

The Tri-lemma or Death by three horns

by J. R. Graves

CHAPTER II. THE QUESTION AMONG PRESBYTERIANS.

The Report of the Old School General Assembly in 1845--Its Answer fatal to the Ecclesiastical Claims of Presbyterians and all Protestants.

THE question of the validity of Romish baptisms has been up for discussion no less than three times before the Presbyterian General Assembly, within the past few years; and with each discussion and attempt to settle it, the more unsettled it appears to be left, and the greater the dissatisfaction arising from it. We have not at hand a digest of the acts of the Assembly, but from the Report below, we find that this question has vexed Presbyterian Assemblies since the year 1790, and has been bequeathed, unsettled, to each succeeding generation.

It was before Parliament so early as 1558, as we shall see.

So early as 1790, Presbyterians decided that the Romish Church was not a true church, and her ordinances, therefore, invalid.

It appeared in 1829, and was indefinitely postponed, for reasons given by one who was at that time a member of the Assembly:

"I was in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1829, (a body of about two hundred members,) when a question was sent us for decision: 'Are the baptisms of Popish priests to be accepted by our [Presbyterian] Churches as valid baptisms?' It was discussed, and we should have voted 'No,' nearly unanimously; but an influential and more shrewd one--secretly reflecting that all our baptisms originally came from Popery--moved and obtained an indefinite postponement of the subject."*

[[* J. F. Bliss, in "Popery and Protestantism Compared."]]

It reappeared again in the year 1835, when the Assembly decided that the Romish Church was "apostate from Christ, and no true church," and her priests as usurpers of the sacred functions of the ministry, consequently, their baptisms null and void.

But notwithstanding this strong decision, in 1845, the Presbytery of Ohio sent up the question for a re-settlement.

The General Assembly met in Cincinnati, O., May 15, 1835, and the following is its report, *in extenso*, on the subject: REPORT.

"The committee appointed to draw up a minute expressive of the views of the Assembly, presented a Report which was read and adopted, and is as follows, viz. :

"The question presented to this Assembly by overture from the Presbytery of Ohio, '*Is baptism in the Church of Rome valid!*' is one of a very grave character, and of deep practical importance. The answer to it must involve principles vital to the peace, the purity, and the stability of the Church of God.

"After a full discussion, carried through several days, this Assembly has decided, by a nearly unanimous vote, that *baptism so administered is not valid*; because, since baptism is an ordinance established by Christ *in his Church*, (Form of Gov., ch. viii; Matt. xxviii: 19, 20,) and is to be administered *only by a minister of Christ*, duly called and ordained to be a steward of the mysteries of God, (Directory, ch. vii: sec. 1,) it follows that no rite administered by one *who is not himself a duly ordained minister* of the true Church of God, visible, can be regarded as an ordinance of Christ, whatever be the name by which it is called, whatever be the form employed in its administration. The so-called priests of the Romish communion are not ministers of Christ, for they are commissioned as agents of the Papal hierarchy, which is not a church of Christ, but the Man of Sin, apostate from the truth, the enemy of righteousness and of God. She has long [always] lain under the curse of God, who has called his people to come out of her, that they, be not partakers of her plagues.

"It is the unanimous opinion of all the Reformed Churches, that the whole Papal body, though once a branch of the visible Church, has long since become utterly corrupt and hopelessly apostate. It was a conviction of this which led to the Reformation, and the complete separation of the Reformed body from the Papal communion. Luther and his coadjutors, being duly ordained presbyters at the time when they left the Romish communion, which then, though fearfully corrupt, was the only visible Church in the countries of their abode, were fully authorized by the Word of God to ordain successors in the ministry, and so to extend and perpetuate the Reformed Churches as true churches of Christ while the contumacious adherence of Rome to her corruptions, as shown in the decisions of the Council of Trent, (which she adopts as authoritative,) cuts her off from the visible Church of Christ, as heretical and unsound. This was the opinion of the Reformers; and it is the doctrine of the Reformed Church to this day. In entire accordance with this is the decision of the General Assembly of our Church, passed in 1835, (see Minutes of General Assembly, vol. viii: page 33,) declaring the Church of Rome to be an apostate body.

