

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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Matthew 28:19

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GARDNER, MARTINEAU, HARNACK

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

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

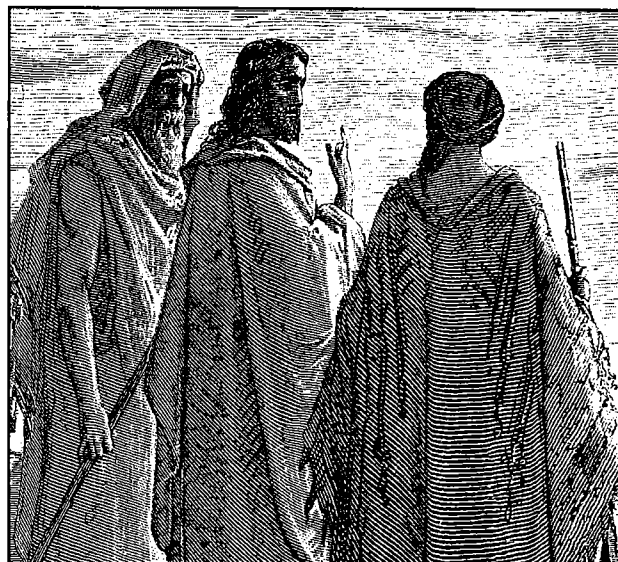
Harnack, in his *History of Dogma* (German edition, 1.68) dismisses the text almost contemptuously as being “no word of the Lord.” Lastly, Canon Armitage Robinson, a cautious critic, in his article on Baptism in the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, inclines to the view that Matthew “does not here report the *ipsissima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

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

EUSEBIUS

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

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



Christ with two disciples after his resurrection.

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

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

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

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

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

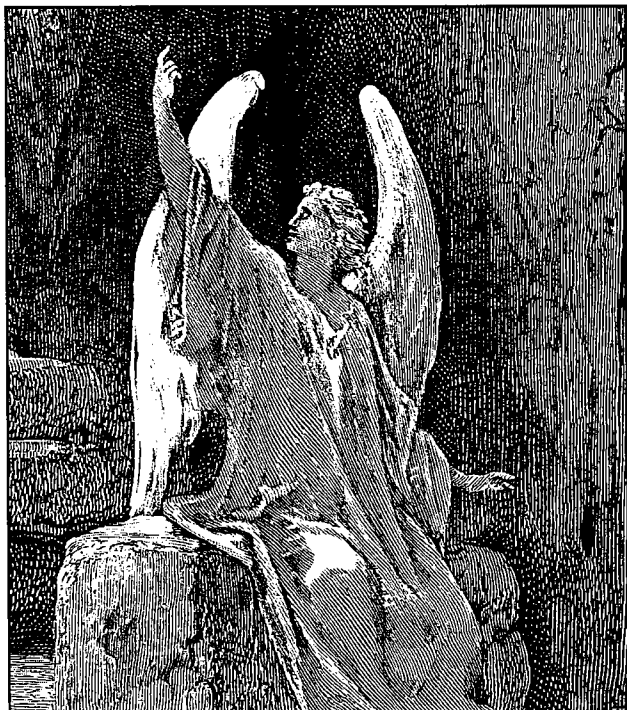
It is evident that this was the text found by Eusebius in the very ancient codices collected fifty to one hundred and fifty years before his birth by his great predecessors. Of any other form of text he had never heard, and knew nothing

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

ORIGEN AND CLEMENT

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

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



An Angel at the empty tomb.

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

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

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

THE ORDINARY TEXT

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

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

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

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

MACEDONIUS

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

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 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.

APHRAATES

There is one other witness whose testimony we must consider. He is Aphraates, the Syriac father 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* [received text] with its injunction to baptise in the triune name. Were the reading of Aphraates an isolated fact, we might regard it as a loose citation, but in presence of the Eusebian and Justinian texts this is impossible.

ORIGINAL ENDING

It is worth considering, however, whether the original text of the gospel did not end at the word "nations," and whether the three rival endings of the text were not developed independently, namely:

(i) "in my name," in Justin, Eusebius, and perhaps Pope Stephen of Rome and the Pneumato-machi.

(ii) "and they shall believe in me," in Aphraates, representing the older Syriac version.

