

The Tri-lemma or Death by three horns

by J. R. Graves

CHAPTER I. THE QUESTION UNDER CONSIDERATION

Its Importance to all Protestant Sects--The Difficulties it presents--The Attention given it by the Old School and New School Presbyterian Assemblies.

THE question that has presented itself to Protestants as embarrassed with more difficulties than any other, and the solution of which they have discovered must prove fatal to their ecclesiastical claims in the eyes of the world, whether answered affirmatively or negatively, is this: IS BAPTISM IN THE CHURCH OF ROME VALID?

From what has appeared, it is evident that there is a growing uneasiness felt by the more intelligent and thinking Pedobaptist ministers, generally, and by Presbyterians, ministers and members, especially.

That Presbyterians, more than the other Protestant societies, are more disturbed by this question, is owing to the fact that it has been up and discussed at length in the General Assemblies of both the Old and New School divisions of the Presbyterian family. The positions taken by their leading doctors of divinity, and the utterances they gave during the discussions that arose, so far as they have been heard, have startled and alarmed their people! So convinced were the leaders that a knowledge of the discussions, and of the difficulties surrounding the question, by their people, would be productive of great disquiet, if not of more serious consequences, that they have, as much as possible, kept them in ignorance, and discouraged discussion in their denominational papers.

But this is one of those questions that can not be suffocated. Inquiry once started can not be stifled down. If the people are allowed to hear but little, and not allowed to talk or to write about it, yet they can *think*; and they will *think* more and more about it. Thus will investigation go forward, producing conviction, until the masses are permeated, and when they do act--when they do call their leaders to an account--it will be a fearful reckoning. The volcanic fires, though long restrained by the superincumbent pressure, yet burn silently, constantly gathering strength and force, until they burst through their rocky barriers to the surface, and pour their irresistible fiery currents of destruction over the land.

The time, we think, has fully come when not only *Christian Protestants* should meet this

question fairly and fully, but *all men* should understand its bearings. Men of no ecclesiastical connections are called upon to support, and they all are supporting, some one of the religious denominations by their means and influence, and they have a right to understand the question.

It is the spirit of the Papacy, whose power is the power of darkness, to repress free thought, and the liberty of speech and the press. It is a confession of a consciousness of wrong, on the part of the leaders of the people or the officers of any government, civil or ecclesiastical, to seek protection by pursuing such a course.

The writer's design in this little work is to submit to the reading world all the facts, admissions and conclusions, etc., etc., connected with the discussion of this question by the Presbyterian General Assemblies, that its grave importance, and the fatal difficulties with which it is invested to all *Protestants*,* may be clearly understood, and that candid men may act in accordance with their convictions from the facts.

[[* Baptists are not Protestants. "They are the only people that never symbolized with the Papacy."-- *Sir I. Newton.*]]

There are several axioms that should be borne in mind by the reader throughout this discussion. They are held in common by all parties.

1. THAT NO ORGANIZATION BUT A TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST, VISIBLE, CAN ADMINISTER SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM.

2. CONVERSELY, IF THE BAPTISM IS CONSIDERED SCRIPTURAL AND VALID, THE SOCIETY ADMINISTERING IT MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED AND TREATED AS A TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST, VISIBLE.

Now, all can see if the baptisms of the Church of Rome are pronounced Scriptural and valid, then the Church of Rome must be admitted to be a *true church* of Christ, visible.

But if Protestants admit this, they surrender their own claims to be true churches of Christ, because they, in separating from the true Church of Christ, become schismatics. But they were excluded and anathematized by the true Church, and therefore their ministers were deprived of all authority to baptize, or to administer Church ordinances.

But should Protestants deny the validity of Romish baptisms, they would thereby deny that the Church of Rome is a Scriptural church, and consequently that she could administer valid ordinances.

By taking this ground, all can again see that they would effectually destroy themselves--for

no Christian Pedobaptist has any other baptism than he received from the priests of Rome. Luther, Calvin, Zwingle, Knox, and all the first ministers, and all those who composed the first societies of the Reformers, were baptized by Roman Catholic priests, and in the Church of Rome, and consequently their baptisms are unscriptural and invalid. But if their baptisms are invalid, then their societies can not be considered churches in any sense, as there can be no church without baptism; and if not churches, Protestant ministers have no Scriptural right either to preach the Gospel, or baptize others into their societies! Moreover, by so doing they deceive and mislead the people, causing them to believe they are baptized, when, in fact, they are not; causing the people to believe that they are in visible churches of Christ, when, in fact, and according to the admissions of these leaders, they are not, but in human societies, that can never administer the ordinances of Christ's Church

That the above are plain statements of facts, the following history will show.

Chapter 2 - The Question Among Presbyterians

Introduction and Contents