"The decision by the General Assembly of 1835, renders the return of a negative to the inquiry proposed by the Presbytery of Ohio *indispensable on the ground of consistency*; unless we are prepared to admit, in direct contradiction to the standards of the Presbyterian Church, that baptism is not an ordinance established by Christ in his Church exclusively, and that it may be administered by an agent of the Man of Sin, an emissary of the Prince of darkness--that it may be administered in sport or in blasphemy, and yet be valid as though administered by a duly commissioned steward of the mysteries of God.

"Nor can it be urged that the Papal hierarchy is improving in her character, and gradually approximating to the Scriptural standard. She *claims to be infallible*; her dogmas she promulgates as the doctrine of heaven; and she pronounces her heaviest anathemas against any and every man who questions her authority, and refuses to bow to her doctrines. She can not recede from the ground she has assumed. She has adopted as her own the decisions of the Council of Trent, which degrade the Word of God, which claim equal authority for the Apocrypha as for the New Testament, and which declare the sense held and taught by the holy Mother Church, on the authority of tradition and of the fathers, to be the true and only sense of Scripture. All who deny this position, or who question her authority, she denounces with the bitterest curses.

"She thus perverts the truth of God, she rejects the doctrine of justification by faith, she substitutes human merit for the righteousness of Christ, and self-inflicted punishment for Gospel repentance; she proclaims her so-called baptism to be regeneration, and the reception of the consecrated wafer, in the Eucharist, to be the receiving of Christ himself, the source and fountain of grace, and with him all the grace he can impart. Is this the truth? Is reliance on this system true

religion? Can, then, the Papal body be a church?

"The Church, (*i. e.*, the Church visible,) as defined in our standards, is the whole body of those persons, together with their children, who make professions of *the holy religion of Christ*, and of submission to his laws. (Form of Gov., ch. ii: sec. 2.) As certainly then, as the dogmas and practices of Papal Rome are not the *holy religion of Christ*, must it be considered that the Papal body is not a church of Christ at all; and if not, then her agents, be they styled priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, or pope, are not ministers of Christ in any sense, for they have no connection with his true, visible Church; and, not being true ministers of Christ, they have no power to administer Christian ordinances, and the rite they *call* baptism is not, in any sense, to be regarded as valid Christian baptism.

"Further, by the perverted meaning they affix, and the superstitious rites they have superadded to the ceremonies they perform under the name of baptism and the Eucharist, the symbolic nature and true design of both the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are lost sight of, and utterly destroyed; so that, could we by any possibility assign to her the *name of a church*, she would still be a church without the two grand ordinances of the Gospel; she neither administers Christian baptism nor celebrates the Supper of the Lord. Moreover, since, by the eleventh canon of the Council of Trent, she declares the efficacy of her ordinances to depend upon the *intention* of the administrator, no man can know with certainty that her form of administration, in any ordinance, is not a mere mockery; no consistent Papist can be certain that he has been duly baptized, or that he has received the veritable Eucharist; he can not *know* that the priest who officiates at his altar is a true priest, nor that there is actually any one true priest, nor any one prelate rightly consecrated in the whole Papal communion. The Papal hierarchy has, by her own solemn acts, shrouded all her doings in uncertainty, and enveloped all her rites in hopeless obscurity. Even on this ground alone, the validity of her baptism might safely be denied.

"Nor is the fact that instances now and then occur of apparent piety in the members of her communion, and of intelligence, zeal, and conscientiousness in some of her priests, any ground of objection against the position here taken by this Assembly. The virtues of individuals do not purify the body of which they are members. We are to judge of the character of a body claiming to be a church of Christ, not by the opinions or practices of individual members, but by its standards, and its allowed practices. Bound as he is by the authority of his Church, and that on pain of her heaviest malediction, to understand the Scriptures only in the sense in which his Church understands and explains them, a consistent Papist can not receive or hold the true religion, or the doctrines of grace. If he does, he must either renounce the Papacy, or, hypocritically, conceal his true sentiments, or he must prepare to brave the thunders of her wrath. True religion and an intelligent adherence to Papal Rome are utterly incompatible and impossible. The Church and the Papacy are the repelling poles of the moral system.

"Difficulties may possibly arise in individual cases. It may not be easy at all times to say whether an applicant for admission to the Church of Christ has, or has not, been baptized; whether he has been christened by a Popish priest or not. In all such doubtful cases, the session of a church must act according to the light before them. But it is safer, and more conducive to peace and edification, to embrace a well-established principle for our guidance, and act upon it firmly, in the fear of God, leaving all consequences with him, than to suffer ourselves, without any fixed principles, to lie at the mercy of circumstances.

