

## "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles."

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The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, etc. By Canon Spence,

Second Edition. London: Nisbet & Co.

(B.T. Vol. 19, p. 95-96.)

Such is the title of a recently discovered Greek MS.; or perhaps, more literally, the longer and more pretentious form, "Teaching of the Lord, through the Twelve Apostles, to the Gentiles." Meagre and incorrect, it serves to manifest the melancholy and rapid decline of the second century from revealed truth. The MS. is of the 11th century, and was found a few years ago by Philotheos Bryennios, who afterwards became Metropolitan of Nicomedia, in the library of the Patriarch of Jerusalem in Constantinople. Any scholar can see the strong analogies between it and both the Epistle of the Pseudo-Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas, which have been generally referred to the beginning and middle of the second century. Some have argued for its priority even to the former; but even the enthusiastic discoverer does not contend for so early a date as either. The sole value of them all is their united yet unwitting evidence how grievously the church had fallen through Judaism. The exaggerated estimate of the late discoveries, formed by men of various schools in our day, demonstrates the same thing now. In the whole treatise of sixteen chapters, if we except the Lord's prayer and a few texts substantially drawn from scripture, there is not one sentence of weighty truth, not out, which indicates the enjoyment of the liberty of Christ, no distinctness as to redemption, not an inkling of the presence of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, nor of the heavenly relationship of the church, nor of the special privileges of the christian.

It is worse than defective, as may be shown by a brief notice of chap. 1 only. In it the law usurps the place of the gospel from first to last. Clearly the writer bad before him, besides the Old Testament the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, the Gospel of John, the Epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians, and that of James; but where is true intelligence of any thing? All is letter, and not spirit. There is no testimony how souls receive life, so is to take its way and refuse the broad road of death; no right sense expressed of that grace which alone keeps by the power of God through faith. What a contrast with Rom. 5 or 8, which last shows us how the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in those that walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit 1 So it is with Rein. 13 where love, in us impossible apart from faith and life in Christ, is truly said to be the fulfilment of the law, which the law itself never did make good. Still less is the doctrine an approach to that in the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians and in the First of John.

The writer interpolates "fasting" unwarrantably into his citation of Matt. 5: 41, and holds out a false promise to those that love such as hate them ("But love ye those that hate you and ye shall have no enemy"). Had the author never weighed the death of Stephen, or of James the son of Zebedee, or of others who were slain for Christ's sake, to say nothing of Himself, the substance and test of all truth? It is amazing that any christian should think that this weak and even false expectation could be a probable oral tradition of the Master's words, No doubt as an ordinary rule those zealous of good disarm the injurious, as 1 Peter 3 shows from Ps. 34. But the, same apostle teaches that our place is to. do good, suffer for it, and take it patiently, which is certainly not law but grace; as Christ also suffered for us, leaving an example that we should follow His steps. Even this Teaching goes on to cite words quite incompatible with his preceding comment; but when he adds "for thou canst not," he exaggerates, unless he means consistently with grace. Indeed his remarks are singularly poor everywhere and in no

case suggest a single oral tradition worthy of the Saviour. How strange, in the face of Matt. 5: 42, to fancy some traditional commandment of the Lord on the subject of giving! And it is really too bad for any sensible christian to say of the closing sentence ("Let thine alms sweat into thy hands, as long as thou knowest to whom thou givest") that it clearly refers to some unwritten saying of authority spoken by our Lord! or by one of His near followers. Most men instructed in the truth and at home in the scriptures will rather judge it as vulgar in style, as beneath inspired sentiment. Indeed it is hard to reconcile with what goes before or with our Lord's words.

There is little or nothing noteworthy in chaps. 2, 3, save perhaps the sentence which Clement of Alex. quotes as scripture from this treatise, "My child, be not a liar, for a lie leads to theft." It would be as true to say, "Be not a thief, for theft leads to lying." Neither sentiment is scriptural, but wholly beneath its tone. But chap. 4 opens with a call to honour him that speaks God's word as the Lord or Jehovah (for it is anarthrous) and for the strange reason, for, when the lordship is spoken of, then the Lord is. Soon after, in urging liberality, comes the word, "If thou professest, by thy hands thou shalt give ransom, or redemption, for thy sins." Wh