(iii) "Baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son and the holy Ghost," or similar in the Greek gnostic Theodotus, Tertullian, Latin version of Irenaeus, and the surviving Greek manuscripts.

The exclusive survival of (iii) in all manuscripts, both Greek and Latin, need not cause surprise. In the only codices which would be even likely to preserve an older reading, namely the Sinaitic Syriac and the oldest Latin manuscripts, the pages are gone which contained the end of Matthew.

But in any case the conversion of Eusebius to the longer text after the Council of Nicea indicates that it was at that time being introduced as a Shibboleth of orthodoxy into all codices. We have no codex older than the year 400, if so old; and long before that time 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, irrespectively of its textual affinities.

(1) Swete, Regis Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, in his book on the "Apostle's Creed," (London, 1894).

(2) While the Greek "baptize" means "to dip," all three quotations use the Latin "tingo" meaning "bathing, wetting, or moistening." This verb itself is a transliteration of the Greek τέγγω.

Ancient Papyri Disprove Critics

Revolutionary ideas about the Bible that have been popularized over the past century include the notions: (1) that Constantine (312-337) excluded several valid gospels from our Bibles, (2) that the Epistle to the Hebrews was not written by Paul or any other apostle, (3) that the writings of John could not possibly have been written before the late 3rd century since the dragon and diadem were not Roman symbols until then, (4) that Revelation does not belong in the Bible.

However, the discovery and translation of the three Chester Beatty papyri, published in 1933-1936 by Frederic G. Kenyon, demonstrate the inaccuracy of these heavily-promoted modern ideas.

(1) (p45). This papyrus of the early 3rd century has the four gospels and Acts (likely in the sequence Matthew-John-Luke-Mark-Acts). Constantine was a century too late to have had any influence on inclusion of these four gospels, or on rejection of the counterfeits (Judas, Peter, Thomas).



The Apostle Peter who influenced the Gospel of Mark.

(2) (p46). Before it is broken off, this papyrus of about 200 AD has most of the Epistles of Paul, but with Hebrews between Romans and Corinthians, and Ephesians before Galatians. Thus, the early Christians regarded Paul as the author of Hebrews.

(3) (p47). This papyrus of the early 3rd century contains the center third of Revelation. The manuscript was written far from Patmos, and half a century earlier than the school of higher criticism would have had us believe possible. [A papyrus fragment in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England (p52) has a few verses from John 18, copied in Egypt perhaps about 125 AD — less than half a century after John penned that gospel.] The prognostication (foresight, foreknowledge) of dragon and diadem simply validates the prophetic character of Revelation.

— James Parkinson

The Conversion of Nathanael

An Expansion of John 1:43-51

Nathanael was a devout Jew with the highest of ethical standards.¹ He was aware of the distinction between himself and most of his fellow Israelites. Rising above the expected always takes special effort, and Nathanael clearly recognized this. He also possessed the character trait of healthy skepticism.

When his friend Philip proclaimed, “I have found the messiah!,” Nathanael mused within his heart if this could really be so. Then, upon finding out that this popular teacher was from Nazareth, Nathanael’s musings took an audible form in his query “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” A town of such low reputation hardly seemed like the appropriate residence of Israel’s great deliverer. Rather than debate with his skeptical friend, Philip’s brief response “Come and see” echoed the invitation given to all truth seekers down through the ages.

Nathanael decided to do so, but not before prayer and meditation. What better place for this than under the protective canopy of his favorite fig tree? He went there often, in secret, to contemplate the scriptures and the promise of a coming messiah. How often had he sought the refuge of its cool umbrella of shade! It was the perfect place to ponder the things of God.