"While some other Churches may hesitate to carry out fully the principles of the Reformation, in wholly repudiating Popish baptism, as well as the Popish mass, we, as Presbyterians, feel bound to act on the principle laid down by our Assembly so long ago as 1790, (see Digest, pp. 94, 95,) that, so long as a body is by us recognized as a true church, her ordinances are to be deemed valid, and no longer.

"In 1835, the Assembly declared the Papacy to be apostate from Christ, and no true church. As we

do not recognize her as a portion of the visible Church of Christ, we can not consistently, view her priesthood as other than usurpers of the sacred functions of the ministry, her ordinances as unscriptural, and her baptism as totally invalid."

The religious world must entertain a profound respect for the matured decisions of such a body as the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America; and the Assembly of 1845 was said to have presented a "brilliant array of ministers in the first rank of intellectual endowment." The above Report, it must be conceded by all, is a masterly production. Its premises are unambiguous and eminently Scriptural. No Protestant or Baptist will gainsay them. The conclusion is invincible, that the Romish Church never had authority to administer baptism, or to ordain ministers who could administer valid baptism, because she was never a true church of Christ visible, but always apostate, from the truth, and the "Man of Sin."

But has not the General Assembly as clearly demonstrated that Presbyterian and *all Protestant baptisms are no baptisms*, as it has that "there is no baptism in the Romish Church?"

We ask the serious, candid reader to compare the premises in the above Report, and the plain facts of history.

1. If it be true that no baptism is valid unless administered by "a duly ordained minister of the true Church of God visible," (though we should grant that the Church of Rome is, and ever has been, such a church,) even then no Presbyterian or Pedobaptist can have a reasonable assurance that he has been truly baptized.

That Presbyterians, in common with all the Reformed or Protestant sects, received their baptisms and ordinations from the Romish apostasy, is denied by no one, is admitted by the Assembly itself.

That the Romish Church did, from its "first coming and working after the manner of Satan," corrupt the design and administration of baptism, is well known to the merest tyro in historical reading. She, at a very early day, before her universal Bishop sat upon the seven hills of Rome, in the seat, to exercise all the powers of the Dragon--Pagan Rome--ascribed a saving efficacy to baptism, and taught that without it there was no salvation. This led her to provide for its administration to all in every period of life, and under every necessitous circumstance. Under ordinary circumstances, the duly ordained priest was the appointed administrator; but, if in danger of death, and no priest was at hand, a layman; and if he could not be had, any one, male or female, a midwife, cook, or scullion, or even heretic, infidel, or Turk! and if water could not be procured, that wine, or milk, or *any fluid* might be used!!

Such was the sacredness of baptism in the eye of "Holy Mother," that when it was administered by boys in sport upon each other, it was held by her as valid baptism and conferring salvation!

It is related by Ruffinus, and indorsed by other writers, that Alexander, bishop of Alexandria once saw a parcel of boys engaged in a play, called "boy bishop," in which they were wont to imitate all things usually performed in the Church, especially the administration of baptism. This worthy bishop conferred with a council of his clergy, and the conclave solemnly resolved, that "the baptism so administered by these boys in play was lawful and valid, and was not to be repeated."

Now, unquestionably, thousands and tens of thousands, received baptism in the Romish

Church by these informal and blasphemous ways, and it has been strongly said: *

"Who can tell, then, but that the Presbyterian Churches of America and Europe derived their

baptism from a layman, a midwife, a cook, a scullion, an infidel, or a Turk?--or perhaps from some baptism administered by boys in sport? We fearlessly assert that no one can tell. And perhaps, too, their baptism was derived from a case where no water could be procured, and wine, or milk, or something of the sort, was used. And certainly, if *regularly* derived it was administered in *greasy* water for 'Holy Mother' requires oil to be poured in the water! At all events, is not the presumption irresistible in favor of their receiving it from those abandoned profligates who disgraced the priestly name during the dark ages; when, according to Chillingworth, 'of a hundred seeming priests, it was doubtful if there was one true one?'

[[* Western Baptist Review, Vol. I, p. 12.]]

