

# **CALVIN ON THE VALIDITY OF 'ROMISH' BAPTISM**

(excerpted from Dr. Francis Nigel Lee's 1990 S.T.D. dissertation "Rebaptism Impossible!")



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Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as 'Roman Catholic' baptism. Neither, for that matter, is there any such entity as 'Baptist' baptism -- as if that were something different from what some might perhaps (though erroneously) call 'Presbyterian' baptism. Indeed, there is only one baptism that is validly Christian. That is Biblical baptism: the only baptism Calvin the Presbyterian upheld.

Of course, Christian baptism can indeed be administered irregularly. Thus, a baby may irregularly be submerged three times -- by an Anti-Protestant Greek 'Orthodox' priest. Or an adult may be baptized trinitarianly with an irregular sevenfold submersion -- by a maverick, noisy & enthusiastic yet insufficiently informed Ultra-Pentecostalist. Again, a perfectly valid (though highly irregular) baptism might be performed by an immersionistic 'Plymouth Brethren' layman -- or by an ordained Campbellite or 'Church of Christ' clergywoman.

On the other hand, Christian baptism can (and should) be administered optimally -- that is, in the best possible circumstances. Those who profess Christ as their Saviour, and their children, should be baptized only once -- and in the best possible way. This, of course, would mean seeking to receive unrepeatable baptism from godly and knowledgeable and male Presbyterian Ministers of the Word and Sacraments.

## Baptism into the Name of the Triune God

"God Triune, at the beginning, created the heavens and the earth." In this very first verse of God's Holy Word, Genesis 1:1, the word "God" translates the Hebrew word '*Elohiym*'. That is a plural word, meaning: (not one nor two but) three or more.

Now numerically, this would imply three or more Gods. Yet the word is used here -- together with the singular verb *bara'*. That verb means "**He** did create." (It doesn't mean "**They** did create"; which would require the plural verb *baru'*). So, thus far, the right rendition of Genesis 1:1, is: "God Triune...[He singular] created...."

What that three-in-one God created, is said to be two "Heavens" (the dual *Shamayiym*) and one "Earth" (the singular '*Arets*'). That totals one three-in-one universe, alias a "tri-universe" created by "God Triune." Indeed, this is what one should expect **such** a Triune God to create.

God Triune Himself has never changed. From eternity, God the Father and the Son and the Spirit has always been an un-begun and a never-ending Harmony -- *Jehovah 'Elohiym*. Genesis 1:1f; 2:4f; Exodus 3:14f; 6:3; Isaiah 6:3; 11:2; 63:7-10; Malachi 3:6; Matthew 28:19; John 17:1-5; Hebrews 9:14; Revelation 1:4-6; 4:2-8; 5:6f; 22:16-19f.

God Triune, at the beginning, created the tri-universe (two-Heavens-and-one-Earth). Genesis 1:1f. The first Heaven is the air surrounding our Earth, and an integral part thereof (Genesis 1:6). The second Heaven is outer space, and the third Heaven is the dwelling-place of God's good angels (Second Corinthians 12:2).

All three, like the Three Persons within God Triune Himself, overlap and interpenetrate one another -- which is what one would expect creatures of God Triune to do. Indeed, this is what Van Til meant by "the one and the many." First Corinthians 12:12-20. So, then: "God Triune, at the beginning, created the tri-universe." Genesis 1:1.

"*Ashrey*" or triuinely "blessed" is the man of God in Psalm 1:1f. Also the Trinitarian Solomon exclaimed in Proverbs 22:20, "Have I not written to you excellent things?" These English words "excellent things" translate the original Hebrew *shalishom* -- meaning "thrice" or "in a threefold way" (cf. too the B.C. 270 Septuagint translation' *srissos*). Indeed, Ecclesiastes 4:12 adds that "the three-fold cord" -- Hebrew *ha-m<sup>e</sup>-shalash* (and the LXX' *so en-tri-ton*) -- "is hard to break." So: "Fear the Triune God (*Ha-'Elohiym*), and keep His Commandments!... For the Triune God (*Ha-'Elohiym*) shall bring every work into judgment!" Ecclesiastes 12:13f.

In the Great Commission, Jehovah-Jesus commands that the children of *Jehovah 'Elohiym* be baptized into His Name -- the Triune Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19. At the very end of the Bible (Revelation 22:1-17), one reads that the pure river of water of life "keeps on proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.... Blessed are they that keep on doing His Commandments, so that they may have right to the tree of life.... I Jesus...am the Root.... And the Spirit and the bride keep on saying ' Let him who is thirsty, come!' "

So all praise to God, the uni-plural '*Elohiym*! Everything is **from Him, through Him, and unto Him**. He created all; and for His pleasure they are; and were created. Genesis 1:1f; Romans 11:36; Revelation 4:11.

For the God of the Old Testament, *Jehovah 'Elohiym*, is the Triune God of the New Testament -- the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Valid baptism is always into His Name alone. The Post-Christian Judaists, Muslims and Jehovah witnesses have rejected this Triune God -- in favour of Unitarianism. They all need to be baptized. The Hindus and the Mormons have rejected this Triune God -- in favour of Polytheism. They too all need to be baptized.

Agnostics have rejected God Triune -- in favour of ignorance. Atheists have rejected God Triune -- in favour of matter. Buddhists have rejected God Triune, in favour of knowledge. Humanists have rejected God Triune, in favour of humanity. All of them need to repent, and to be baptized.

But Baptists, Campbellites, Eastern-Orthodox, Lutherans, Methodists, Romanists and Seventh-day Adventists -- in spite of their various soteriological errors -- do not need to be (re)baptized. For all of them, already, have been baptized quite validly -- as Trinitarians -- in the Name of the Father and

of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. What they need to do, is to repent -- to turn to the Triune God of their baptism with a better understanding, and with all their hearts.

### **Adamic Presbyterianism: mankind's first religion**

The Presbyterian Church, as its very name would indicate, is quite the oldest denomination on earth. For it was established by the Triune God (Jehovah Elohim) in the Garden of Eden, with its covenant head Adam as its very first 'presbyter' (or mature Elder). Genesis 1:1-28f & 2:4-24 & 3:15f; First Timothy 2:12 to 3:5; Hebrews 11:1-4f.

The Christian Church is to be presbyterian. Exodus 3:6-18; 18:12-21; Matthew 16:18f; 18:15-17; 22:31f; Hebrews 11:2; 12:22-24; 13:7,17,34. Indeed, during the future triumph of Christianity here on earth -- as a result of the vigorous preaching of the Word and the faithful 'presbyterian' administration of the sacraments, the government of the Church Visible Universal -- will become more and more presbyterian. Thus compare: Isaiah 2:2-4f; Zechariah 12:6f; Revelation 4:4-11; 5:6-14; 11:15-17; *Westminster Larger Catechism* 191.

Now Presbyterians **sprinkle** their baptizees -- upon the authority and into the Name of the Triune God. Psalms 72:6-11; 77:15-20; Isaiah 44:1-4; 52:15f; Ezekiel 36:25; Acts 1:5f; 2:3,17,33,38f; First Corinthians 10:1-2; Hebrews 6:2-7; 9:10-21; 10:22.

See too Dr. Francis Nigel Lee's 1990 monograph *Sprinkling is Scriptural*. This Biblical baptism by sprinkling incorporates them into the Christian Church Visible as the earthly body of Christ -- the religious community consisting of those already considered to be "Christians" (by grace and through faith only in the merits of Jesus Christ).

They are so deemed -- because they are priorly considered to be "Christians and federally holy before baptism." Thus, the *Westminster Assembly's Directory for the Publick Worship of God* -- in the section on the administration of the sacraments (and first, of baptism).

Presbyterians fully realize that many baptizees -- especially those who later transfer their Christian membership from elsewhere to the Presbyterian Church -- were, unfortunately, not Christians before and at the time of their baptisms. Of course, they certainly should have been. Yet sadly, many were not.

Most professing Christians and their children who transfer to the Presbyterian Church, were baptized previously -- but some of them only by way of submersion. Though such immersion is irregular, it is nevertheless valid.

Hence, Presbyterians would never wish to 're-baptize' -- not even by the right mode of sprinkling -- those previously baptized simply by submersion. *Westminster Confession of Faith* 28:3. For

Presbyterians correctly claim that all such attempted 're-baptisms' are: unnecessary; impossible; and sinful. Exodus 4:24-26; Acts 8:12-24; Romans 4:11 & 6:1-5; First Corinthians 1:11-17 & 12:13; Ephesians 1:13f & 4:30f & 5:25f; Colossians 2:11-13 & 3:10f; Hebrews 6:1-6 & 10:22-39.

Indeed, even when administered irregularly (or when administered regularly) -- **Christian** baptism, is Christian **baptism**. For there is only "one God and Father"; only "one body and one Spirit"; and only "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Ephesians 4:4-6.

The "one baptism" of the Bible -- is the baptism of the Lord Jesus as the only true Christ. It is baptism administered upon the authority, alias in the Name, of the one triune Jehovah Elohim. It is baptism administered into the Name of God; into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; into the Ontological Trinity. Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:9-11 & 16:16; Genesis 1:1-3; Psalm 33:6; Romans 11:33-36; Second Corinthians 13:14; Revelation 4:3 to 5:7 & 22:16-18f.

The Triune God alone validates all things, including baptism. In all matters whatsoever -- there can be no stronger or more valid point of reference, than He Himself.

### **Different deviations from primordial Presbyterianism**

Triune baptisms alone are valid -- wheresoever or by whomsoever administered. They are all obviously valid, whenever administered in the Church Universal of all the ages -- re-formed and re-presbyterianized at the time of the Protestant Reformation. But they are also valid if performed in the post-patristic and deformed Roman Catholic Church -- even today. Indeed, they are also valid, even if given by sectarian groups like the modern Seventh-day Adventists.

For reliance solely upon the saving Name of the Triune Elohim always been the position of God's Bible-believing Presbyterian Church worldwide. This has been the case, right down throughout all the centuries. Indeed, it is to be reliance on the Triune God alone -- regardless of the place or the denomination where baptism into His Name was administered.

Such reliance has sufficed ever since the first presbyter (Adam), his wife (Eve), and their children (Abel and Seth) -- even without baptism -- trusted in Jehovah-Jesus for their salvation. Genesis 3:14-21; 4:1-4,26; 5:1-5f,23,29f; Hebrews 11:4-7; 12:22-24; First Peter 3:20f; Matthew 28:19.

True Presbyterians rely once and for all upon the Triune God alone. Thus they also insist on only "one baptism" -- once and for all. For that is to point solely to Him. Ephesians 4:4-6.

Over against Presbyterianism, however, stand various varieties of Catabaptists. Such Catabaptists may be Romish, Baptist, Quasi-Protestant, or Eastern Orthodox. In spite of all their differences with one another, they are all dissatisfied with a previous alleged baptism. Instead, they focus on the importance of undergoing a subsequent baptism -- which alone they deem to be valid.

Catabaptists tend to rely more on the latter baptism itself than upon the Triune God to validate that sacrament. Holy Scripture, however, is quite plain. All 'rebaptisms' involve, at least subjectively, a fresh crucifying of Christ. Hebrews 6:1-6. The very idea should make Christians shudder. For Christ died but once and for all. In baptism, we too died once and for all. Romans 6:1-13.

Now Romish Catabaptists opt for an *ex opere operato* view of the sacrament. Thereby, baptism itself is deemed to cleanse. Although in theory they claim that 'Protestant baptisms' are quite valid -- the Romanists' very insistence upon baptism as such, has expanded their giving 'conditional baptisms' to many and perhaps even to most Ex-Protestants who romanize. This itself makes such Romanist 'conditional baptizers' *de facto* Catabaptists.

Baptistic Catabaptists reject all infant baptisms (whether Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant). They are zealous in rebaptizing all of their converts from such circles. Until about 1700 A.D., most Baptistic Catabaptists (re)baptized by **pouring** (thus the European Anabaptists). Since then, however, most now (re)baptize by submersion (thus the American Baptists *etc.*).