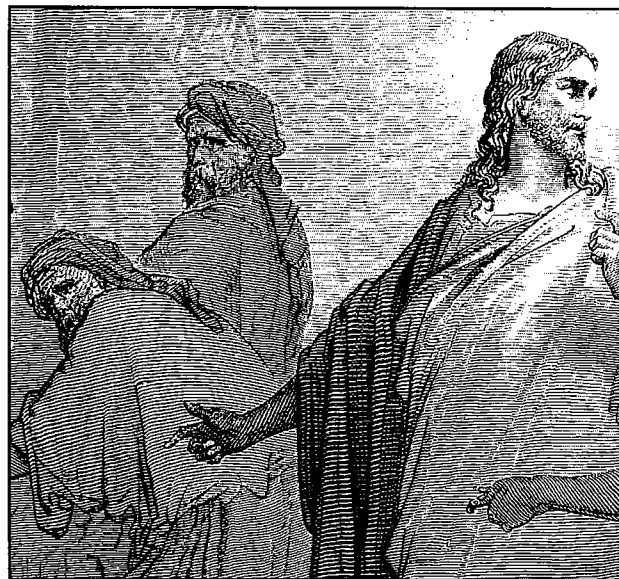
The next day Nathanael, somewhat reluctantly, accompanied Philip to find and meet Jesus. As they walked on, they noticed a crowd in the distance; Philip knew the focus of that crowd would likely be the Master, so they walked on. Sure enough, Philip saw Jesus ministering to a group of disciples, and, pointing, he said to Nathanael “that’s him, over there!”

Nathanael mustered some courage and walked directly toward Jesus. He was surprised to notice that, despite the throng, Jesus seemed to be looking directly at him. Not only that, he was also smiling and beckoning Nathanael to come closer.

At just a few paces away Jesus pointed to Nathanael and proclaimed “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.” Nathanael stopped in his tracks, inwardly wondering how this man could know anything at all about him. Nathanael knew well he was devoted and disciplined, but how did Jesus know this? So, he asked “How do you know me?”

Jesus beckoned him to come closer still, until they stood side by side. The Savior then put his arm around Nathanael’s shoulder in a gesture of affection. “I saw you” Jesus whispered. “What do you mean you saw me?” Nathanael inquired. “Under your favorite fig tree, yesterday. I saw you there.”²

Nathanael quickly bolted back, startled. How could this be so? It was a private moment in a private setting. “What did you see?” Nathanael wondered aloud. Jesus quietly said



Christ with Two Disciples.

“Your prayers were heard, and today your prayers have been answered.”

Nathanael’s skepticism now found no room in his heart. He fell to his knees and proclaimed “Rabbi, you are the son of God. You are the king of Israel,” demonstrating Nathanael’s joy, as well as his astute knowledge of the messiah’s divinely appointed roles.

Without missing a beat, the Lord challenged Nathanael with “Because I said to you ‘I saw you under the fig tree’ do you believe?” The Master’s quick question kept Nathanael on the proper mental course, allowing no time for him to exult in actually finding, and personally meeting, the promised messiah.

Then, with Nathanael’s mind and heart racing, Jesus assured him that “hereafter, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of Man.” The Lord thus expanded Nathanael’s awareness of the messiah’s kingly role over Israel to a broader picture of his future regal role of blessing the entire human family.

Thus began Nathanael’s ministry as one of the chosen twelve. A devout Israelite, with a healthy skepticism, was forever changed — as we all are — by an encounter with the Son of God.

— Robert Brand

(1) Nathanael is also referred to as Bartholomew. See Luke 6:14.

(2) “Under the fig tree” was an idiomatic phrase also used by rabbis to describe meditation on the scriptures, but its use in this context, and Nathanael’s reaction, indicate a literal application of the Lord’s supernatural power.

Editor note: This article makes the encounter to be a day after Phillip told Nathanael of Jesus, and when Jesus met him the article puts the word “yesterday” in Jesus’ mouth. This supposition of an added day is not in the passage, which otherwise marks each day individually. The narrative simply says that when Jesus found Phillip, he in turn called Nathanael, and (presumably the same day) he came to see Jesus as well. In this regard it parallels the experience of Andrew and Simon earlier in the same chapter.

“Hastening the Presence”

We find 2 Peter 3:12 translated “As you look forward to the day of God, and speed its coming” (New International Version), where this last phrase is otherwise translated “hasting unto the coming” (King James). A technical translation such as the Marshall Diaglott renders this phrase “hastening the presence (*parousia*) of the day of God.”

How should we understand this?