"But who among the Papal officials may be considered a '*duly ordained minister* of the true church of God, visible?' Will our Presbyterian brethren claim to derive their baptism from his Holiness, the head of the Romish Church? No; they esteem him no minister of Christ. Will they derive it from archbishops, bishops, priests, etc.? No; they affirm that 'no such officers belong to the 'true Church of God, visible.' Luther was ordained a *priest*, (not a *presbyter*, as the Assembly declares,) and the thought of it in after life made him shudder. The officiating bishop gave him the cup, and said, 'Receive the power of offering sacrifice for the living and the dead.' 'That the earth did not then swallow us both up,' says Luther, 'was an instance of the patience and long-suffering of the Lord!' He was a *priest*, and not a duly ordained minister of the true Church! And Calvin, if we may believe Beza, was never ordained even a priest. He never received 'orders in any other way than by tonsure.'* In a word, should their chain of succession not have been rudely broken by some layman, woman, 'boy bishop,' or infidel, still consistency compels the Presbyterians to recognize the Papal hierarchy as duly ordained ministers in the true Church--to admit, to say the least, that, in the Church of the Gospel dispensation, there is an established priesthood, not 'called of God, as was Aaron,' to offer gifts and sacrifices. All this, we say, must be admitted, and yet no Presbyterian will admit it; or else, according to the General Assembly, there is no baptism in the Presbyterian Church!"

[[* "The tonsure in the Romish Church may be received after the age of seven years. It is the first part of the ceremony of ordination. The candidate presents himself, in a black cassock, before the bishop, with a surplice on the right arm, and a lighted taper in his hand. He kneels, and the bishop standing, covered with his miter, repeats a prayer, and several verses from the Scriptures. The bishop, then sitting, cuts five different parcels of hair from the head of the candidate, who repeats these words, '*The Lord is my inheritance.*' Putting off his miter, the bishop says a prayer over the person tonsured; an anthem is sung by the choir; then a prayer, in the middle of which the bishop puts the surplice on the candidate for orders, and says, '*May the Lord clothe thee with thy new name.*' The ceremony is concluded by the candidate's presenting the wax taper to the bishop, who gives him his blessing." -*Dr. Hurde's Rites and Ceremonies*, p. 282.]]

But bad as this is, it is not the worst.

II. *In asserting that Calvin and Luther, and all the first ministers of the Reformation, received valid baptism in the Romish Church, as it does, the General Assembly annulled the baptisms of all Presbyterians and Pedobaptists!*

I submit the reasoning of the editor of the "Western Baptist Review" upon this proposition:

"If the Reformers were baptized at all, if their baptism was valid, (and this was taken for granted by the Assembly,) then they were baptized by those who were duly ordained ministers of 'the *true Church* of God, visible.' But they were baptized by priests of the Church of Rome; therefore, the Church of Rome was 'the true Church of God visible at the time of the Reformation! Indeed, the General Assembly seems to have embraced fully this conclusion. It says: 'Luther and his coadjutors, being duly ordained presbyters [*alias* "priests"] at the time they left the Romish communion--which then, though fearfully corrupt, was the only visible Church in the countries of

their abode--were fully authorized by the Word of God to ordain successors in the ministry, and so to extend the Reformed Churches, as true Churches of Christ.' Ay, it was necessary to the argument, not merely to affirm that the Romish was 'the only visible Church' in the countries of the Reformers, but that she was emphatically 'the true Church of God, visible;' or, according to the showing of the Assembly, Luther and his coadjutors could not administer the ordinances, and could not 'extend the Reformed Churches, as true Churches of Christ.' For, remember, the position is roundly maintained, that no one can administer the ordinances, unless 'duly ordained in the true Church of God, visible.' If Luther and his coadjutors were authorized to administer baptism--and the Assembly say they were--then, according to the same authority, they were duly ordained ministers of 'the true Church of God, visible; and we learn, from the same source, that they were ordained by the Romish Church!!!--thus making the Romish 'the true Church of God, visible!!' "We do not question for a moment the right of the General Assembly to declare the Romish Church 'the true Church of God, visible,' in the days of the Reformers; but surely such a declaration, if received, must utterly destroy all confidence in the judgment of Luther and his coadjutors, who vehemently testified that the Church of Rome was Antichrist and the Whore of Babylon! But grant the assumption that Luther and his coadjutors were duly ordained presbyters in the Romish Church, or 'the true Church of God, visible,' and what follows? Why, that in leaving the Church in which they were 'duly ordained presbyters,' Luther and his coadjutors left 'the Church of God, visible!' This is so plain that the blind may see it. But this is not all--it is but the beginning. For, if this Church could 'duly ordain' them, she could duly *depose* them. If she could give the power she could take it away. How, then, could Luther and his coadjutors be 'fully authorized by the Word of God to ordain successors in the ministry,' seeing that the Church that made them ministers--ay, 'the true Church of God, visible'--had deposed them from office, and solemnly excluded them from fellowship? Dr. Rice, in one of his speeches on this question, told the Assembly: 'If the Pope has the authority to put any one into the Church, he has authority to put out, and then we are all out, and we may as well quit the discussion, and go home.' Very true. The remark was worthy of the logical acumen of Dr. Rice. And it is just as true, that if the Romish Church had authority to baptize and 'duly ordain' Luther and his coadjutors, she had the authority to depose them from office, and to exclude them. Indeed, the authority is the same, and can not be separated so as to extend to the one and not to the other. It does not matter whence the authority was derived--from heaven, earth, or hell--it was just the same in the one case as the other--was just as effectual in unmaking as in making them ministers, and in excluding them from, as including them in, the pale of 'the true Church of God, visible.' These conclusions are natural, necessary, and irresistible. If the Romish Church was the true Church, then the Reformers were deposed and excommunicated; if she was not the true Church, then they were never baptized, nor ordained to the ministry. Let the Presbyterians take either horn of this dilemma, and, their General Assembly being witness, they are without baptism, without a ministry, and without a Church!"