Sadly, one sometimes encounters even Quasi-Protestant Catabaptists (many of whom uphold infant baptism as such). However, these people -- who repudiate all 'Romish baptisms' largely because they were administered by Romanists -- are often reactionaries. For they seem to be far more **Anti**-Romish than they appear to be **Pro**-testant! Such include those whom the (Free) Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia's Dr. Rowland Ward well describes as: "Ultra-Protestants who lose all ability to think, through a myopic aversion to Romanism."

Yet the Catabaptists also include even some ultra-hardline Anti-Protestant and Anti-Romanistic 'Eastern Orthodox' Christians.<sup>3</sup> Such deny the validity of triune baptism, if performed specifically in the world-wide 'Latin' or Western Rite of the Roman Church -- or if performed in any of the Protestant Churches. In general, however, the 'Eastern Orthodox' usually determine the **validity** of baptisms exactly in the same way as do both Classic Protestants and Roman Catholics.

Now the Frenchman John Calvin -- later to become the greatest Presbyterian of all time -- was conceived in a Romish home. He was born on 10th July 1509 -- in the church-dominated town of Noyon in Picardy. He was baptized soon after his birth -- in the Roman Catholic parish church of Sainte-Godebert.

His mother was a very dedicated Roman Catholic woman. Calvin later wrote that he very well remembered how she had taken him, when a small boy, to religious processions and to one of the churches in town. There, she taught him to honour the multitude of images -- and to kiss the relicts of the saints.

His father was registrar to the ecclesiastical court, and notary fiscal to the Roman Catholic bishop. At an early age, his father enrolled him for the priesthood. So, at the age of twelve, John became a clerk and received the tonsure.<sup>1</sup>



### **Calvin's protestantization and exodus from Romanism**

Calvin's commitment to Christ gradually ripened, especially after studying the Word of God. Rev. Prof. Dr. R. Schippers of the Free University in Amsterdam concludes that John Calvin's actual conversion to Christ and indeed to Protestantism took place only after many years of thorough methodological investigation of the problematics involved -- and also of the writings of the Protestant Reformation. It was in 1533 that he reached his internal crisis.

Yet even then, he did not schismatically sever himself from his Church. Instead, he attempted to heal her of her pollutions. He did not abandon the Church that had mothered him. However, she -- resisting all his filial efforts to rehabilitate her from her prostitution -- so internally pressured him, that a year later he had to leave her establishment.<sup>2</sup>

On 4th May 1534, he returned to his home town Noyon and took leave of his quasi-appointments and ecclesiastical income. Without support, he now scurried throughout France and preached the Gospel in caves and cellars. A new wave of persecution against those pro-testing or witnessing for the truth of God's Word, now forced him to leave his fatherland.

Yet the Mother Church Visible, though unfaithful to her Divine Husband, was still John Calvin's mother. Repudiated by her through her own unfaithfulness and even expelled from his country, he would faithfully and constantly plead and keep on pleading with her -- to reform. Hosea 2:2!

Later, in 1557, Calvin first published the *Preface* to his *Commentary on the Psalms*. There, he furnished it with an account of his earlier conversion to Protestantism -- to the cause of those who 'pro-test-ed' or witnessed for the purity of Christ's Gospel -- about a quarter of a century earlier.

### **Calvin's account of his own conversion to Christ**

Writes the Reformer:<sup>3</sup> "When I was as yet a very little boy, my father had destined me for the study of theology" -- in order to become a priest in the Roman Catholic Church. But "God -- by the secret guidance of His providence -- at length gave a different direction to my course.... I was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire. God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame....

"Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true godliness, I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein that, although I did not altogether leave off other studies, I yet pursued them with less ardour.... Leaving my native country France, I in fact retired into [Strassburg in] Germany -- expressly for the purpose of being able there to enjoy in some obscure corner the repose which I had always desired....

"But lo! Whilst I lay hidden [in Switzerland] at Basle, and known only to a few people -- many faithful and holy persons were burnt alive in France" by the Romanists. The latter, for this action of theirs, were immediately repudiated by the Lutherans. For those murderous arsonists "excited the strongest disapprobation among a great part of the Germans."

However, "in order to allay this indignation, certain wicked and lying pamphlets were circulated" by the persecuting French Romanists. These cunning pamphlets were supported by both imperial court and papal *curia*. They assailed the true Protestants -- only obliquely, yet very effectively. For they did so, explains Calvin, by "stating that none were being treated with such cruelty -- except Anabaptists and seditious persons who by their perverse ravings and false opinions were overthrowing not only religion but also all civil order...."

"The object which these instruments of the court aimed at by their disguises, was not only that the disgrace of shedding so much innocent blood might remain buried under the false charges and calumnies...but also so that afterwards they might be able to proceed to the utmost extremity in murdering the poor saints...."

"It appeared to me, that unless I opposed them to the utmost of my ability -- my silence could not be vindicated from the charge of cowardice and treachery. This was the consideration which induced me to publish my *Institutes of the Christian Religion*" in 1536.

### **Calvin's *Institutes* prove he was no Anabaptist**

Now Calvin here repudiates the Romish allegations that the Protestants -- those who witnessed for the purity of Christ's Gospel -- were "Anabaptists and seditious persons." He states that these were "false charges and calumnies." For the actions even of the revolutionary Anabaptists themselves clearly indicated the untruthfulness of the above Anti-Calvinistic allegations of the Romanists. As Calvin next states, also "the Anabaptists began to assail us" -- *viz.*, for opposing their revolutionism,

Clearly, the revolutionary Anabaptists had broken with the Historic Christian Church altogether. The Romanists had not. Yet they were indeed, as Calvin then called them, "the internal enemies of the Church." For although they constantly continued "boasting mightily of the Gospel of Christ -- nevertheless, they rush against me with greater impetuosity than against the open adversaries of the Church."

Why? According to Calvin, "because I do not embrace their gross and fictitious notion concerning a carnal way of eating Christ in the sacrament." Thus, not baptism but the mass -- was the great watershed between Romanism and Protestantism.

It is very significant that the Protestant Reformer Calvin here repudiates both the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation and the Anabaptist doctrine of antipaidobaptistic revolutionism. For Calvin

never repudiated infant baptism in general, nor the validity of baptisms administered by Rome in particular.

Instead, Calvin here calls the Romanists "internal enemies of the Church." This shows Calvin considered both himself and the Romanists to be inside the Visible Church of Christ. All of her members -- be they Catholics or Protestants -- needed ongoing reformation.

Indeed, in his 1536 *Institutes of the Christian Religion* mentioned above -- as well as in every subsequent edition thereof till his last in 1559 -- Calvin never hesitates repeatedly to condemn the blasphemous Romish mass.<sup>4</sup> Yet in all of the many editions of that same work, he specifically upholds the validity of baptisms performed by Rome in general -- and the validity of infant baptism in particular, by whomsoever performed.<sup>5</sup>

There, he condemns specifically the anti-trinitarian "Servetus -- [whom Calvin calls] 'not the least among the Anabaptists.'"<sup>6</sup> Indeed, in the *Prefatory Address* to his *Institutes*, which he sent to the Romish King Francis I of France, Calvin specifically classifies these "Catabaptists" as being among the various "portentous miscreants" which then tarnished civilization. Consequently, he ascribes their evils "to the malice of Satan."<sup>7</sup>

### **Baptismal background of Calvin and his immediate family**

Some four years after first publishing the *Institutes*, Calvin married a converted Anabaptist widow in 1540. She was, of course, never rebaptized on becoming a Presbyterian like Calvin. Their eldest child was baptized in infancy. Their subsequent children were never baptized -- because dying shortly after birth.<sup>8</sup>

These examples of baptism and non-baptism in Calvin' s own immediate family, are really most instructive. Calvin, baptized in infancy by the Church of Rome, was never rebaptized. Nor was his wife -- after being affused as an adult in the Name of the Trinity by the Anabaptists. Their eldest child, expected to live, was baptized in the Presbyterian Church. Their other children, seen to be dying and expected next to be seen again in glory -- were deliberately left unbaptized. Not one member of the entire family was ever submersed.

Why not? Because the antirebaptist Calvin and his de-anabaptized wife rightly understood that baptism is to be administered but once and for all to anyone. They also saw that baptism is only for the living -- and not for the dying. Romans 6:1-11. They also understood that the Visible Church everywhere is but "one body" -- with "one God and Father of all" and one Son and "one Spirit." Consequently, they were contented -- with that "one Lord; one faith; one baptism." See Ephesians 4:4-6.

### **1542: Calvin's Form of Administering Baptism**

Apparently in 1542, Calvin adapted his Strassburg *Form of Administering Baptism* for use in Geneva. He did the same in respect of his *Brief Form of a Confession of Faith*.<sup>9</sup>

In the former, the baptismal formula, he declares<sup>10</sup> that God "is pleased to incorporate us into His Church by baptism." Calvin then goes on to assume the validity of baptisms administered in the corrupted Church of Rome even over many generations. For not yet sixty generations had elapsed from the apostolic age to his own day. Yet God had promised to keep His covenant -- even unto thousands of generations. Exodus 20:1-6.

Explains Dr. Calvin: "Our gracious God, not contenting Himself with having adopted us for His children and received us into the communion of His Church, has been pleased to extend His goodness still farther to us -- by promising to be our God and the God of our seed to a thousand generations. Hence, though the children of believers are of the corrupt race of Adam, He [the one and only True Triune God] nevertheless accepts them in virtue of this covenant -- and adopts them into His family.

"For this reason, He was pleased from the first (Genesis 17:12) that in His Church, children should receive the sign of circumcision -- by which He then represented all that is now signified to us by baptism. And as He gave commandments that they should be circumcised, so He adopted them for His children and called Himself their God as well as the God of their fathers....

"The Lord Jesus Christ came down to earth not to diminish the grace of God His Father -- but to extend the covenant of salvation over all the world. Instead of confining it as formerly to the Jews, there is no doubt that our children are heirs of the life which He has promised to us."

Then, right after his baptismal formula, Calvin implicitly endorses the validity of water baptism administered in the Church of Rome. He does this, even while he abolishes the unnecessary -- the indeed ancient, yet still only post-apostolic -- accretions with which she had disfigured her baptism over the centuries.

Thus, Calvin explains<sup>11</sup> that "there are many other ceremonies which we do not deny are very ancient.... They have been invented at pleasure, or at least on grounds which...must be trivial -- since they have been devised without authority from the Word of God....

"So many superstitions have sprung from them, we have felt no hesitation in abolishing them -- in order that there might be nothing to prevent the people from going directly to Jesus Christ.... It is certain that chrism, tapers and other pomposities are not of the ordination of God, but have been added by men -- and have at length gone so far, that people have dwelt more on them and held them in higher estimation, than the proper institution of Jesus Christ."

Yet all these tapers *etc.* were not able to destroy the sacrament altogether. For they could not and did not invalidate Christian water-baptisms as such, even when administered by the deforming and deformed Church of Rome.

### **Calvin's 1542 Brief Form of a Confession of Faith**

In his *Brief Form of a Confession of Faith*, Dr. John Calvin gives further reasons why he accepts the validity of baptisms administered in Rome. Yet, he still utterly rejects the Romish mass.

He there explains<sup>12</sup> that "sacraments be added to the preaching of the Word, as seals by which the promises of God are sealed on our hearts.... Two such sacraments were ordained by Christ, *viz.* baptism and the Lord's supper. The former, to give us an entrance into the Church of God; the latter, to keep us in it. The five 'sacraments' imagined by the Papists, and first coined in their own brain, I repudiate....

"Water, though it is a fading element, truly testifies to us in baptism -- the true presence of the blood of Jesus Christ and of His Spirit.... In the Lord's supper, the bread and wine are to us true and by no means fallacious pledges that we are spiritually nourished by the body and blood of Christ. And thus I join with the signs -- the very possession and fruition of that which is therein offered to us....

"I detest as intolerable sacrilege the execrable abomination of the mass..., diametrically opposed to the purity of the sacrament of the Lord's supper." No such repudiatory statement, however, does Calvin ever make of the different sacrament of baptism within the Romish Church. For Rome has never taught any alleged transubstantiation of the baptismal water into Christ's blood -- as she does indeed teach in respect of the wine in her pseudo-sacrament of the mass.