This word “hastening” in Greek is *speudoo* [Strong’s 4692, *spyoo’-do*], to “speed” or “urge on” diligently or earnestly. This word apparently is linked to the image of running by foot. It is constructed by taking the word for “foot,” Strong’s 4228, and intensifying it by adding the letter “s” in front. Colloquial expressions once used in English such as “hot-footing it” seem to capture this thought.

The phrase does not say we are “hastening the coming” (King James), but “hastening the presence of the Day of the Lord.” It refers to hastening the events within the day of the Lord. However, we cannot actually hasten the Lord’s time clock of events that occur within the Day of the Lord. But we can seemingly hasten it from two standpoints.

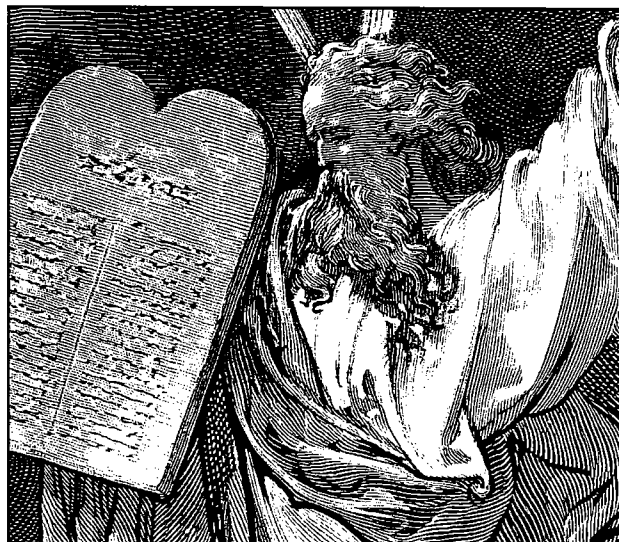
(1) We are to be so active in the events of the Day of the Lord — the harvest work, Kingdom work, helping the bride make herself ready or praying for those who can be active — as if we were trying to hasten the events of the Day of the Lord onward. Of course, we know we cannot.

(2) But what happens when we are very active (“footing it”), doing the things we enjoy? We then find that the time just seems to fly quickly. Being enthusiastically active in the Lord’s work during the Day of the Lord is so rewarding that it feels like the events of the Day of the Lord are hastening on.

— *Discourse excerpt, Chicago May 2006 Convention*

Oxen and Wagons

“(1) And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them; (2) That the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of the tribes, and were over them that were numbered, offered: (3) And they brought their offering before the LORD, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen; a wagon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox: and they brought them before the tabernacle. (4) And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, (5) Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service. (6) And Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites. (7) Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto



Moses with the Law of God.

the sons of Gershon, according to their service: (8) And four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. (9) But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders (Numbers 7:1-9).

LEVI’S FOUR DIVISIONS

When the children of Israel set up camp, they followed an orderly arrangement for setting up their tents in relationship to the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was set up first. Then the priestly family of Amram, including Moses and Aaron, who were two of Amram’s three sons, camped on the east side of the Tabernacle, close by. It was their duty to minister to the priestly functions connected with the services of the Tabernacle. They had full charge of all the religious things. To the north were encamped the families of Merari. On the west side were the tents of the family of Gershom.

The four directions — east, north, south and west — were also of significance. The Hebrews considered the cardinal points of the compass, or the heavens in those days, in reference to a man whose face was turned towards the east. The north was consequently on his left hand, and south on his right and the west at his back. We will tie in these directions somewhat as we continue our discussion.

According to genealogy, Levi, the son of Jacob and Leah, had three sons: Kohath, Gershom and Merari. Kohath had four sons, and the priestly line came through his eldest son Amram, the father of Moses and Aaron. We know that names in scripture have significant meanings. Amram meant “An exalted people,” according to Smith’s Bible Dictionary. McClintock & Strong gives the meaning “kindred of the high” or “friend of Jehovah.”

Pastor Russell sets forth that these four divisions of the tribe of Levi represent four classes after the work of reconciliation is complete — the Church Class, the Great Com-

pany, the Ancient Worthies, and the World of Mankind (Charles T. Russell, *The New Creation*, Volume 6 of "Studies in the Scriptures," subhead "Christ Made Unto Us Sanctification," 1916, pages 128-129).