Once more:

III. *The Papal hierarchy, at the time of the Reformation, was no more the true Church of Christ, visible, than now, and her baptisms, therefore, were no more valid than they are to-day.*

The same editor says:

"Examine all the arguments advanced by the General Assembly to prove that the Romish Church is no Church, and her baptism no baptism, and do they not apply with equal force and power to her condition at the time of, and prior to, the Reformation? 'The so-called priests of the Romish, communion,' says the Assembly, 'are not ministers of Christ, for they are commissioned as agents of the Papal hierarchy, which is not a Church of Christ, but the Man of Sin, apostate from the truth, the enemy of righteousness and of God.' And what were Luther and his coadjutors, when priests in the Romish communion, but the commissioned agents of the Papal hierarchy, and the *sworn vassals* of the Pope of Rome? It was not the Reformation, nor yet the decision of the Presbyterian

General Assembly, in 1835, 'declaring the Church of Rome an apostate body, that made it so. That society, controlled by and subservient to, the Papal hierarchy, *never was* 'the true Church of God, visible.' The Church in Rome, founded by the apostles, and the Papal hierarchy, were never identified, never had any relationship, and were always as opposite to each other as light and darkness. The coming of the Papacy was 'after the working of Satan, [*not* of the apostles,] with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish.' From the beginning, it was 'the Man of Sin and Son of Perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.' (2 Thess. ii: 4, 9, and 10.) The Papacy, according to Protestants, 'ascended out of the bottomless pit, and shall go into perdition,' and has been, from the first, full of the names of blasphemy--'Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.' (Rev. xvii, *passim*.) Protestant commentators tell us that Daniel the prophet foretold the rise and reign of the Papal Church in the 'little horn' that came up among the ten horns of the fourth beast, 'before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots; and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.' 'And the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.' (Dan. vii, *passim*.) These passages, and many others quoted by Protestants as applicable to the Papal Church, show, if they have been rightly applied, that she never was the Church of God, but always the opposite, and the bloodiest enemy of the saints.

"It was argued before the General Assembly by several, and especially by Dr. Rice, that in the days of Luther, 'there was still salt enough in the Church [of Rome] to preserve its existence as a Church of Christ, and the administration of Scriptural ordinances by her officers was valid. But the time came when the voice of God was heard: "Come out of her, my people." The great body of true disciples obeyed the command and came out. Some true disciples no doubt remained, but we can no longer consider the Church of Rome as the Church of Christ.'