Some of Calvin's reasons for the unrepeatability of baptisms performed validly within the Church of Rome, are set out in his 1544 *Address on the Necessity of Reforming the Church*. Dr. Calvin wrote it, at the request of his friend Bucer -- and then sent it to Emperor Charles V of Germany.<sup>13</sup>

Dr. John Calvin there maintains that in the Roman Catholic Church "baptism was so disguised by superfluous additions, that scarcely a vestige of pure and genuine baptism could be traced." On the other hand, "the holy supper was not only corrupted by extraneous observances." There, "its very form was altogether changed...without any vestige of the supper in it."<sup>14</sup>

Calvin's language here is very precise. At least "a vestige of pure and genuine baptism" could, he insists, still be traced in the Romish Church -- though "scarcely" so. On the other hand, the Lord's table had there been "altogether changed...without any vestige of the supper in it."

Hence, as to the former, Calvin says: "From baptism...have we rescinded many additions -- which were partly useless; and partly, from their superstitious tendency, noxious." Such "additions," he

explains, include "chrism, salt, spittle and tapers." Taken together, these additions were "noxious" -- although only "partly" so.

Indeed, precisely because these additions to baptism were also partly non-noxious -- they did not invalidate "the genuineness of baptism itself."<sup>15</sup> For the character of these additions -- be it variously "partly noxious" and "partly useless" -- could only disfigure but not eradicate baptism as such, to which they were uselessly superadded.

### **1546-47: the baptismal declarations of the Romish Council of Trent**

In 1546-47, the Roman Catholic *Council of Trent* held its Fifth and Sixth Sessions. There, it declared -- quite wrongly -- that the sacrament of baptism comes to "the damned" (alias those condemned in Adam's original sin).

Rightly, however, baptism should ideally be given only to those who have been justified by grace through faith in Christ and His work for His children. Trent claims that baptism itself "totally expunges" the guilt of all pre-baptismal sin -- as if baptism had no sacramental reference to the guilt of post-baptismal sin! Trent further falsely alleges that baptism itself -- as if by magic -- "translates" a man from the state of death into spiritual life.<sup>16</sup>

This latter 'translation' -- Trent soon claimed at its Seventh Session -- baptism does "from the work performed" or "*ex opere operato*." This means 'by the work performed' -- by the baptism itself as such. Then, immediately thereafter, Trent quite rightly went on to insist that "baptism...cannot be repeated."<sup>17</sup>

One can rejoice that Trent here quite rightly stresses the unrepeatability of baptism. Yet as to what baptism effects, Trent claims far too much at one point -- and far too little at another!

Trent claims far too much -- where it alleges that baptism itself washes away all pre-baptismal sin. For not baptism but only the blood of Christ itself can do and does do just that.

Yet Trent also claims far too little for baptism. It wrongly alleges that baptism is of advantage merely for those sins committed before baptism. It does not claim -- as the Holy Bible clearly implies -- that baptism seals the forgiveness of all sins whatsoever: including those committed also after baptism.

According to Sacred Scripture, precisely baptism's unrepeatability -- makes it the one and only life-long sacrament. By grace and through faith alone, it indeed signifies the forgiveness of all sins -- past, present, and future. For baptism needs no augmentation with endless post-baptismal repeated applications of 'holy water' (like a whole series of pseudo-rebaptisms). Nor does baptism need augmentation by Rome's pseudo-sacraments of confirmation, the mass, penance, ordination (or alternatively marriage), and extreme unction.

### **Calvin's response to Trent on the 'seven sacraments'**

Now Trent finished setting forth the Romish doctrine of baptism at that Seventh Session -- on 3rd March, 1547.<sup>18</sup> Calvin then responded -- in his *Antidote to Trent* -- on 21st November, 1547.<sup>19</sup>

Trent alleged:<sup>20</sup> "Whosoever shall say that the Sacraments...are either more or fewer than seven (namely Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, [Holy] Orders and Matrimony) -- or even that any one of these seven is not truly and properly a Sacrament -- let him be *anathema!*... Whosoever shall say that these seven Sacraments are so equal among themselves that no one is in any respect of greater dignity than another -- let him be *anathema!*"

To this, we see Calvin respond<sup>21</sup> in 1547 that in the Sacred Scriptures "we read that baptism was recommended by Christ. We read in like manner that the Lord's supper was recommended.... Of the others [the Romanists' remaining five quasi-sacraments], we read nothing of the kind....

"Not contented, however, with claiming equal authority for all -- they prefer the chrism of their confirmation to the baptism of Christ. For their making one of more dignity than another, is not for the purpose of placing those which have no support from Scripture in an inferior grade. But they renew those execrable blasphemies which the Council of Aurelium first vented -- that we are made only 'Half-Christian' by baptism, and are finished by confirmation."

Here, Rome implies that baptism is indeed unrepeatable -- but that confirmation is more important than baptism. In his reply, Dr. Calvin too assumes the unrepeatability and indeed the life-long effectiveness of baptism. Confirmation, on the other hand, is to him no sacrament at all -- and grossly inferior to life-long baptism.

### **Calvin responds to Trent on the *ex opere operato***

Trent continues:<sup>22</sup> "Whosoever shall say that by these [seven] Sacraments...grace is not conferred *ex opere operato* (from the work performed), but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices to obtain grace -- let him be *anathema!*"

Calvin here responds to the Romanists:<sup>23</sup> "Here indeed they disclose their impiety not only more clearly but also more grossly. The device of *opus operatum* is recent [post-patristic], and was coined by illiterate monks who had never learned anything of the nature of sacraments....

"If we grant their postulate -- that grace is procured in the sacraments *ex opere operato* -- a part of merit is separated from faith, and the use of the sacraments is in itself effectual for salvation." However, "the apostle is a witness that they are of no avail, unless received by faith." See: Acts 8:12-23; First Corinthians 1:12-17; First Peter 3:20f; compare Mark 16:16. Yet throughout, Dr. Calvin never

questions the validity of baptisms administered once and for all -- even if so served within the Church of Rome.

### **Trent and Calvin on unrepeatable baptism's "indelibility"**

Trent further alleges:<sup>24</sup> "Whosoever shall say that in the three Sacraments -- namely Baptism, Confirmation and [Holy] Orders -- there is not impressed on the soul a character, *i.e.*, some spiritual and indelible sign owing to which they cannot be repeated -- let him be *anathema!*"

This quite correctly abbreviates *inter alia* to: "Baptism...cannot be repeated." Here, Trent rightly recognizes the 'indelible character' and unrepeatability of baptism -- while wrongly assuming its cleansing qualities. Yet Trent here wrongly assumes that her pseudo-sacrament of 'confirmation' is also unrepeatable -- and that both confirmation and ordination are indelible.

Unlike the sacrament of baptism, the non-sacrament of confirmation is neither unrepeatable nor indelible. See: Second Corinthians 1:21*f etc.* The non-sacrament of ordination is unrepeatable, yet not indelible. Compare: Second Timothy 4:10 *etc.* For even if a trinitarian presbyter demits the Christian Ministry of the Word and Sacraments without censure, he should certainly forfeit his ministerial status. Yet, if he should thereafter get re-appointed as a Minister of the Word and Sacraments -- in the same or even in a different denomination of trinitarians -- there should be no re-ordination.<sup>25</sup>

However, Rome has claimed an indelible character not just -- rightly -- for baptism. She has also claimed it -- wrongly -- for confirmation and ordination. Indeed, Rome has wrongly claimed that even unrepeatable baptism itself -- indelibly eradicates all pre-baptismal sins.

The truth is, baptism is indelible chiefly in the sense that it is unrepeatable. Baptism itself does not indelibly wash away pre-baptismal sins -- or any sins, for that matter. Yet unrepeatable baptism indeed 'indelibly' guarantees -- by grace and through faith in Jesus -- that the truly indelible blood of Christ washes away all sins, whether pre- or post-baptismal.

Dr. Calvin explains<sup>26</sup> that Rome has based all these wrongful claims on the "device" of her *opus operatum* sacramentology. He explains this is "recent" [alias post-patristic], and was "coined by illiterate monks who had never learned anything of the nature of sacraments.... Their fable of an indelible character is the product of the same forge. It was altogether unknown to the primitive Church, and is more suited to magical charms than to the sound doctrine of the Gospel."

Yet Calvin never claims (as do the Catabaptists) that Rome's "recent" adoption of an *ex opere operato* sacramentology has **invalidated** her baptisms. To the contrary. Calvin agrees that even the Council of Trent's wrongful assertion that baptism works *ex opere operato* -- cannot invalidate 'Romish' baptisms.



For -- Dr. Calvin adds -- "baptism is not to be repeated!" About that, he insists, "the pious are sufficiently agreed." Yet "this -- which was true of baptism -- they [the Romanists] afterwards rashly transferred to their Confirmation and Orders" too.

Thus, it is "true" that "baptism is not to be repeated." Here, "the pious are sufficiently agreed." Rebaptism, therefore -- according to Calvin -- is implicitly im-pious.

### **Calvin versus Trent on "intention" at baptisms**

Alleges Trent:<sup>27</sup> "Whosoever shall say that in Ministers, when they perform and distribute the Sacraments, an intention at least of doing what the Church does, is not requisite -- let him be *anathema!*"

Here Calvin responds:<sup>28</sup> "If the intention of the Minister is necessary, none of us can be certain of his baptism.... [Then,] I was baptized if it so pleased the priest -- whose good faith is no more known to me than that of any Ethiopian."

Yet even if some complete pagan were to perform the baptism -- provided true, that sacrament itself would not and could not be invalid. For even "if some Epicurean, inwardly grinning at the whole performance, were to administer the Supper to me according to the command of Christ and the rule given by Him, and in due form -- I would not doubt that the bread and the cup held forth by his hand are pledges to me of the body and blood of Christ."

Alleges Trent:<sup>29</sup> "XII. Whosoever shall say that a Minister, in a state of mortal sin, provided he has observed all the essentials which pertain to the performing and giving of a Sacrament, does not perform or give the Sacrament -- let him be *anathema!*" Replies Calvin:<sup>30</sup> "Canon XII. Amen!"

Calvin himself, then, repeatedly rejects Rome's doctrine anent the intention of the one baptizing -- as regards what the baptizer thereby intends to effect. Yet he agrees with Romanism that the heavenliness or the hellishness of the baptizer is quite irrelevant.

For, to the Romish view that the baptisms performed even by 'lost baptizers' (like the apostate Judas Iscariot) "in a state of mortal sin" are valid -- Calvin rightly responds: "Amen!"

### **Calvin repudiates Trent on "additions" to baptism**

Trent further alleges:<sup>31</sup> "Whosoever shall say that the received and approved Rites of the Catholic Church accustomed to be used in the solemn administration of the Sacraments may either be despised or omitted at pleasure by the Minister without sin, or changed into other new rites by any pastors of churches -- let him be *anathema!*"

Here Calvin responds:<sup>32</sup> "The genuine rite of baptism, is simple.... But under how many and how various and discordant additions, has this simplicity been buried?... All the godly complain...that in baptism more is made of the [oily] chrism, the taper, the salt, the spittle, in fine -- than the washing with water in which the whole perfection of baptism consists."

All of the "discordant additions" which Rome superimposes upon baptism, thus indeed cause the "simplicity" of the sacrament to get "buried." But they do not invalidate baptism. That is still preserved intact, in spite of all those futile superimpositions upon it.

### **Calvin agrees with Trent that 'Roman baptism' is valid**

Thus far Trent's Canons on "the Sacraments in General." Trent next goes on to exhibit all her Canons on "Baptism" in particular.

Claims the Council of Trent:<sup>33</sup> "Whosoever shall say that in the Roman Church (which is the mother and mistress of all Churches) there is not the true doctrine of the Sacrament of Baptism -- let him be *anathema!*"

Calvin responds that "the whole doctrine of baptism, as taught by them, is partly mutilated."<sup>34</sup> Yet this clearly implies that in his opinion it was also partly un-mutilated --and therefore still valid, in spite of some irregular mutilation.

### **Trent and Calvin agree that 'baptism by heretics' is valid**

Alleges Trent:<sup>35</sup> "Whosoever shall say that Baptism, which is also given by heretics in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit with the intention of doing what the Church does, is not true Baptism -- let him be *anathema!*"

Responds Calvin:<sup>36</sup> "Canon IV. What the Minister intends to do, is of little consequence to us.... Let it suffice then, to have been baptized in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit -- whatever may have been the ignorance or impiety of those who administered baptism to us. Man is merely the hand. It is Christ alone Who truly and properly baptizes."

