages, 111-112.

“It is satisfactory to notice that Dr. Eberhard Nestle, in his new edition of the New Testament in Latin and Greek, furnishes the Eusebian reading in his critical apparatus, and that Dr. Sanday seems to lean to its acceptance.”

A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, J. Hastings, 1906, page 170

“It is doubted whether the explicit injunction of Matt. 28:19 can be accepted as uttered by Jesus. ... But the Trinitarian formula in the mouth of Jesus is certainly unexpected.”

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, James Orr, 1946, page 398

“Feine (PER3, XIX, 396 f) and Kattenbusch (Sch-Herz, I, 435 f. argue that the Trinitarian formula in Matthew 28:19 is spurious. No record of the use of the Trinitarian formula can be discovered in the Acts or the epistles of the apostles.”

The Jerusalem Bible, 1966, Page 64.

Footnote to Matthew 28:19, It may be that this formula, so far as the fullness of its expression is concerned, is a reflection of the liturgical usage established later in the primitive community. It will be remembered that the Acts speak of baptizing “in the name of Jesus”, Acts 1:5 +. But whatever the variation on formula the underlying reality remains the same.”

Young’s Literal Translation of the Holy Bible, 1953.

“Having gone, then, disciple all the nations, (baptizing them – to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all, whatsoever I did command you,) and lo, I am with you all the days – till the full end of the age.”

The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible, 1962, page 351

Matthew 28:19 “... has been disputed on textual grounds, but in the opinion of many scholars the words may still be regarded as part of the true text of Matthew. There is, however, grave doubt whether they may be the ipsissima verba of Jesus. The evidence of Acts 2:38; 10:48 (cf. 8:16; 19:5), supported by Gal. 3:27; Rom 6:3, suggest that baptism in early Christianity was administered, not in the threefold name, but “in the name of Jesus Christ” or “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” This is difficult to reconcile with the specific instructions of the verse at the end of Matthew.”

Harry Austryn Wolfson. *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers, Vol. I.* 1964, pg 143

“Critical scholarship, on the whole, rejects the traditional attribution of the tripartite baptismal formula to Jesus and regards it as of later origin.” “Undoubtedly then the baptismal formula originally consisted of one part and it gradually developed into its tripartite form.”

The New English Translation, 2nd Beta Edition, footnote. <http://netbible.com/netbible/>

tc Although some scholars have denied that the trinitarian baptismal formula in the Great Commission was a part of the original text of Matthew, there is no ms support for their contention. F. C. Conybeare, “The Eusebian Form of the Text of Mt. 28:19,” ZNW 2 (1901): 275-88, based his view on a faulty reading of Eusebius’ quotations of this text. A few other scholars have also accepted the shorter reading, on other grounds. For discussion (and refutation of the conjecture that excises this baptismal formula), see B. J. Hubbard, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning* (SBLDS 19), 163-64, 167-75; and Jane Schaberg, *The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit* (SBLDS 61), 27-29. (RDH—at the completion of this writing, I have not as yet been able to access these two books. I hope to have read them by the actual presentation.)

Raymond E. Brown. *Introduction to the New Testament.* 1994. Page 203

“The baptismal formula in the name of the three divine agents was presumably used in the Matthean church at this period, having replaced an earlier custom of baptizing in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:16; etc.)” Emphasis added.

J. Harold Greenlee. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism.* 1964. Page 68

“Intentional doctrinal changes which have received any appreciable mss. support have almost invariably been changes in the direction of orthodoxy or stronger doctrinal emphasis. Variants

which seem intended to strengthen a doctrinal statement or introduce an accepted doctrine include the Trinitarian passage of 1 John 5:7.”

B. J. Hubbard. *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning.* 1974. Page 87. “Probably the most disputed feature of 28:16-20 is the authenticity of the triadic baptismal formula, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

B. J. Hubbard. *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning.* 1974. Page 116. “We agree that the universal missionary command is hardly ipsissima verba Jesu, an actual saying of Jesus.”

B. J. Hubbard. *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning.* 1974. Page 130. “As we have seen, the earliest practice was that of baptism into the name of Jesus. In 28:19 we have a practice which reflects the shift from the Jesus formula of baptism to the triadic one.”

B. J. Hubbard. *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning.* 1974. Page 156. “Here, (in *Historica Ecclesiastica* III, 5, 2) admittedly, there is no grouping of texts. Either Eusebius is quoting Mt 28:19 freely or does, in fact, have textual support for the shorter reading.”

B. J. Hubbard. *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning.* 1974. Page 161-2. “Nevertheless, a special prominence is given to the shorter reading and to the related notion of the importance of Jesus name, especially in one work, the *Demonstratio Evangelica*. It therefore remains possible – but not, in our opinion probable – that Eusebius had textual support for the shorter reading of Matthew 28:19.”

B. J. Hubbard. *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning.* 1974. Page 175. “It is not possible to rule out altogether the shorter reading. Both the Eusebian evidence and the form critical and exegetical findings of Flusser make this the case. Moreover, the presence of ‘in my name’ in the proto-commission lends some credibility to the shorter reading.”

B. J. Hubbard. *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning.* 1974. Page 175. “In short, *we think* that the triadic baptismal formula has *a strong probability* of being authentic.” Emphasis added.