"With great deference to the opinion of so able a divine, we must beg leave to protest most earnestly against the sentiment that the Whore of Babylon was ever the Bride, the Lamb's wife! No amount of 'salt' could effect such a wonderful transformation as this! And we most solemnly protest, too, against the doctrine that 'Scriptural ordinances' were ever administered by the Man of Sin and Son of Perdition, and his 'commissioned agents.' They were to do many wonders, according to the Scripture, but no such wonder as this for they were 'lying wonders,' which 'Scriptural ordinances' are not. Besides, what was the character of the Romish Church before the Almighty called upon his people to come out of her? Let the Scriptures answer: 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.' (Rev. xviii: 2, 3.) Throughout the Scriptures, admitting the interpretation of Protestants, the Papal Church is represented as antagonistical to the people of God. They composed no part of her. She is represented as making war with the saints, and overcoming them; as drunk with the blood of God's people; not as making war with and overcoming herself; and as being drunk with her own blood. That God had a people in her bounds is true; and God warns them to get out of those bounds, lest, in destroying her, they should be destroyed; just as Christ warned his disciples to escape from Judea when they saw the abomination of desolation standing where it should not. But the fact that there were true and real saints in the bounds of the Papal Church, could prove nothing; the General Assembly admits that she includes many now. There are many in Germany and elsewhere in her dominions that are now protesting in thunder tones against her corruptions and abominations. Indeed, Dr. Rice has fully answered himself; for, during the same debate, he said: The question is not whether any who belong to the Church of Rome are, or may be, truly pious. It is admitted on all hands, that there may be members of that community who are the true children of God; but still they are not members of any branch of the Church of Christ on earth. The validity of baptism does not rest on the piety merely of the person administering, but upon his authority to administer.

"If the piety of a portion of her members can not make mystical Babylon the Church of God now, neither could it before the Reformation. There are many pious people in the United States--more, a great deal, in proportion, than ever belonged at one time to the Romish Church--and yet, the United States is not the Church of God.

"But the General Assembly seemed to think that there was more truth in the Church of Rome before than since the Reformation--that she never became hopelessly corrupt in doctrine until the Council of Trent. This we presume to be a mistake. The Council of Trent but uttered the voice of Papacy in the form of decrees. There was not a sentiment then uttered that had not previously been held by the hierarchy. Let the history of the Romish Church speak. Long before this Council, did she not claim for the Pope the attributes of holiness and infallibility? Did she not assert that she was Christ's vicar upon earth?--Lord God the Pope? Did she not claim for him dominion, temporal and spiritual, over the whole earth; and declare that he might dispose of crowns, and kingdoms, and continents at his sovereign pleasure? That he had a right to dethrone kings, absolve subjects from their allegiance, and by his mandate, make that sin which was no sin, and convert sin into virtue? Were not her garments reeking with the blood of God's people? Had she not thrown down the altars, and subverted the worship of God; filling her temples with the images of saints and angels and establishing the adoration of relics and dead men's bones? Had she not licensed sin by selling indulgences; annulled the doctrine of repentance by her superstitious penances, and that of justification by faith in Jesus, by foolish observances and human merit? In a word, she was stained with every crime, foul with every pollution; had assumed and exercised the most hellish powers; had propagated as divine truths the most outrageous falsehoods; had uttered the most horrid blasphemies, and had filled the world with error, fraud, superstition, and blood! The earth was drunk with the wine of her fornication.

"We have read her history to little purpose if, before the Reformation, the Romish Church was not a more formidable enemy to truth, (we do not say more abominably corrupt,) than she is now. Then her abominations were less disguised. No palliation of them was attempted. Her mien was then more haughty. Kings trembled at her frown. The thunders of the Vatican shook the world. The fires of her persecutions lighted up all lands, and the swords of her crusaders gleamed in all eyes. The blood of martyrs crimsoned the whole earth. 'The world wondered after the beast.' She sat a queen and reigned without a rival. She had almost banished the Word of God from the habitations of men, and crushed to death the few and feeble adherents of the truth. 'Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.'

"But she is no longer so formidable and so terrible. No kings now tremble at her frown. She has no crowns, and kingdoms and continents to dispose of. The Vatican now speaks in almost harmless tones, and her mandates are held in derision and contempt by nations and multitudes that once quailed before them as the decrees of destiny. The fires of her persecutions have been extinguished, and her army of crusaders disbanded. Her whole policy has been changed. She has substituted craft and cunning for force and persecutions. She supplicates where she once commanded. And, in spite of her opposition, the Bible is being multiplied, and the Gospel preached beyond all example. The army of truth is invading the territories of the Papal Church, and rapidly pressing to her utter overthrow. We appeal to all candid minds--and let them answer in the light of the Bible and of history--if the Romish Church, under Gregory XVI., is not a Church of Christ, was she such a Church under Gregory VII.? Can, in a word, the most tortuous construction of the Scriptures, or the most ingenious application of the '*salt*' of logic, transform the Man of Sin into the Church of God? or the Whore of Babylon into the Bride of the Redeemer?"

