

The Tri-lemma;

OR,

DEATH BY THREE HORNS

BY J. R. GRAVES

CHAPTER VI.

THE CATHOLICS THEMSELVES IN A TRI-LEMMA

AXIOM I

A true Church of Christ is the only organization on earth divinely authorized to preach the Gospel or to administer Church ordinances.

This proposition is so self-evident to every Bible reader, and so universally admitted, that I put it down as axiomatic. It follows, therefore, irresistibly, that no organization originated and set up by men, even though called Church of Christ, has any right to engage in the evangelization of the world, to ordain ministers, or administer church ordinances. This is the high and holy vocation whereunto Christ has called His churches. No other organizations can aspire or arrogate themselves this high honor. All can see that it would be nothing less than a profanation of divine things for Masonic or Odd Fellows' lodges to claim and assume the prerogative of ordaining Gospel ministers and administering baptism and the Lord's Supper. Is it any the less so for the fifty-three different religious societies in America that confess themselves originated and set up by men to claim to be churches of Christ and administer His ordinances that He empowered his Churches alone to administer? If the proposition be true, it inevitably follows that the ordinances administered by these human societies are null and void.

AXIOM II

A body, though once a true Church of Christ visible, apostatizing from its original and scriptural faith and order, and teaching doctrines in manifest contravention of them, can not be considered a Church of Christ and its ordinances as valid.

This is so evident and generally conceded that I put it down as an axiom, and will

add another, which naturally follows from it.

AXIOM III

If the majority of a true church should fall away from the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, perverting the ordinances to the subversion of men's souls, and should exclude the minority that abides by the truth, such a majority, though it should retain the name, would not be entitled to the claims of being a Church of Christ, and all its acts and ordinances would be manifestly null and void.

AXIOM IV

The constitutional minority of any church, however small, holding fast the doctrine and order of the Gospel, though excluded and cast out by an apostate majority, must, in accordance with the law and reason, be considered a true Church and its ordinances valid and scriptural.

Now, Paul expressly predicted that in the latter days, before the coming of Christ, there would be "a falling away," an apostasy from the truth and order of the Gospel.

All commentators agree that there was a great and almost universal falling away from the faith, "once for all delivered to the saints," in the third and following centuries. That under the auspices of Constantine, those churches, and majorities of churches, that had apostatized were organized into the corrupt hierarchy known as the Greek Catholic Church, and subsequently—A. D. 606-10—the Latin or Roman Catholic Church, with its pontiff, appeared in the west.

Now the churches from which the Catholics "fell away" were those planted upon the one true and living foundation by the apostles, and all history records the fact that they were called *Ana*-baptists—Re-baptizers,—because they would not recognize these apostate anti-Christian Catholic churches as churches of Christ, or their immersions as valid. They rigidly acted upon the principle that an apostate and anti-Christian "Church," so called, could not administer valid ordinances. By this attitude toward the Catholics they incurred their bitterest hatred, and drew down upon themselves their direst persecutions. Aided by the secular arm, the Catholics drove the, out of all the cities and towns and from every rural district of the Roman Empire, where their forces could reach them, into "the wilderness," and forced them to seek shelter and nourishment in the mountain caves and valleys of

the Crotian Alps and Apennines. For ages, these secluded mountain valleys were the sole hiding places of the true witnesses of Jesus, and from this fact, they received the name of "Waldenses," "Voudois"—i.e., "Valley Men." Robinson, the learned historian, says:

"From the Latin 'vallis' came the English valley, the French and Spanish 'valle,' the Italian 'valdeci,' the Low Dutch 'velleye,' the Provencal 'vaux,' 'vaudois,' the Ecclesiastical 'vallences,' 'valdenses,' 'Waldenses.'"

To establish historically the force of my axioms, I quote a few standard authorities. Dr. Alexis Mustin says:

"The Voudois [Waldenses] of the Alps are, in our view, primitive Christians, or inheritors of the primitive church, who have been preserved in these valleys from the *alterations* successively introduced by the Church of Rome into evangelical worship. It was not they who separated from Catholicism, but the Catholicism separated from them in modifying the primitive worship."—*The Israel of the Alps*, p. 1.

Waddington (Episcopalian) in his "History of the Church" speaking of the Novatian, whom he called "sectaries," because they were expelled from Italy because of their protest against the corruptions of the Church at Rome in the third century, under the pastorate of Cornelius.

"And those rigid principles which had characterized and sanctified the Church in the first century were *abandoned to the profession of schismatic sectaries in the third.*"—p. 70.

Dr. Alix, a Protestant writer, in his "History of the Churches of Piedmont," says:

"For three hundred years or more the Bishop of Rome attempted to subjugate the Church of Milan under his jurisdiction, and at last the interest of Rome grew too potent for the Church at Milan, planted by one of the apostles, insomuch that the bishop [i.e. pastor] and people, rather than own their jurisdiction, retired to the valleys of Lucerne and Angrogna, and thence were called Valdences, Waldenses, or 'the people of the valleys.'—*Encyclopedia Religious Knowledge*, p. 1148.

Dr. Cramp, a recent English historian, says:

"We may safely infer that the Novatian churches were what are now called

Baptist churches—adhering to the apostolic and primitive practice.”—*p. 59.*

If history establishes any one thing beyond successful contradiction, it is that the apostolic churches and the churches universally of the first three centuries were Baptist churches, and if Christ had a kingdom on earth it was composed of these primitive Baptist churches.

This, then is the tri-lemma into which the Catholics are historically driven when asked if the baptisms of the Baptists are valid.

If they answer in the affirmative, then they must grant that the Baptists were and are true churches of Christ, and that the Catholics, having apostatized and fallen away from their faith and order, are schismatics and anti-Christian, and therefore without baptism or any valid claim to be a Church of Christ.

But if the Catholics say that our baptisms and ordinances are *invalid* because we are not and were never true churches of Christ, then they are compelled to admit that they themselves have neither baptisms nor ordinations, or any just claim to be called a Christian Church, since they received all their baptisms and ordinations from the Baptists of the third and fourth centuries!!

The third horn upon which they are empaled is—“We can not tell.”

[Chapter 5 - The Claims of Baptists](#)