Hans Kosmala. *The Conclusion of Matthew.* 1978. Page 2.

“On the whole it must be said that the arguments brought forth against the shorter version are without exception extremely weak.”

G.R. Beasley-Murray. *Baptism in the New Testament.* 1963. Pages 83-84.

“Is it possible to suggest an earlier form of v. 19? Yes, it is. A whole group of exegetes and critics have recognized that the opening declaration of Mt. 28:18 demands a Christological statement to follow it: ‘All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me’ leads us to expect as a consequence, ‘Go and make disciples *unto Me* among all the nations, baptizing them in *My* name, teaching them to observe all *I* commanded you’. In fact, the first and third clauses have

that significance: it looks as though the second clause has been modified from a Christological to a trinitarian formula in the interest of the liturgical practice in the Evangelist's day.

Jane Schaberg. *The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.* 1982. Page 29.

"The theory that a shorter version of Matthew 28:19 was original to the text, and that the triadic phrase is an interpolation has won fairly wide acceptance."

Jane Schaberg. *The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.* 1982. Page 72, fn 131.

"No scholar has claimed the triadic phrase is from the time of Jesus' ministry."

Jane Schaberg. *The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.* 1982. Page 4.

"The triadic phrase is considered by others a late, fourth century interpolation into the Matthean text, representing the developed Trinitarian thinking of the church."

Jane Schaberg. *The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.* 1982. Page 8.

"Insofar as the doctrine is answer to a problem, according to Wainwright, the doctrine of the Trinity emerges in the NT, although there is no formal statement of a position."

Jane Schaberg. *The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.* 1982. Page 9.

"The terms 'Trinity' and 'Trinitarian' are reserved for the stage of formal doctrine at which God is clearly perceived as tri-personal, coequal. The Biblical material does not reflect this stage."

Jane Schaberg. *The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.* 1982. Page 9.

"Moule, for example remarks that Matt 28:19b may belong to a stage at which there is a genuinely Trinitarian conception of God."

Jane Schaberg. *The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.* 1982. Page 9.

"Rahner argues that while there is no systematic doctrine of the 'immanent' Trinity in the NT, the nearest to such a proposition is Matt 28:19b."

Word Biblical Commentary. 1995. Page 888

"Shaberg's theory that the triadic formula goes back to the triad in Daniel 7 (Ancient of Days, one like the Son of man, and angels) remains an improbable speculation."

Wilhelm Heitmuler. *In Jesus Name.* 1903. Page 270.

"It would be superfluous to show all over again that the direct institution of baptism through Jesus, as it is recounted in Mt 28, is historically untenable."

E. Klostermann *Handbuch zum Neuen Testament* by Lietzmann. Page 357

"If the evidence from Eusebius and Justin shows the existence of a short text of this nature, it must undoubtedly be original."

N. P. Williams, *Baptism in the New Testament* by G.R. Beasley-Murray. Page 77.

"Anxious to hold on to the Dominical institution of baptism if possible, did not feel he could go farther than regard the passage as 'the feather which may decisively weigh down the scale of historical balance which represents "Dominical Institution", if sufficient indirect evidence can

be gathered from the rest of the New Testament to invest this hypothesis with considerable likelihood': should testimony to the contrary be forthcoming, he adjudged, the passage would have to be rejected, 'not being more than a feather!'"

Appendix II

Some Variant Readings of Matthew 28:19

- “18 Jesus drew near to them and said to them: To me has been given all power in heaven and earth. 19 **Go**, 20 and (teach) them to carry out all the things which I have commanded you forever.” Howard, George. *The Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*. Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1995. Page 150-151, Quoting from the **Shem-Tob** text. Omits all but “Go” from verse 19.
- “God hath not yet inflicted nor inflicts 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 illuminated by the name of this Christ.” **Justin Martyr**, 100-165 AD, *Dialogue with Trypho*. Seems to echo Eusebius.
- “Go to the nations.” **Origen**, 185-254 AD, quoted three times in his Greek writings.
- “Go ye and make disciples of all the nations in my name.” **Eusebius of Caesarea**, quoted some 17, 260-340 AD
- “Go ye and make disciples of all nations.” **Eusebius of Caesarea**, quoted some 7 times, 260-340 AD
- “Make disciples of all nations, and they shall believe in me.” **Aphraates the Syriac**, writing between 337-345 AD.
- “And to the Apostles he gave the command. Going around preach ye and baptize those who believe in the name of Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit.” **Clement of Alexandria**, quoting the Gnostic heretic Theodotus, 150-215 AD.
- Thus, too, does the angel, the witness of baptism, “make the paths straight” for the Holy Spirit, who is about to come upon us, by the washing away of sins, which faith, sealed in *the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit*, obtains. **Tertullian**, *On Baptism*, Chapter 6, omits “in the name” here as well as in *Against Praxaes*, Chapter XXVI, Written around 216 AD.

While it is true we can never know for certain if these Church Father’s were quoting directly from a manuscripts, the wide variety indicates even in Tertullian’s day, the text for Matthew’s ending was not as yet settled! How else do you explain his omitting “in the name of?”

One must ask, just what was the source of these other readings? Essentially they could only have originated from either Matthew’s ending, or Mark’s ending that may still be unknown.