From the fatal conclusions of the positions taken by the General Assembly, there is no possible escape. The baptisms and ordinances of all Protestants are nullified, whether Romish baptisms are valid or invalid.

There is one position that might be taken, if one could be found willing to destroy the people's confidence in the Word of God, in the truth of prophecy, in the veracity, faithfulness, and power of Jesus Christ, to save his party organization.

That position is to affirm that the gates of hell had triumphed over the Church of Christ; the last visible Church, that composed his kingdom on earth, had been "given to another people"--had been destroyed from the face of the earth,--and that "the faith" was the *second* time given to the

world for another trial with the powers of darkness; that the kingdom set up by the God of heaven--the Church upbuilt by Jesus Christ himself--having yielded to the assaults of hell, Christ divinely commissioned Luther and Calvin, and their coadjutors, to see if they could not do better than he had done, in establishing visible Churches that could stand against the powers of Satan; that Christ commissioned these men, directly, as he did John the Baptist, to preach, and to baptize, and recover the victory, which he had so ignominiously lost, from the hands of Satan!

The man who would say this, would brand the Bible with falsehood, and Christ with imposture, it is true; but what will not man do rather than confess that he is wrong, and has led others into error? It may possibly be thought that no Christian man would advocate, before the Christian world, such a position.

What will the reader say when we inform him that one of the members of that very Assembly did rise upon that floor and urge the Presbyterian Assembly to take this very ground! That man was Professor Thornwell. We quote one paragraph from his speech:

"The Reformers themselves evidently had an extraordinary commission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The towers, bulwarks, and palaces of the city of the great King had fallen into ruins, and they were raised up, in the providence of God, to reconstruct the edifice according to the pattern shown them in the mount. Their authority was not derived from Rome, nor from any of her prelates; the seal of their commission was not the imposition of Episcopal hands, nor the transmission of sacerdotal grace. They were called of God, and derived their authority from Christ; and in consequence of that call and of that authority, the Churches which they formed were as truly Churches of the Redeemer as those which were planted by the hands of the Apostles."

It was well that the General Assembly did not countenance such irreverent utterances,* preferring to peril the ecclesiastical claims of all Protestants, in the eyes of man, and be repudiated, it may be, rather than to assume this attitude toward Christ.

[[* Do not Methodists take this very ground with reference to the Wesleys? See their Discipline, page 1.]]

Suppose it were granted that God raised up Luther, and Calvin, and others, to do what his Son had failed to do, did he not inspire them? Did he not deliver "the faith" to them, as he did to the saints at first? Did he leave them to teach for doctrine and for observance whatever they severally saw fit in their own unassisted wisdom to do?--to form visible Churches after patterns not shown in the mount, but after their own devisings?

The position of Professor Thornwell forces him to claim inspiration for the founders of the Reformed Churches. And then, what follows? In what a light is God placed by this assumption, and Christ, also, if he essayed the second time to raise up visible Churches? Did God inspire Luther to teach consubstantiation, and Calvin to denounce it as false and impious? Luther to give one form of Church government, and Calvin a different one? and so on through all the variant doctrines and practices of Protestants; until, displeased with these, he raised up Wesley to deny his sovereignty and salvation by grace, without works, as taught by Calvin, Luther, and Paul?

We leave this subject to the serious and prayerful reflection of the reader.

If no baptism be valid except administered by a duly ordained minister of Christ in a true Church of Christ, visible, as the Assembly truly decided, let Presbyterians and the world decide if the baptisms of Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, or any one of the first Presbyterian ministers or members, were valid.