### **Trent wrongly refers baptism only to prebaptismal sins**

Alleges the Council of Trent:<sup>37</sup> "Whosoever shall say that all sins which are done after baptism are either discharged or made venial by the mere remembrance and faith of baptism received -- let him be *anathema!*"

Implicitly, Trent here rightly presupposes the unrepeatability of baptism. Again implicitly, it might even seem to commend Protestants for asserting the same. Yet also, Trent here errs in faulting Protestants for clinging solely to the Triune One signified by that unrepeatable baptism. For true Protestants rightly cling to the Triune God alone -- to the absolute exclusion of Rome's endless series of post-baptismal holy water applications, masses, and penances *etc.*

As Calvin remarks:<sup>38</sup> "Sins are effaced by the mere remembrance of baptism...conjoined with faith and repentance.... We ought to turn our thoughts not only to the sprinkling of water.... We must flee to baptism, and from it seek a confirmation of forgiveness.... God reconciles us to Himself....

"The belief and certainty of this reconciliation, which is daily repeated even to the end of life, He seals to us by baptism. We were indeed baptized once" -- *viz.*, once and for all. "But there is a perpetual testimony of pardon and free propitiation -- in Christ."

Here Calvin clearly states that Christians are "baptized once" -- once and for all. His strong views about baptism are the very opposite of baptismal regenerationism and baptismal cleansing only from pre-baptismal sins. Roman Catholicism teaches that post-baptismal holy water and unbiblical post-baptismal pseudo-sacraments are needed to cleanse from post-baptismal sins. But Calvin's view of baptism once and for all, seals the forgiveness of all sins -- whether pre-baptismal sins or post-baptismal sins (and indeed both).

Consequently, Dr. Calvin utterly repudiates Rome's post-baptismal holy water and post-baptismal pseudo-sacraments. He regards them as undermining of the power of baptism in the Name of the All-Sufficient Triune God Himself.

### **Trent rightly refuses to rebaptize anyone priorly baptized**

Alleged Trent:<sup>39</sup> "XI. Whosoever shall say that true and duly conferred baptism is to be repeated to him who has denied the faith of Christ among [Muslims *etc.* and/or other] infidels, after he turns to [re]-repentance -- let him be *anathema!*

"XII. Whosoever shall say that no man is baptized unless at that age at which Christ was baptized or at the very point of death -- let him be *anathema!*

"XIII. Whosoever shall say that infants, in respect they have no act (capacity) of believing, are not to be counted among believers after they have received baptism, and are thus are to be re-baptized after they come to the years of discretion, or that it is better that the baptism of them be omitted, than that they, not believing by their own act, be baptized in the faith only of the Church -- let him be *anathema!*"

To all this, Dr. Calvin responds:<sup>40</sup> To these "three heads" -- *Of Baptism* canons XI-XIII -- "I not unwillingly subscribe." Together with Rome -- Calvin thus here condemns all rebaptism.

### **Calvin 'liberates' baptism from Trent's enshackling chrism**

Finally, the Council of Trent alleges that baptism needs completion by confirmation and its oily chrism. For "whosoever shall say that those who attribute any virtue to chrism in the sacrament of Confirmation, insult the Holy Spirit -- let him be *anathema!*"<sup>41</sup>

Here, Dr. Calvin answers very bluntly:<sup>42</sup> "I am certainly not of the number of those who think that 'Confirmation' -- as observed under the Roman Papacy -- is an idle ceremony.... I regard it as one of the most deadly wiles of Satan...."

"In the name of Pope Melciades -- *De Consecrat. Dist. 5* -- they declare that the Spirit is given in baptism for innocence; in 'Confirmation' for increase of grace.... Baptism [they say] is sufficient for those who were to die instantly. But by 'Confirmation' [they further say that] those who are to prove victorious -- are armed so as to be able to sustain the contest."

"Thus, one half of the efficacy of baptism is lopped off. As if it were said in vain that in baptism the old man is crucified, in order that we may walk in newness of life! Romans 6:6. They add, besides, that though neither of the two is perfect without the other -- yet 'Confirmation' must be regarded with higher veneration than baptism. For there is a decree of the Council of Aurelium, that no man should be deemed a Christian who has not been anointed by episcopal unction."

Naturally, this can only mean that perhaps even baptized babies -- and certainly older children baptized but not yet confirmed -- would still not yet be Christians. As Calvin concludes: "These words are fit to be propounded to children -- in sport!" Yet this is really "sacrilege...replete with execrable blasphemy."

Romish 'Confirmation' is indeed blasphemous. It is totally unrelated to public affirmation of faith by already Christian (and thus baptized) children of the covenant -- when they reach teenage.<sup>43</sup> It is very significant that Calvin thoroughly agrees<sup>44</sup> with Rome's doctrine (and perhaps even with Rome's *anathema*) against all rebaptism. He agrees with Rome against all antipaidobaptism.

He agrees with Rome in condemning those who teach "that infants...have no act [or real capacity] of believing" and therefore also "are not to be counted among believers after they have received baptism" but "are to be re-baptized after they come to the years of discretion" etc.<sup>45</sup> For, like Rome, also Calvin is no Catabaptist.

### Calvin's opposition to the *Interim Declaration of Religion*

In the 1546-47 *Interim Declaration of Religion*, Emperor Charles V of Germany had sought to re-unify Lutherans and Romanists within his empire. However, this he sought to do on the basis of a general reconciliation of Lutheranism with most of the tenets of mediaeval Romanism.<sup>46</sup>

States the *Interim*: "Let the Ancient Ceremonies used in the Sacrament of Baptism all be retained -- viz. Exorcism, Renunciation, Profession of Faith, Christ, &c. For they tend to figure and shew forth the efficacy of this Sacrament."<sup>47</sup>

Calvin is seen to have given a quick response to the above -- in his 1547 treatise titled *The True Method of Giving Peace to Christendom and Reforming the Church*. There, he insists<sup>48</sup> that it is "the Spirit of God...Who sprinkles our soul with the blood of Christ. First Peter 1:2."

Yet "all the Ceremonies by which posterity has partly vitiated [and also] partly obscured the pure baptism of Christ -- they [who would reconcile especially the Lutherans with most of the doctrines of Mediaeval Romanism] order to be left untouched.... What else is this, than to soil the heavenly laver of Christ with the muddy impurities of man?"

"Christ commanded the simple symbol of water. With it, as was right, the apostles were contented. The same soberness did not prevail with their [later] 'successors.' They became delighted with the oil and the taper and similar follies. At length, as is usual, perverse superstition crept in, and the chrism added by man was considered of more value than the water consecrated by Christ....

"Our superstitious [school]masters allege that these additions serve to adorn baptism. But the fact proclaims that the pure administration of it, is rather obscured." Yet even such obscuration cannot invalidate water baptism, whenever administered in the Name of the Triune God.

For John Calvin goes on to declare<sup>49</sup> in his 1547 *Appendix to the Tract on the True Method of Reforming the Church* that "the children of papists," baptized in the Romish Church, "are validly baptized." He denied that they were "strangers -- just because they were begotten neither by a holy father nor born from a holy mother. They cease not to be 'children of saints' -- though it be necessary to go farther back for their origin. God does not stop at the first degree, but diffuses the promise of life to a thousand generations."

Next, Calvin discusses the baptismal views of Augustine. "If a layman...shall have given baptism," said Augustine, "I know not if any one can say piously that it is to be repeated."

In the context of his discussion, John Calvin certainly seems to agree with this -- while even more strongly than Augustine disapproving of baptisms by laymen. Indeed, the very unrepeatability of circumcision -- and even of Calvin's perception of the highly irregular and totally unauthorized circumcision performed by Moses' wife Zipporah -- would tend to endorse this perception.<sup>50</sup>

### **Calvin on the Romish mutilation of baptism**

In 1549, Calvin wrote in his *Commentary on Hebrews* (6:2-4) that "the children of believers were baptized as infants, since they were adopted from the womb." The Romanists, however, "have invented the fiction that it is a sacrament by which the Spirit of regeneration is conferred. By this invention, they have mutilated baptism.... They have planned nothing less than the destruction of the force of baptism."

Yet the Romanists had not succeeded in destroying baptism, but only in polluting it somewhat with Romish impurities. So "today, we [Protestants] must retain the institution in its purity -- but we must correct the [Romish] superstition.... What great thing would the Apostle be saying -- in maintaining that repentance which is the adjunct of baptism could not be repeated?!"<sup>51</sup>

That same year -- 1549 -- seems to be the very time the Italian Unitarian Laelius Socinus came to Geneva. Soon afterwards he wrote to Calvin -- asking him whether it was lawful for Protestants to marry Romanists, and whether popish baptism was efficacious.

Ignoring (at that time) Socinus's apostate rejection of the Trinity, the Trinitarian Calvin answered his questions on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1549 [*Epistle* 1212 in *Opera* VIII:307-11]. Calvin replied that while marriages to Romanists were reprehensible, popish baptism was valid and efficacious and should be resorted to where no other can be had. For Romanism, though corrupt, still retained marks of the Christian Church -- as well as a scattered number of elect persons. Baptism was not a papal invention, but a divine institution and gift of God Who fulfils His promises. See Schaff's *Church History* VIII:634f, and also Calvin's *Epistle* 1323 of December 1549 (in *Opera* XIII:484-87).

In 1552, we see Calvin further observing: "The Papists are in great error in many of their doctrines anent baptism" -- but not for administering still-valid trinitarian baptisms. The Papists err in that "they restrict baptism to the time of birth and the life that went before -- as if the significance and power of it did not even extend to the time of death!"<sup>52</sup>

Yet this certainly implies -- as Rev. Professor R.S. Wallace has maintained -- that baptism, once administered and by whomsoever, is never to be repeated. For in later years, it is still to remain -- continually efficacious.<sup>53</sup>

### **Calvin: baptism unrepeatable even to Simon the sorcerer**

In his *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (first edition 1552), Calvin next goes on to make a very important remark about Simon the sorcerer. When Simon first heard the Gospel, he professed belief in Christ -- and was baptized. Acts 8:13. Later, it seems he acted as one who was still an unbeliever. Consequently, Peter then cursed him: "May your money perish with you!" Acts 8:20.

Yet Peter thereafter urged him again to "repent" -- so that his sin might be "forgiven" him. Acts 8:22. It is not known whether Simon did so re-repent. However, if he did -- then, said Calvin, his early baptism would suffice. He should not be rebaptized.

For on Acts 8:13, Calvin argued regarding that Simon:<sup>54</sup> "Even though the receiving of baptism was of no use to him at that time, yet -- if conversion followed afterwards, as some conjecture -- the benefit was not terminated or wiped out. For it often happens that, after a long time, the Spirit of God is at last active -- so that the sacraments may begin to realize their efficacy."

### **No rebaptism, says Calvin, in Acts 19:1-5**

Calvin further goes on to refute the attempt of Rebaptists to ground their views in Acts 19:3-5. Here Calvin insists:<sup>55</sup> "The baptism of John...was a token and pledge of the same adoption and the same newness of life which we receive in our baptism today. Therefore we do not read that Christ baptized afresh those whom came over to Him from John.... We have a common baptism with the Son of God."

As to baptism, Calvin goes on, "the question is asked whether it was right to repeat it." That very question rests upon a misinterpretation of Acts 19:1-5. Nevertheless, explains Calvin, "fanatical men of our day...have tried to introduce Anabaptism."

On the other hand, Calvin continues, "others deny that baptism was repeated." Rightly so. For, even as regards specifically Acts 19, Calvin bluntly states: "I do deny that the baptism of water was repeated."

The simple fact is that the above-mentioned group mentioned in Acts 19, consisted exclusively of unitarian heretics -- before Paul met and evangelized them. Paul certainly did not rebaptize them. For, unlike trinitarian Roman Catholics, they had never before been baptized in the Name of the Triune God -- at all. [See too at note 66 below, and especially above in chapter II at its notes 86 to 134.]

### **Calvin on the validity of 'Romish baptisms' in his 1555f *Sermons on Deuteronomy***

On 7th October 1555, John Calvin preached on Deuteronomy 12 that "God is contented with few ceremonies. For it is...His will that in our baptism we shall have such an assurance of our washing and cleansing by the grace that is purchased for us in our Lord Jesus Christ -- as should continue with us for ever...."