"Similarly, Levi's three sons (Kohath, Gershom and Merari) seem to represent four classes. (1) Moses, Aaron and all the priest-family of Amram (son of Kohath), whose tents were in front (east) of the Tabernacle. These had full charge of all things religious — their brethren — even all the Levites — being their honored assistants or servants. (2) Camped on the south side was the Kohath family, their closest of kin, and these had charge of the most sacred articles — the Altars, the Candlestick (lampstand), the Table and the Ark. (3) Camped at the north side of the Tabernacle were the Levites of the Merari family, next in honor of service, having charge of the gold-covered boards and the posts, sockets, etc. (4) Camped at the rear, was the Gershom family of Levites, having charge of the least important services — the portorage, etc., of the cords, outer curtains, gate, etc.

"These distinct families of Levites may properly represent four distinct classes of justified humanity when the reconciliation is completed: the saints, or Royal Priesthood, the ancient worthies, the 'great company,' and the rescued of the world. As is not unusual in respect to types, the names seem to be significant. (1) Amram's family chosen to be priests: the name Amram signifies high people, or exalted people. What a fitting name for the type of the "little flock" whose head is Christ Jesus! 'Highly exalted,' 'very high,' are the Scriptural declarations of these priests. (2) Kohath signifies ally, or comrade. It was from the Kohath family that Amram's sons were chosen to be a new house of priests. The Kohath family of Levites might, therefore, properly represent the ancient worthies whose faith and obedience and loyalty to God and willingness to suffer for righteousness was so fully attested, and with whom we feel so close a kinship. They were, indeed, the Lord's allies and ours; and in some respects come nearer to the Christ every way than do any others. (3) Merari signifies bitterness; hence, the Merari family of Levites would seem to represent the 'great company' of spirit-begotten ones who fail to win the prize of Royal Priesthood, and are 'saved so as by fire,' coming up through 'great tribulation' and bitter experiences to the position of honor and service which they will occupy. (4) Gershom signifies refugees, or rescued; hence, the Gershom family of Levites would seem well to represent the saved world of mankind, all of whom will be refugees succored and delivered, rescued from the blindness and slavery of Satan."

It seems natural that the family of Amram would represent the Church Class. They had access to the Holy and the Most Holy, they performed the sacrifices. They were the closest to the Lord. It was also the class through which the priestly line passed from generation to generation. The famous Priest Zadok of David's and Solomon's day descended through the line of Aaron through the house of Eleazar (1 Chronicles 24:3, 1 Chronicles 29:22).



God's Judgment against Korah's rebellion.

Being on the east side, we see a correspondence to the "kings of the east" of Revelation 16:12. "And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." Here we unmistakably recognize the Church Class, the Little Flock, the more than overcomers of this Gospel Age.

KORAH'S REBELLION

A further indication that Amram was the priestly tribe and would remain so, came when Korah and his company rebelled against God's appointed rulers, Moses and Aaron. Korah was the son of Izhar, who was one of the four sons of Kohath. In the account of this uprising we find some 250 leaders of Israel perished by the hand of the Lord. Following this, when the people in general rebelled, an additional 14,700 perished in what is described as a "plague."

In the rebellion of Korah, the leading conspirators after organizing came to Moses and Aaron as a body and boldly charged them with public usurpation and demanded they lay down their arrogated power. Moses immediately bowed himself, "fell on his face," confronted with the enormity of so outrageous a revolt. Korah's rebellion challenged the divine system framed so carefully for the benefit of the nation. Moses left the matter in the Lord's hands requesting the conspirators to come on the morrow with censers for incense that the Lord himself by some manifest token might make known his will in this great matter.

The following day, Korah and his company appeared before the tabernacle, attended by a multitude of people out of the general body of the tribes. Then the Shekinah light, the symbol of divine presence, which abode between the Cherubim in the Most Holy, came before the entrance of the sacred structure as a cloud. A loud voice commanded Moses and Aaron to stand apart, lest they share in the destruction of this group. On hearing this, Moses and Aaron

fell on their knees and pleaded with the Lord to confine his wrath to the leaders only, and to spare the congregation. The congregation was induced to separate themselves from these leaders, and once they had separated, the ground opened and swallowed up the tents of the conspirators. Thus, Korah and the 250 were destroyed by fire, probably from the Shekinah light itself. Jude refers to the incident as the "gainsaying of Korah." "Gainsaying" is "dispute" according to translations other than King James (Numbers 16:31-33).