Here is a literal history of the baptism of John Calvin, the father and founder of Presbyterianism. We take it from the columns of an exchange paper:

"THE BAPTISM OF JOHN CALVIN.--John Calvin was born of Papal parents, and received his baptism from a priest of mystical Babylon--a consecrated emissary of 'the man of sin and son of perdition.' While an infant, 'muling and puking in his nurse's arms,' he was taken by his parents or sponsors to the nearest Papal meeting-house, to have his soul regenerated. At the door of the Church he was met by the priest, to denote that as little Calvin was not yet of the number of the faithful, he had no right to enter into that sacred place; and after asking the little fellow what he demanded of the Church, and telling him the conditions on which the demand would be granted, (the parents answering when necessary, in the name of the child,) the priest proceeded to prepare him for the reception of the sacrament of salvation, as follows: 1st. He breathed upon him and said, *Depart from me, thou unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.* 2d. He made the sign of the cross upon his forehead. 3d. He put a little blessed salt into the babe's mouth, saying, 'Receive the salt of wisdom; may it be unto thee a propitiation unto everlasting life.' 4th. The priest then proceeded to exorcisms by which, in the name of Jesus Christ, and through the merits of his death upon the cross, (the sign of which he frequently made on little Calvin,) he commanded the devil to depart from the child's soul, and ordered him to give place unto the Holy Ghost. "By these ceremonies, the infant Calvin being prepared to be admitted into the Church, as one delivered, in a great measure (so his parents believed) from the power of Satan, and belonging to Jesus Christ, the priest permitted him to be brought into that part of the Church where the baptismal font was, saying, *'Enter into the Church of God, that thou mayest have part with Christ unto everlasting life.'* And while proceeding to the font, the old Calvin (for young Calvin) recited with an audible voice, the Apostle's Creed and the Lord's Prayer. Then the priest recited another exorcism, and at the end of it, touched the ears and nostrils of the infant Calvin, with a little spittle, saying, *'Ephpheta,'* that is, *'Be thou opened unto an odor of sweetness; but be thou put to flight, O Devil, for the judgment of God will be at hand.'*

"They were now at the baptismal font. The waters in this font had been solemnly blessed on the eve of Easter and Pentecost, to serve throughout the whole year. In blessing these waters a lighted torch was put into the font, to represent the Divine love, which is communicated to the soul by baptism and the light of good examples, which all who are baptized ought to give, and holy oil and chrism were mixed with the water, to represent the spiritual union of the soul with God, by the grace received by baptism.

"Before these waters were applied to little Calvin, he had to undergo some such examination as the following:

"*Priest.*--What is your name?

"*Little Calvin.*--John Calvin.*

"*Priest.*--John, dost thou renounce the devil and all his works?

"*Little Calvin.*--I do renounce them.

"*Priest.*--Dost thou detest and abhor all the maxims and vanities of the world, which are the pomps of the devil, and abhor all sins which are his works?

"*Little Calvin.*--I detest and abhor them all.

"*Priest.*--Dost thou believe in God, the Father, Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth?

"*Little Calvin.*--I do believe.

"*Priest*.--Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born and suffered death?

"*Little Calvin*.--I do believe.

"*Priest*.--Dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the resurrection of the body, and life eternal?

"*Little Calvin*.--I do believe.

"*Priest*.--John, do you desire to be baptized?

"*Little Calvin*.--I do desire it.

[[*As little Calvin was only a few hours or days old, of course he spoke this through his godfather.]]

"Then the priest anointed him with holy oil on the breast and between the shoulders, making the sign of the cross and saying, 'I anoint thee with the oil of salvation, in Christ Jesus our Lord, that thou mayest have life everlasting.' The father then held the babe, bareheaded, over the font, the priest poured the greasy water, consecrated as afore written, into the child's face, in the name of the Trinity.

"Little Calvin was thus *made a Christian*, and was immediately anointed on the crown of the head with holy chrism, to signify that royal priesthood to which he was raised by baptism. He was clothed with a white garment, as an emblem of the spotless innocence with which his soul was adorned; and a lighted torch was put into his hand as an emblem of a good example.

"Thus John Calvin, (who, if he had not come, Presbyterianism had not been,) was initiated into the Christian Church and made a child of God and an heir of glory by baptism!

"The Old School General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, a few years ago, decided that no baptism was valid except administered by a regular ordained minister in the true Church of God, visible; that the Romish Church was not the Church of God at all, and that, therefore, baptism administered within its pales and by its priesthood was no baptism! Then, according to Presbyterian principles, John Calvin, Theodore Beza, John Knox, and their contemporary Reformers, all of whom were baptized by Papists, had no Christian baptism! The chain of baptismal successors from the Apostolic Church to the Presbyterian Church, which the General Assembly had declared to be essential to valid baptism, has been broken asunder, and all the spiritual smiths beneath the skies can not mend it. And thus our Presbyterian brethren, by the solemn decision of their highest ecclesiastical tribunal, have no baptism!

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