"Yes, but we must have a taper,' say the Papists,' to represent the Holy Ghost!' 'We must have salt, to represent the heavenly wisdom and the grace of God!' 'We must have divers other things, and we must have spittle to make infants and dumb folks to speak!'"

To these Popish objections, Calvin immediately responded: "They can serve for nothing but to make Christianity a laughing stock to the Jews and the Turks.... The Papists have broken and transgressed God's order by adding...to things which He had set down [as] certain -- and in such measure as He would not have men to go beyond them."

On 23rd October 1555, Calvin preached from Deuteronomy 14 that "the Papists have shaken off the yoke of our Lord Jesus Christ.... True it is, that they have baptism -- which is the sign of Christianity. But they have utterly abolished the true use of baptism, and we see that they have no skill at all either of God or of His Word."

On 23rd January 1556, Calvin preached a sermon on Deuteronomy 23:7. There, God commands: "You shall not abhor an Edomite; because he is your brother! You shall not abhor an Egyptian; because you were a stranger in his land!" This, argues Dr. John Calvin, means that the baptized Romanist is our brother -- just as the uncircumcised Edomite was the brother of the Israelite. See Romans 4:11-13 *cf.* Colossians 2:11-13.

Calvin argues that baptized Protestants are now far closer to baptized Romanists than either of them are to unbaptized Moslems. Comparing circumcised Edomites to baptized Romanists, Dr. Calvin insists: "Moses says that if the Edomites would yield themselves into the [truly Christian alias the godly Protestant] Church of God -- they might be received...and be incorporated therein altogether. For he who offered himself to be circumcised, was always received...."

"Let us therefore diligently note here of the children of [the circumcised] Esau...that if any of them would renounce his own kindred" -- as converted Papists should their kindred Romanists -- "he would be accounted in the number of this blessed flock" of God's True People.

"Likewise at this day" -- Dr. John Calvin explained in 1556<sup>f</sup> (after the Council of Trent) -- "we are far nearer neighbours to the Papists than to the Turks or other Paynims [or Heathens]. And the reason is, because albeit they [the Papists] are estranged from the grace of God and have corrupted all religion and are so entangled in their abuses and corruptions as it is horrible to behold -- yet, notwithstanding, there remains among them some footsteps of the calling of God.

"For they have baptism, which is a visible sign whereby we see that God held those of His House and of His Fold. You see then, how the Papists are as it were the Edomites" -- who had received circumcision, which baptism has now replaced (*cf.* Colossians 2:11-13).

"For they [the Romanists] were first called -- and should have been partakers of the salvation which was preached to us by the Gospel. They bear yet the mark thereof -- as touching baptism. But because they have perverted the service of God -- yes, and as it were taken faith clean away, by which



they should have been called to the mercy which has been brought to us by our Lord Jesus Christ -- it is great reason that they should be held for Edomites....

"Therefore let us endeavour as much as is possible for us, to bring them back again, so that we may be knit together again! And how knit together again? I do not mean that we should turn aside from the pure truth of God, to be[come] at agreement with the Papists -- but that they should enter; that is to say, that they should approach near unto God, and we all of us thus be reconciled, yielding obedience unto our heavenly Father, so that we may all have one Head, Jesus Christ, Who will defend us under His wings.

"When the Papists come and order themselves thus -- we are to receive them with all gentleness, by reason of the brotherhood which God has set between them and us. And we must not only do so; but also must seek them as much as is possible for us to do so....

"Therefore nowadays, seeing that God has showed Himself so gracious unto us, as to make us His Church -- let us be ready to receive them which will be reclaimed thereunto! Yes, let us have our arms stretched out not only to them which are the children of God -- but also to such as are our kinsfolk afar off, endeavouring for all that to win and to gain them!"

On 15th July 1556, Calvin conceded, in his last sermon on Deuteronomy, that "in the Popedom they have many signs.... We ourselves do see that they have defiled baptism. True it is that they could not utterly despatch it out of the way.... Our Lord Jesus Christ has brought to pass that His baptism continueth still in His Church.

"But we see how it is infected with many spots among the Papists.... For they esteem not a child to be baptized with the water [as it is of itself]; but the water must be 'charmed' aforehand, and it must have 'conjurations' made over it. And then must other inventions be mingled with it -- as spittle, salt, and tapers....

"Let us learn to discern the things which God ordaineth and alloweth by His Word -- from the things that men have put forth at adventure and after their own fancies! And let us understand that as God's truth is always certain and infallible, so those things that are brought up by men cannot proceed but of untruth and falsehood."

More withering condemnations of Rome's perversion of baptism are hardly imaginable. Here Dr., Calvin tells it exactly like it is.

Yet even in the same breath, Calvin is also quick to make a correct concession. He still insists: "The Papists...have baptism." Indeed, "in the Popedom...Christ has brought [it] to pass that His baptism continueth still in His Church."

### **Calvin believed the Minor Prophets imply 'Romish' baptisms are valid**

In Dr. Calvin's 1557 *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, he has much to say about the Papal Church and its baptism. Nowhere is he there more copious, than in his exposition of Hosea.

In Hosea 4:12f, God told that Prophet regarding Israelites: "My people ask counsel at their stocks [alias their wooden idols].... They have gone a-whoring [away] from under their God."

Comments Calvin: "The same thing that the Prophet brought against the Israelites, may be brought also against the Papists. For as soon as infants are born among them, the Lord signs them with the sacred symbol of baptism. They are therefore in some sense the people of God.

"We see, at the same time, how gross and abominable are the superstitions which prevail among them. There are none more stupid than they are.... How great then, and how shameful is this baseness -- that the Papists, who boast themselves to be the people of God, should go astray after their own mad follies....

"Baptism, then, affords the Papists no excuse; but on the contrary, renders double their sin! For they have, by a profane audacity, contaminated what the Son of God has appointed.

"But there is in their Mass a much greater abomination. For the[ir] Mass, as we know, is in no respect the same with the Holy Supper of our Lord."

Yet Rome's baptism is still baptism, in spite of its adulterations. For, explains Calvin: "There are at least some things remaining in baptism. But the Mass is nothing like Christ's Holy Supper.... Extreme infamy...belongs to the Mass."

Also on Micah 1:3f, Calvin comments: "We find the Papists boasting of the title 'Church' -- and, in a manner, with vain confidence binding God to themselves because they have baptism, though they have adulterated it with their superstitions. And they think that they have Christ, because they still retain the name of a 'Church.'

"Even if the Lord had promised that His dwelling would be in Rome, we yet see how foolish and frivolous such boasting would be! For though the temple was at Jerusalem -- yet the Lord went forth thence to punish the sins of the people -- yes, even of the chosen people.

### **Calvin says baptism in Rome and even by the devil is still valid**

In two of his letters<sup>56</sup> to the catabaptistic antitrinitarian heretic Socinus, Calvin makes the same point. The Reformer insists that, unlike antitrinitarian unitarians like Socinus, there is still in trinitarian "Rome a remnant of the Church." Consequently, "baptism there is still valid" *etc.*

Indeed, adds Calvin, "it matters not to me whether he who performs the baptism is a diabolical man -- or even the devil." For even Satan would still have to baptize us not in his own wretched name, but only in the fully trustworthy Name of the Triune God.

Again, in another communication, Calvin -- like John Knox after him -- shows his preference for Romanism above Anabaptism. For Calvin indicates he prefers the administration of infant baptism even in the Romish Church -- to its non-administration among infants of Anabaptists.

In 1553, we find Calvin observing that the Jesus "deliberately abstained from [Himself giving] the outward administration of the sign while He was in the world. In so doing He bore witness to all ages, that nothing is lost from the power of baptism when it is administered by a mortal man.... The very symbol that we receive from a mortal man, should be regarded in the same light as if Christ Himself had put forth His hand from heaven and stretched it out to us.

"Now if the baptism administered by man is Christ's baptism, it will not cease to be Christ's -- whoever the Minister may be.... This suffices to refute the Anabaptists, who maintain that baptism is vitiated by the vice of the [Roman Catholic] Minister -- and [who] disturb the Church with this madness. Augustine has aptly used this argument against the Donatists."<sup>57</sup>

Calvin also observes: "We hold the ordinance of God to be too sacred to depend for its efficacy on man. Even if it were then to be that Judas or any other epicurean contemner of everything sacred is the administrator -- the spiritual nourishment of the body and blood of Christ [in the Sacrament] are conferred through his hand just as if he were an angel come down from heaven."<sup>58</sup>

Also around 1557, Calvin is seen to comment on Amos 5:25-26 that "baptism is a sacred and immutable testimony of the grace of God -- though it were administered by the devil; though all who partake of it were ungodly and polluted as to their own persons. Baptism ever retains its own character, and is never contaminated by the vices of men."<sup>59</sup>

### **The papal antichrist cannot invalidate baptism in Roman Church**

In 1559, the last and definitive edition of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* appeared. There, Calvin's position on the validity of baptism administered by the Roman Church is yet clearer. We have already given his assessment as to the continuation of Christ's Church in the Middle Ages, in spite of the tyranny of the papal antichrist. Now we must show how this assumes the validity of baptisms administered there -- in spite of the papacy, and all of its perversions.

In his *Institutes*, Calvin explains:<sup>60</sup> "As in ancient times there remained among the Jews certain special privileges of a Church, so in the present day we deny not to the Papists those vestiges of a Church which the Lord has allowed to remain among them.... When the Lord had once made His covenant with the Jews, it was preserved.... Nor could circumcision be so profaned by their impure hands, as not still to be a true sign and sacrament of His covenant....

"So, having deposited His covenant in Gaul, Italy, Germany, Spain and England -- when these countries were oppressed by the tyranny of antichrist -- He, in order that His covenant might remain inviolable, first preserved baptism there, as an evidence of the covenant: baptism which, consecrated by His lips, retains its power, in spite of human depravity."

Thus, Calvin insists that God had "preserved baptism" also in Mediaeval Europe. Indeed, God had done so -- even in spite of "the tyranny of antichrist."

By the latter, Calvin clearly means the papacy -- as he quite categorically explains elsewhere too.<sup>61</sup> Thus, baptism administered in the Romish Church -- Calvin holds to be indisputably valid. For this reason, he outrightly rejects the rebaptizing -- by anybody -- of all protestantized Ex-Romanists (and, for that matter, of any romanized Ex-Protestants).

The Australian Presbyterian Free Church's Rev. Rowland Ward makes an astute observation in his 1990 book *Baptism in Scripture* (page 67). "Against the mindless Anabaptism of his own day and the Ultra-Protestantism of our own," insists Ward, "Calvin's further comments are relevant."

For even before the Protestant Reformation, explains Calvin,<sup>62</sup> God would not and "did not suffer Antichrist either to subvert His Church from its foundation, or to level it with the ground.... He allowed a fearful shaking and dismembering to take place. But He was pleased that, amid the devastation, the edifice should remain -- though half in ruins. Therefore, while we are unwilling simply to concede the name of 'Church' to the Papists -- we do not deny that there are churches among them....

"Daniel and Paul foretold that antichrist would sit in the Temple of God. Daniel 9:27; Second Thessalonians 2:4. We regard the Roman Pontiff as the leader and standard-bearer of that wicked and abominable kingdom. By placing his seat in the Temple of God -- it is intimated that his kingdom would not be such as to destroy the name either of Christ or of His Church.

"Hence, then, it is obvious that we do not at all deny that churches remain under his [antichrist's] tyranny; churches, however, which by sacrilegious impiety he has profaned.... I call them churches, inasmuch as the Lord there wondrously preserves some remains of His people, though miserably torn and scattered, and inasmuch as some symbols of the Church still remain -- symbols especially whose efficacy neither the craft of the devil nor human depravity can destroy." Indeed, symbols such as the ineradicable sign of trinitarian baptism itself!