The rebellious spirit excited by these ambitious leaders vented itself afresh on the next day in complaints against Moses for causing the death of their popular leaders.

Divine indignation once more interceded in the form of a plague and cut off thousands of this factious multitude, and threatened still more had Moses not intervened.

After this lesson of Divine appointment, the Lord asked that the rods of all the chief men of every tribe, including Aaron's, be brought into the Tabernacle and laid overnight in the Most Holy. The next morning, these were brought forth from the Tabernacle for the people to view. No change had taken place in any except Aaron's. His rod had brought forth buds, blossoms and almonds. Thus, the Lord re-emphasized his selection of this priestly line.

DUTIES OF THE AMRAM FAMILY

The duties of the Amram family are not enumerated in the seventh chapter of Numbers, for their lot was not involved in the transportation of the Tabernacle. They merely covered the articles, then allowed the Levites to enter and begin the dismantling work.

The task of transporting the sacred items of the Tabernacle such as the Ark of the Covenant, the Table of Shewbread, the Golden Candlestick, and the Altars, fell to the families of the other sons of Kohath. In the broad sense, they were referred to as Kohathites. However, as we can see in the genealogy, they were the closest of kin to the priestly class. At first it would appear that these would aptly represent the Great Company, but in analyzing the names, it seems that they would more properly represent the Ancient Worthies. Kohath means "ally" or "comrade." The Ancient Worthies had similar trials and experiences as the Church Class, and had they lived in the Gospel Age, it seems almost a certainty that they would have constituted a part of the Church class.

In Hebrews, we are all familiar with the trials and testings this class went through. Their justification was as a result of faith in God. Our Lord's words regarding them in Matthew 11:11: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

We noticed in our text that the Kohathites were not assigned any wagons in verse nine. They had to transport the sacred articles by hand, that is, by using the staves provided in all the articles of furniture. Thus four men would carry each article, with each having a staff on their shoulder.

FOUR WAGONS AND EIGHT OXEN

According to our picture, the family of Merari represented the Great Company class, while the Gershonites represented the World of Mankind. The sons of Merari received four wagons and eight oxen. This was the family that represented the Great Company. Their charge of the tabernacle during the period of its transportation, and setting up and taking it down, were the boards, bars, pillars, sockets, pins and cords of the dwelling, as well as the court and all the tools connected with this operation (Numbers 4:29-33).

Though east is the primary direction of orientation as we have already seen, north in the scriptures often referred to the place of the Throne of the Lord. "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place" (Job 26:7). In the 38th chapter, Job also speaks of the Pleiades, which are in the general direction of the north. David in the Psalms says, "Promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge, he putteth down one, and setteth up another." This indicates that promotion would come from the north (Psalms 75:6,7, Revelation 7:9-15).

Owing to the heavy nature of the material assigned to them, the sons of Merari (on the north side, Numbers 3:35) required the greater part of the wagons and oxen which had been furnished by the Princes. Let us examine what the meaning and spiritual lesson is here. We observe how God wisely and graciously ordered the most strength to those that had the most work. "Each wagon according to his service." Whatever burden God in His providences lays upon us, he will by his grace proportion the strength to it. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

It is for the Lord to permit increasing trials and testings to come upon us as we grow older and stronger in the Truth. Sometimes he permits a great fight from within or from without or both, and the New Creature is put to the test of endurance. It is not the Lord's intention that these trying experiences shall crush the New Creature; but on the contrary, that the putting forth of endeavor to resist the adversary and every evil and shall make the New Creature that much stronger. This is according to and in harmony with the promise we have just read in Corinthians.

The spirit begotten ones not only have the advantage of greater enlightenment, which comes to them through the deeper knowledge of the divine character, the divine plan and the divine promises, but also the advantage of having the Lord Jesus as their helper! We not only claim the promise of our Lord that the Church class has had throughout this Age, that "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," or as the margin reference says, "unto the consummation of the age," but we have had our Lord with us personally since his silent and unobserved return (as far as the world is concerned) in 1874.

— John Trzyna