

Can Christian Convert Non-Christians?

Matthew 28 - Appendix

On Mat. 28:19

The following paragraphs are excerpts from the article, *The Conclusion of Matthew*, by Hans Kosmala, 1965.

The conclusion of the Gospel of Matthew is the only passage in the whole New Testament which contains the Trinitarian baptism formula. There is not a single manuscript which does not have it. The wording of the conclusion, 28:18b-20 is as follows:

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Ed. Note: KJV)

Because all manuscripts agree with each other on the inclusion of the baptism formula no doubts were ever raised about the originality of this formula until the 19th century). The attitude of the NT scholars of our day can be briefly summed up as follows: all scholars acknowledge that the manuscript tradition is unanimous about the inclusion of the Trinitarian baptism formula. Some of them, however, infer that the traditional text must be accepted as it is, as we have no other text, and that the matter must, therefore, rest until we find a manuscript of the Gospel without the Trinitarian formula. This may probably not be their considered opinion, but leaving the problem alone is a way out of the dilemma. Other scholars, though also admitting the manuscript evidence, would nonetheless say that the formula is late, because it can in no way be corroborated from the rest of the NT tradition.

To their support came the discovery that Eusebius in a number of his writings quotes a text which has no baptism formula at all. Instead of it (omitting verse 19b from "baptizing to Spirit") he continues the text of 19a after nation with the words in my name, so that the line reads: "go out make all nations disciples in my name." This variant reading will be found in the critical apparatus of NESTLE'S and KIRKPATRICK'S editions.

It is now over sixty years ago that F. C. CONYBEARE published a survey of all quotations of Matthew 28:19 in the writings of Eusebius 3). There are no less than 17 attestations of the reading "in my name" to the exclusion of the words "baptizing... Spirit."

CONYBEARE found that all the passages with "in my name" occur in the ante-nicene writings. There are three passages in the works of Eusebius in which the textus receptus of Mt 28:19 is quoted, but all of these belong to the last period of his literary activity which fell after the Council of Nicea. This is certainly a remarkable observation, and it looks as if texts with the shorter version of 28:19b still existed round about 300 A.D. But then Eusebius would be our only witness, perhaps with one or two exceptions.

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