### **Calvin rejects Romish 'holy water' as quasi-rebaptistic**

Yet Calvin insists<sup>63</sup> that Romanism's repeated resprinklings of holy water upon those already duly baptized -- comes perilously close to the hemerobaptistic heresy of constantly rebaptizing baptizees even on a daily basis. "Should any one ask them [the Romanists] where they get their holy water,

they will at once answer -- 'from the apostles!' As if I did not know who the Roman bishop is, to whom history ascribes the invention -- and who, if he had admitted the apostles to his council, assuredly never would have adulterated baptism by a foreign and unseasonable symbol" such as 'holy water' (*sic*)!

Calvin continues: "It does not seem probable to me that the origin of that consecration is so ancient as is there recorded. For when Augustine says (*Epistle* 118) that certain churches in his day rejected the formal imitation of Christ in the washing of feet, lest that rite should seem to pertain to baptism -- he intimates that there was then no kind of washing which has any resemblance to baptism. Be that as it may -- I will never admit that the Spirit of the apostles gave rise to that daily sign [of sprinkling with 'holy water'] by which baptism, while brought back to remembrance, is in a manner repeated." For baptism is totally unrepeatable.

Calvin concludes by observing that Christ's "baptism administered by the apostles while He was still on earth, was called **His** baptism" -- [*viz.*, **Christ-ian** baptism]. Now certain "ancient writers." continues Calvin, "say that the one baptism [of John the Baptizer] was only preparative to the other [baptism in the Name of the Triune God]." They say this, "because they read that those who had received the 'baptism of John' were [so **they** say!] again baptized by Paul (Acts 19:3-5 & Matthew 3:11). How greatly they are mistaken in this!"

### Donatism and Catabaptism decisively rejected by Calvin

Even more strenuously, Calvin further insists<sup>64</sup> that "a sacrament is not to be estimated by the hand of him by whom it is administered, but is to be received as from the hand of God Himself.... Its dignity neither gains nor loses by the administrator.... Among men, when a letter has been sent, if the hand and seal is recognized, it is not of the least consequence who or what the messenger was. So it ought to be sufficient for us to recognize the hand and seal of our Lord in His sacraments -- let the administrator be who he may!"

Calvin next compares the Catabaptists of his own day to the earlier Donatists. The latter were the 313<sup>f</sup> A.D. sectarians who rebaptized Ex-Catholics who had 'donatized.' After confuting "the error of the Donatists," Calvin adds:<sup>64</sup> "Such in the present day are our Catabaptists, who deny that we are duly baptized -- because we were baptized in the papacy by wicked men and idolaters. Hence they [the paidobaptist Catabaptists] furiously insist on anabaptism" alias rebaptism.

"Against these absurdities, we shall be fortified sufficiently if we reflect that by baptism we were initiated not into the name of any man, but into the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and therefore that baptism is not of man but of God -- by whomsoever it may have been administered. Be it that those who baptized us were most ignorant of God and all piety, or were despisers -- still they did not baptize us into a fellowship with their ignorance or sacrilege, but into the faith of Jesus Christ. Because the name which they invoked was not their own, but God's. Nor did they baptize into any other Name....

"Thus it did not harm the Jews that they were circumcised by impure and apostate priests. It did not nullify the symbol, so as to make it necessary to repeat it. It was enough to return to its genuine origin.... The objection that baptism ought to be celebrated in the assembly of the godly, does not prove that it loses its whole efficacy because it is partly defective....

"We do not abolish the institution of God -- [even] though idolaters may corrupt it. Circumcision was anciently vitiated by many superstitions, and yet ceased not to be regarded as a symbol of grace.

"Nor did Josiah and Hezekiah, when they assembled out of all Israel those who had revolted from God, call them to be circumcised anew." Nor would the execution of such a call even have been possible.

### **A baptizee's lack of faith does not invalidate that baptism**

Calvin next states<sup>65</sup> that Rebaptists sometimes "ask us what faith for several years followed our baptism, so that they may thereby prove that our baptism was in vain -- since it is not sanctified unless the word of the promise is received with faith. Our answer is that, [our then] being blind and unbelieving, we for a long time did not hold the promise which was given us in baptism. But that still, the promise -- as it was from God -- always remained fixed, and firm, and true....

"We acknowledge therefore that at that time, baptism profited us nothing -- since in us the offered promise, without which baptism is nothing, lay neglected.... But we do not believe that the promise itself has vanished. We rather reflect thus: God in baptism promises the remission of sins, and will undoubtedly perform what He has promised to all believers. That promise was offered to us in baptism. Let us therefore embrace it in faith! In regard to us, indeed, it was long buried -- on account of unbelief. Now, therefore, let us with faith receive it!

"Wherefore, when the Lord invites the Jewish people to repentance -- He gives no injunction concerning another circumcision. Though (as we have said) they were circumcised by a wicked and sacrilegious hand, and had long lived in the same impiety. All He urges, is conversion of heart. For how much soever the covenant might have been violated by them -- the symbol of the covenant always remained, according to the appointment of the Lord: firm and inviolable.

"Solely therefore on the condition of repentance, were they restored to the covenant which God had once made with them in circumcision. Though this which they had received at the hand of a covenant-breaking priest, they had themselves, as much as in them lay, polluted and extinguished."

### **No rebaptisms of the apostles; nor by Paul at Ephesus**

Next, Calvin<sup>66</sup> refers to two significant cases. First, there is the case of the apostles' own reception of Christian baptism -- before they themselves started giving it to others. John 3:22-26*f*. For some of the mediaeval and sixteenth-century Catabaptists allege that it was agents of Jesus who actually 'rebaptized' those apostles who had previously been baptized by John the Baptizer.

Secondly, there is the case of the baptizing of the approximately twelve 'disciples' whom St. Paul encountered in Ephesus. Again, Catabaptists **claim** that Paul had (re)baptized them -- even after they had been baptized priorly by John the Baptizer himself. Acts 19:1-7.

Now Catabaptists clutch at these two events -- as justification for their own view of mandatory rebaptism for all converts from Roman Catholicism. However, none of Christ's apostles nor any later believers was ever rebaptized -- according to the Holy Scriptures.

For those baptized by John the Baptizer who became first the disciples and then the apostles of Jesus Christ -- were never baptized or rebaptized by the Saviour nor by any of His followers. John 1:15*f*,35*f*,40*f* & 4:1-2. And the twelve heretics whom Paul encountered at Ephesus, being unitarians, had never previously received trinitarian baptism at all. Acts 19:3 *cf.* First Corinthians 15:29.

Calvin explains<sup>67</sup> that the Catabaptists "allege Paul rebaptized those who had been baptized with the baptism of John. Acts 19:3-5." Yet in actual fact, as Calvin himself rightly insists: "The baptism of John was the same as ours.... John's was a true baptism -- and one and the same with the baptism of Christ." Hence, "I deny that they [the unitarians at Ephesus] were re-baptized."

Furthermore, continues John Calvin, "if ignorance vitiates a former [baptism] and requires to be corrected by a second baptism -- the apostles should first of all have been rebaptized. Since for more than three full years after their baptism [by John], they scarcely received any slender portion of purer doctrine" even from their new mentor Jesus Himself. Yet they were never rebaptized.

However, even if they had been, and even if we were to be rebaptized, and even repeatedly -- it would still be of no avail. For "then, so numerous being the acts of ignorance which by the mercy of God are daily corrected in us -- what rivers would suffice, for so many repeated baptisms?!"

### **Ecclesiastical embellishments to baptism do not invalidate it**

At this point, Calvin indicates<sup>68</sup> that post-apostolic human additions to trinitarian baptism, though indeed undesirable, do not themselves invalidate that sacrament. Thus, "in regard to the external symbol, I wish the genuine institution of Christ had been maintained.... As if to be baptized with water according to the precept of Christ had been a contemptible thing -- a benediction, or rather incantation, was devised....

There was afterwards added the taper and chrism, while exorcism was thought to open the door for baptism. Though I am not unaware how ancient the origin of this adventitious farrago is -- still, it is lawful for me and all the godly to reject whatever men have presumed to add to the institution of Christ."

For indeed, it was "when Satan saw that by the foolish credulity of the world his impostures were received almost without objection at the commencement of the Gospel -- he proceeded to grosser mockery. Hence spittle, and other follies -- to the open disgrace of baptism -- were introduced with unbridled licence." See Cyprian's *Epistle* 69(70):2.

These unnecessary and post-apostolic additions should certainly be rejected. However, as regards the valid baptism itself -- still there in spite of all the above-mentioned additions thereto -- it would, of course, be unlawful for anyone to reject!

Similarly, all Christians worldwide should certainly reject the pathetic practice of those 'Protestant' (*sic*) churches especially in America -- which baptize babies by dipping red roses for boys and white roses for girls into the baptismal font and then flicking the water off the roses onto the tiny babies' heads, in the Name of the Triune God. Yet what really Reformed Christian would argue that these perverted baptisms are **invalid**, and need to be **re-administered** without the roses?

"From our experience of them," declares Calvin of these post-apostolic accretions to baptism, "let us learn that there is nothing holier or better or safer -- than to be contented with the authority of Christ alone. How much better therefore it is to lay aside all theatrical pomp, which dazzles the eyes of the simple and dulls their minds." However, even where such "pomp" was not laid aside --as in the Mediaeval Romish Church -- those baptisms were still valid.

How then would Calvin himself have the candidate to be baptized? Says the genius of Geneva: "How much better...it is to lay aside all theatrical pomp...and when any one is to be baptized, to bring him forward and present him to God: the whole Church looking on as witnesses and praying over him to recite the *Confession of Faith* in which the catechumen has been instructed.

"Explain the promises which are given in baptism; then baptize in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; and conclude with prayer and thanksgiving! In this way, nothing which is appropriate would be omitted.... The one ceremony which proceeded from its divine Author would shine forth most brightly, not being buried or polluted by extraneous observances."

Even rather minor variations within the trinitarian baptismal ceremony itself -- do not invalidate the sacrament. Such minor matters could be: sprinkling (or immersing) -- onefoldly, or threefoldly.

Thus Calvin insists: "Whether the person [getting] baptized is to be immersed wholly, and that whether once or thrice -- or whether he is only to be sprinkled with water -- is not of the least consequence." Yet, he himself soon adds: "**We maintain...that in baptism...the forehead is sprinkled with water!**"<sup>69</sup>



As Calvin states elsewhere too:<sup>70</sup> "The Church allowed itself freedom, from the beginning, to have slightly different rites. For some used to immerse [or to 'intinct'] three times, while others did it only once. Accordingly, there is no call for us to be too particular about things that are not so necessary...."

Sins are effaced by the mere remembrance of baptism...conjoined with faith and repentance.... We ought to turn our thoughts not only to the sprinkling of water.... The Spirit of God...sprinkles our soul with the blood of Christ. First Peter 1:2!"

### **The connection between unrepeatable baptism and confirmation**

Extremely interesting is the connection perceived by Calvin between the unrepeatable sacramental baptism of a covenant infant -- and the latter's own later and non-sacramental confirmation. By the latter, is meant his profession of faith at teenage (without rebaptism) at the time of his first admission to the Lord's table. In a sense, subsequent public re-affirmations of faith could indeed then be regarded as re-confirmations -- yett never to be effected by way of rebaptisms!

Explains Calvin:<sup>71</sup> "It was anciently customary for the children of Christians, after they had grown up, to appear before the bishop to fulfil that duty which was required of such adults as presented themselves for baptism.... The infants therefore, who had been initiated by baptism, not then having given a confession of faith to the Church, were...toward the end of their boyhood or on adolescence -- brought forward by their parents and were examined by the bishop in terms of the *Catechism*...."

"The ceremony of laying on of hands was also used. Thus the boy, on his faith being approved, was dismissed with a solemn blessing. Ancient writers often make mention of this custom...."

"Leo says (*Epistle 39*): 'If anyone returns from heretics, let him not be baptized again, but let that which was there wanting to him -- viz. the virtue of the Spirit -- be conferred by the laying on of the hands of the bishop.'"

The same would apply even if he had been baptized only by heretics, and then further groomed in that tradition -- until he might get better directed toward a purer church or denomination. For in his *Epistle 77*, Leo elsewhere explains what he meant when he had earlier said: 'Let not him who was baptized by heretics be rebaptized -- but be confirmed, by the laying on of hands with the invocation of the Holy Spirit' Elucidates Calvin: "This laying on of hands, which is done simply by way of benediction, I commend -- and would like to see restored to its pure use in the present day."

A very vexing problem was that the Romanists had quite wrongly ritualized this non-sacramental confirmation, through the accretion of holy oil or chrism. Furthermore, they had then also falsely proclaimed that to be a sacrament. Indeed, they had later elevated it even above baptism itself.

"They conclude," observes Calvin,<sup>72</sup> "that this 'sacred unction' is to be held in greater veneration than baptism -- because the former is specially administered by the ['bishops' as a] higher order of priests, whereas the latter is dispensed in common by all priests whatever.... But do they [thereby] not...prove themselves to be Donatists -- who estimate the value of the sacrament by the dignity of the minister?"

Of course they do! Hence, the Romanists were practising Donatism -- and the Protestants were now the true Catholics.

### **Confirmation no 'repetition' of unrepeatable baptism**

The Romanists also had a second reason for elevating their confirmation above baptism. It is a reason curiously akin to that of submersionist Baptists today -- who regard Presbyterian sprinkling as quantitatively inadequate and modally unacceptable.

Exclaims Calvin:<sup>73</sup> "How frivolous, inept and stolid the other reason -- that their confirmation is worthier than the baptism of God -- because in [their] confirmation it is the [whole] forehead that is besmeared with oil, and in baptism [only] the cranium.... We maintain, against them, that **in baptism also, the forehead is sprinkled with water** -- in comparison with which we do not value your oil one straw, whether in baptism or in confirmation."

Calvin also gives<sup>74</sup> a third reason for rejecting the Romanists' concept of confirmation. In support of their own views, they had appealed to "antiquity" and "the consent of many ages." Yet, "even were this true -- they gain nothing by it. A sacrament is not of earth, but of heaven; not of men, but of God only. They must prove God to be the Author of their 'confirmation' -- if they would have it to be regarded as a sacrament.

"But why obtrude antiquity -- seeing that ancient writers, whenever they would speak precisely, nowhere mention more than two sacraments" -- baptism and the supper (but not confirmation)? Were the bulwark of our faith to be sought from men, we have an impregnable citadel in this -- that the fictitious sacraments of these men were never recognized as sacraments by ancient writers." Unfortunately for them, the "antiquity" they claim is clearly only from the time of Augustine.

Before Augustine, of course, "ancient writers" do "speak of the laying on of hands. But do they call it a sacrament?" No!

"Augustine distinctly affirms that it is nothing but prayer. *De Bapt. cont. Donat.*, III:16. Let them not here yelp but one of their vile distinctions -- that the laying on of hands to which Augustine referred, was not the confirmatory but the curative or reconciliatory. His book is extant, and in men's

hands. If I wrest it to any meaning different from that which Augustine himself wrote it -- they are welcome not only to load me with reproaches after their wonted manner, but to spit upon me!

"He is speaking of those who returned from schism to the unity of the Church. He says that they have no need of a repetition of baptism. For the laying on of hands is sufficient." Thus, once again, according to Calvin -- there is "no need of a repetition of baptism."

### **Unrepeatable baptism and lifelong repentance**

John Calvin finally refutes the Romish pseudo-sacrament of 'penance' (*sic*). That is yet another post-apostolic device which, in practice, had weakened the once-and-for-all nature of Biblical baptism. For, as regards 'penance' -- explains Calvin<sup>75</sup> -- "I deny that it can justly be regarded as a sacrament.... Whatever ceremony is here used, is a mere invention of man....

"Their fiction of the 'sacrament' of penance -- therefore -- was falsehood and imposture. This fictitious 'sacrament' they adorned with the befitting *eulogium* that it was the second plank in the case of shipwreck. Because if any one had, by sin, injured 'the garment of innocence' received in baptism -- he might repair it by penitence....

"As if [truly 'indelible'] baptism were effaced by sin! Were it not rather to be recalled to the mind of the sinner, whenever he thinks of the forgiveness of sins -- so that he may thereby: recollect himself; regain courage; and be confirmed in the belief that he shall obtain the forgiveness of sins which was promised him in baptism?" Of course!

Calvin concludes: "You will speak most correctly, therefore, if you call **baptism** 'the sacrament of penitence' -- seeing it is given to those who aim at repentance to confirm their faith and seal their confidence.... [Thus] John preached 'the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins.' Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3."

### **Calvin assures Knox that Rome's baptisms are valid**

Also in 1559, we see Calvin writing<sup>76</sup> to Scottish Reformer John Knox that "the interruption of piety which has prevailed in Popery, has not taken away from baptism its force and efficacy.... Offspring descended from holy and pious ancestors [such as godly mothers and grandmothers], belong to the body of the Church -- though their fathers and grandfathers may have been apostates." It is thus, even though it is often so that "baptism is prostituted" in Romanism -- and elsewhere too, as in the previously mentioned rose-intincting 'Protestant' (*sic*) churches especially in America.

Yet even a prostituted baptism in the Church of Rome or elsewhere, is still a baptism -- just as a prostituted woman is herself still a woman. For a woman does not cease to be a woman -- nor does one's "Mother Church" cease to be one's mother -- even if she becomes a prostitute. Hosea 2:2.

Neither does triune baptism lose its validity -- even if and when administered by the great harlot of Revelation 17:5.

It may well be true that, even before the Protestant Reformation, the Romish Church had already become that very mother of harlots. Perhaps -- already in Calvin's time -- "upon her forehead a name was written: 'Mystery Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.'" But it was not so then, nor is it yet so, that Rome baptizes in her own name. Nor does she then proclaim: "I baptize you in the name of Romish Babylon the great, the mother of harlots!"

To this very day, Rome has always -- and only -- baptized solely "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Hence, as Calvin informs Knox, "the interruption of piety which has prevailed in Popery, has not taken away from baptism its force and efficacy."

The same is true also of other deformed denominations -- even those which used to be Protestant. Their own decline from God's Word, is reminiscent of Rome's -- before them. In that sense, the Romish whore is the "mother of harlots" -- those daughter denominations which follow in her footsteps and depart from Protestantism (alias the faithful proclamation of the Word of the Lord). Yet there too -- as long as those deformed denominations still baptize in the Name of the Triune God -- such baptisms are still fully valid and unrepeatable.

### **Rome's baptisms recognized in Calvin's *French Confession***

This is why, again in 1559, Dr. Calvin stated in his *French Confession*:<sup>77</sup> "We condemn the papal assemblies -- as the pure Word of God is banished from them, their sacraments are corrupted or falsified or destroyed, and all superstitions and idolatries are in them.... Nevertheless, as some trace of the Church is left in the papacy and the virtue and substance of baptism remain, and as the efficacy of baptism does not depend upon the person who administers it -- we confess that those baptized in it do not need a second baptism...."

"Baptism is given as a pledge of our adoption.... We are baptized only once.... The benefit that it symbolizes to us, reaches over our whole lives and to our death -- so that we have a lasting witness that Jesus Christ will always be our justification and sanctification."

Indeed, even in 1563, we see Calvin replying on behalf of the Pastors and Professors of Geneva -- to the National Synod of the French Reformed Church. There Dr. John Calvin writes: "'Popish' baptism is grounded upon the institution of Christ -- because the priests, perverse as they are, and utterly corrupt, are yet the ordinary Ministers of that Church in which they tyrannically demean themselves."<sup>78</sup>

### **Trent (1545-1563) never changed Rome's doctrine of baptism**

It was in that same year 1563 that all of the Tridentine canons -- stretching from those of 13th December 1545 up to those formulated on 4th December 1563 -- were on that latter date finally completed and re-affirmed.<sup>79</sup> That, of course, was long after her Seventh Session on 3rd March 1547 -- when Trent had finished expounding her doctrine of baptism.<sup>80</sup> Since 1547, Trent -- and only under her doctrine of penance expounded on 25th November 1551 -- had merely re-iterated her previously expressed erroneous view that "baptism itself is for those who have not as yet been regenerated."<sup>81</sup>

American Catabaptists in particular, like the noted Thornwell and his modern 'Quasi-Calvinist' admirers, have postulated: that Calvin wrote his 1536 *Institutes* before the 1545<sup>f</sup> Romish Council of Trent; that Trent then worsened Rome's baptismal doctrines; and that Calvin would not have maintained his anticatabaptism thereafter. Significantly, however, Calvin's anticatabaptism is still found in his last and definitive edition of the *Institutes* (that of 1559). It is also found, as we have already seen and will yet further see, in many of his other writings too.

Radically false, therefore, are the modern catabaptistic allegations of 'Ultra-Anti-Romists' that Trent changed Rome's Pre-Tridentine doctrine of baptism -- or that Trent subsequently harshened it after Calvin had finished evaluating it. False also is the modern catabaptistic conclusion drawn from these allegations, *viz.* that protestantized Ex-Romanists now need rebaptizing.

For that sinful suggestion (*cf.* Hebrews 6:1-6) is predicated on the inaccurate inference that Calvin affirmed the validity only of Rome's Pre-Tridentine baptisms -- but not that of her Tridentine or Post-Tridentine sacramentology.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, even after the Decrees of Trent were totally terminated on 4th December 1563, Calvin still went on to oppose catabaptism -- both implicitly and explicitly -- in three **subsequent** writings.

### **Calvin's 1563 views on the validity of Zipporah's circumcising**

In that same year<sup>83</sup> -- 1563 -- Calvin published his *Harmony of the Pentateuch*. There, discussing the great irregularity of the circumcision performed by Zipporah in Exodus 4:24<sup>f</sup>, he nevertheless clearly implies its validity.

Explains Calvin of Moses:<sup>84</sup> "The expression 'the Lord met him' [Exodus 4:24] is here used in a bad sense.... Moses was assured of His anger.... For why should Zipporah have taken a sharp stone or knife and circumcised her son -- had she not known that God was offended at his uncircumcision? ... Moses had provoked God's vengeance.... He was terrified by the approach of certain destruction....

"The cause of his affliction was shewn him.... It would never otherwise have occurred to himself or his wife to circumcise the child to appease God's wrath.... God was, as it were, propitiated by this

offering -- since He withdrew His hand and took away the tokens of His wrath.... Let us then learn from hence to use reverently the sacraments which are the seals of God's grace -- lest He should severely avenge our despisal of them....

"Certainly the child was not duly [or regularly] circumcised.... Still, it is plain from the event that the ceremony -- thus rashly performed -- pleased God. For it is immediately added that 'He let him go' [Exodus 4:26].... The scourge of God ceased or was removed, because He was pacified by the repentance both of Moses and of Zipporah, although it [the circumcision] was improper [or irregular but not invalid] -- *praeopostera*(Latin); *vicieuse* (French) -- in itself.

"Not that imperfect obedience is pleasing to God absolutely. But relatively, through indulgence, it is sometimes approved.... When therefore Zipporah, who had opposed her husband, circumcised her son with her own hands -- although she had not yet seriously repented -- yet [the Lord] God was contented with the suppression of her pride, so as to cease from afflicting Moses....

"Let us conclude, then, that the confusion of Zipporah and the stupor of Moses were pardoned.... She rashly hastened to circumcise her son -- not out of presumption, but yielding to the fears of destruction threatened by God."

What, though, of the Romanists with their encouragement of 'emergency baptisms' even by nursemaids? For that matter, what about baptisms performed in modernist churches by female Ministers -- 'ordained' unbiblically? Both practices are to be most strongly discouraged. Yet, provided the baptisms concerned were trinitarian -- once performed, their validity should not be questioned.

For, responds Calvin: "Their folly is confuted, who wish to obtain a colour for baptism by women from this passage. For they contend that if infants be in danger of death, they may properly be baptized by women -- because Zipporah circumcised her son. But they will themselves allow that, if a man be present, a woman could not lawfully [or regularly] administer this sacrament. It is a perversion, then, to lay down a rule -- from a confused and hasty act."

Yet the circumcision performed by Zipporah was certainly valid. For God then immediately ceased threatening the delinquent Moses. Being valid, even this irregular circumcision was not to be repeated later -- in a more regular way. Indeed, circumcision one performed -- is unrepeatable anyway. So too, *mutatis mutandis*, is the baptism which has replaced it. Romans 4:11f & 6:1f; Colossians 2:11f; Hebrews 6:1-6.

### **Calvin on Joshua: circumcision but no recircumcision before Passover**

In the last year of his life, 1564, Calvin completed and published his *Commentary on Joshua*.<sup>85</sup> There, in discussing Joshua 5:2-8, he showed the need of being circumcised -- before partaking of the

Passover. Writes Calvin: "Just as in the present day the ordinance of the Supper is common -- only to those who have been admitted into the Church by baptism."

As regards the Israelites, continues Calvin, for forty years after the time of their exodus from Egypt -- "none were circumcised on the way, after they had set out.... For it is said that their sons...were circumcised by Joshua...in order that their uncircumcision might not pollute the holy land."<sup>86</sup> Circumcision -- like the baptism which has now replaced it -- may indeed, sinfully, be postponed. However, once administered -- it is sacramentally unrepeatable.

### Calvin on Ezekiel: baptisms in Romish Church clearly valid

We now come to Calvin's last work -- his 1564 unfinished *Commentaries on the First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*. It was published only posthumously, in 1565 -- by Calvin's successor Beza.<sup>87</sup> It was both written and published a considerable time after the cessation of the last session of the Romish Council of Trent in 1563. Consequently, its clear teaching as to the abiding validity and hence unrepeatability of baptisms performed in the deformed Church of Rome -- is therefore irrefutable.

Commenting on Ezekiel 16:21 and 16:20, John Calvin clearly states:<sup>88</sup> "The Jews were naturally accursed, through being Adam's seed. But by supernatural and singular privilege, they were exempt and free from the curse -- since circumcision was a testimony of the adoption by which God had consecrated them to Himself. Hence they were holy.... As to their being impure, it could not...abolish God's covenant.

"The same thing ought at this time to prevail in the Papacy. For we are all born under the curse. And yet God acknowledges supernaturally as His sons all who spring from the faithful -- not only in the first or second degree, but even to a thousand generations.... Paul says that the children of the faithful are holy, since baptism does not lose its efficacy and the adoption of God remains fixed. First Corinthians 7:14....

"In the Papacy, such declension has grown up through many ages, that they have altogether denied God.... And yet, it is certain that a portion of God's covenant remains among them.... Hence it arises, that our baptism does not need renewal. Because although the devil has long reigned in the Papacy -- yet he could not altogether extinguish God's grace. Nay, a Church is among them.

"For otherwise, Paul's prophecy would have been false -- when he says that antichrist was seated in the Temple of God. Second Thessalonians 2:4. If in the Papacy there had been only Satan's dunghill or brothel, and no form of a Church had remained in it -- this had been a proof that antichrist did not sit in the Temple of God. But this, as I have said, exaggerates their crime -- and is very far from enabling them to erect their crests as they do."

Soon after writing his unfinished *Commentary on Ezekiel*, Calvin died on 27th May 1564. Born in Romish France and baptized in the Roman Catholic Church, he never ceased to keep reforming. He wanted ongoing reformation for himself, when yet a Romanist -- and also after becoming a Protestant. Luke 22:31-32 & Romans 12:1-2. He also wanted ongoing reformation for Christ's Church -- whether Romish, or Protestant. Hebrews 9:10 to 10:22 & Revelation 2:1-5f to 3:19.

*Christianus regeneratus, semper sanctificandus.* A regenerated Christian always needs to keep on being sanctified! *Ecclesia deformata fiat reformata!* Let the 'Deformed Church' become a Reformed Church! *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda.* The Reformed Church always needs to keep on being reformed.

Always improving but never repeating his infant baptism, Calvin kept on serving God all his life. Then he joined the ranks of those who believe and have been baptized -- in heaven above. Mark 16:16 and Revelation 22:4.

### **Calvin's high regard for the imperfect Church and her baptism**

The wildcat Anabaptists wanted (and still want) to demolish the Church Universal and start anew with their own revolutionary rebaptisms. But Calvin insisted instead in bringing Reformation to the historic Christian Church.

"By the faith of the Gospel," he explains,<sup>89</sup> "Christ becomes ours...by depositing this treasure with the Church.... In particular, He has instituted sacraments, which we feel by experience to be most useful helps in fostering and confirming our faith.... What God has thus joined together, let not man put asunder. Mark 10:9. To those to whom He is Father, let the Church also be mother....

"In the Creed, we profess to believe the Church. Reference is made...to the Visible Church, of which we are now treating.... This article of the Creed relates in some measure to the external Church, that every one of us must maintain brotherly concord with all the children of God.... Hence the additional expression, the 'communion of saints'....

"In order to embrace the unity of the Church in this manner, it is not necessary...to see it with our eyes.... But as it is now our purpose to discourse of the Visible Church, let us learn from her single title of 'Mother' how useful -- nay, how necessary -- the knowledge of her is.

"Since there is no other means of entering into life, unless she conceive us in the womb and give us birth.... Beyond the pale of the Church, no forgiveness of sins -- no salvation -- can be hoped for.... The abandonment of the Church is always fatal....

"By the name 'Church' is designated the whole body of mankind scattered throughout the world, who profess to worship one God and Christ -- who by baptism are initiated into the faith.... In this



Church there is a very large mixture of hypocrites who have nothing of Christ but the name and outward appearance....

"Wherever we see the Word of God, sincerely preached and heard -- wherever we see the sacraments, administered according to the institution of Christ -- there we cannot have any doubt that the Church of God has some existence.... We are never to discard it so long as these remain, though it may otherwise teem with numerous faults....

"We are not on account of every minute difference to abandon a church, provided it retain sound and unimpaired that doctrine in which the safety of piety consists -- and keep the use of the sacraments instituted by the Lord. Meanwhile, if we strive to reform what is offensive, we act in the discharge of duty....

"Our indulgence ought to extend much farther in tolerating imperfection of conduct.... There always have been persons...imbued with a false persuasion of absolute holiness.... Such of old were the Cathari and the Donatists..... Such in the present day are some of the Anabaptists.... Seeing that among those to whom the Gospel is preached, the fruit produced is not in accordance with the doctrine -- they forthwith conclude that there no church exists!

"The offence is indeed well founded.... It is one to which in this most unhappy age we give far too much occasion.... Still, those of whom we have spoken, sin in their turn -- by not knowing how to set bounds to their offence. For where the Lord requires mercy, they omit it and give themselves up to immoderate severity. Thinking there is no church where there is not complete purity and integrity of conduct -- they, through hatred of wickedness, withdraw from a genuine church....

"Those who are the most forward and as it were leaders in producing revolt from the Church have, for the most part, no other motive than to display their own superiority by despising all other men. Well and wisely therefore does Augustine say...that pious reason and the mode of ecclesiastical discipline ought specially to regard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.... Those bad sons who...attempt altogether to draw away..., pervert to sacrilegious schism.... To the pious and placid his advice is mercifully to correct what they can and to bear patiently with what they cannot correct; in love lamenting and mourning until God either reform or correct -- or at the harvest root up the tares and scatter the chaff. Augustine: *Against the Donatist Parmenian* chs. 1-2....

"Christ Himself, His apostles, and almost all the prophets have furnished us with examples. Fearful are the descriptions in which Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Habakkuk and others deplore the diseases of the Church of Jerusalem. In the people, the rulers and the priests, corruption prevailed to such a degree that Isaiah hesitates not -- to liken Jerusalem to Sodom and Gomorrah! Isaiah 1:10. Religion was partly despised, partly adulterated -- while in regard to morals we everywhere meet with accounts of theft, robbery, perfidy, murder and similar crimes.

"The prophets, however, did not therefore either form new churches for themselves or erect new altars on which they might have separate sacrifices. But whatever their countrymen might be,

reflecting that the Lord had deposited His Word with them and instituted the ceremonies by which He was then worshipped -- they stretched out pure hands to Him, though amid the company of the ungodly.... If the holy prophets felt no obligation to withdraw from the Church on account of the very numerous and heinous crimes not of one or two individuals but almost of the whole people --we arrogate too much to ourselves, if we presume forthwith to withdraw from the communion of the Church [just] because the lives of all accord not with our judgment or even with the Christian profession.

"Then, what kind of age was that of Christ and the apostles? Yet neither could the desperate impiety of the Pharisees nor the dissolute licentiousness of manners which everywhere prevailed, prevent them from using the same sacred rites with the people and meeting in one common temple for the public exercises of religion.... They knew that those who joined in these sacred rites with a pure conscience, were not at all polluted by the society of the wicked. If any one is little moved by prophets and apostles -- let him at least defer to the authority of Christ!"

### **Calvin upholds the baptism even of the heretical Corinthians**

Calvin develops this thought even more concretely in his evaluation of the deeply sinful and doctrinally deviant Church in Corinth. For, he explains,<sup>90</sup> "it is a dangerous temptation to think there is no Church where perfect purity is lacking. The point is that anyone who is obsessed by that idea, must cut himself off from everybody else, and appear to himself to be the only saint in the world. Or he must set up a sect of his own along with other hypocrites.

"Why then should Paul have recognized the Church at Corinth? No doubt it was because he saw among them the teaching of the Gospel, baptism and the Lord's supper -- the marks by which the Church ought to be determined. For while some had begun to be uncertain about the resurrection, yet that error had not permeated the whole body -- and so neither the name nor the reality of the Church is wiped out on that account....

Some defects had crept into the administration of the Supper. Discipline and moral tone had greatly declined. The simplicity of the Gospel was despised. They had surrendered themselves to ostentation and display. They were broken up into various parties through the ambition of their Ministers. Nevertheless, because they held on to the fundamental teaching -- the One God was worshipped by them and was invoked in the Name of Christ. They rested their confidence of salvation in Christ, and they had a ministry that was not wholly corrupt.

"For those reasons, the Church still continued to exist among them. Hence wherever the worship of God is unimpaired, and that fundamental teaching of which I have spoken persists -- there we may without difficulty decide the Church exists."

Yet some "exclaim that it is impossible to tolerate the vice which everywhere stalks abroad.... What if the apostle's sentiment applies here also? Among the Corinthians it was not a few that erred, but

almost the whole body had become tainted.... There was not only corruption in manners, but also in doctrine. What course was taken by the holy apostle..., by the organ of the heavenly Spirit, by Whose testimony the Church stands and falls?

"Does he seek separation from them? Does he discard them from the Kingdom of Christ? Does he strike them with the thunder of a final anathema? He not only does none of these things, but he acknowledges and heralds them as a Church of Christ.... Lawsuits and avarice prevail.... A crime which even the Gentiles would execrate, is openly approved.... Some hold the resurrection of the dead in derision, though with it the whole Gospel must fall.... Many things are done neither decently nor in order.... There the Church still remains -- simply because the ministration of Word and Sacrament is not rejected."

### **Antirebaptist Calvin holds Rome's baptisms valid**

So, according to Calvin: Firstly, all sons of Adam are sinners from their very conception onward.<sup>91</sup> Secondly, there is a difference between unborn believers and unbelievers.<sup>92</sup> Thirdly, regeneration generally precedes regular baptism.<sup>93</sup>

Fourthly, baptism itself never regenerates and is not at all necessary for salvation.<sup>94</sup> Fifthly, the sacrament of baptism is not for the dead nor for the dying.<sup>95</sup> Sixthly, baptism should be given only to those who already seem to be believers (whether infants or adults).<sup>96</sup> Seventhly, baptism should take place only in a church setting (and never privately).<sup>97</sup>

Eighthly, Scripture requires that parents at Protestant baptismal services for their children, promise to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Truly, this promise cannot sincerely be given by Romanists. Consequently, Protestant churches should refuse to baptize the children of Romanists not yet protestantized -- and also the children of all other persons who cannot yet creditably profess (alias 'protest') the Biblical faith.<sup>98</sup>

Ninthly, the children of backslidden Protestants should not be baptized in Protestant churches until those backsliders have first been restored to full fellowship within the Protestant Church. Further, Protestant parents who have their children baptized in Romish churches -- or who get themselves rebaptized either in Romish or Baptist churches -- are censorable. Yet baptizees who lapse from the Christian faith even into infidelity -- should never be rebaptized after their later reconversion back to Christianity.<sup>99</sup>

Tenthly, nevertheless, all "children of papists" (& even of backslidden non-papist Christ-professing parents), once baptized -- even if only in the Romish Church -- "are validly baptized" quite unto the thousandth generation. Consequently, they should never be rebaptized -- if and when they become Protestants. Indeed, triune baptism administered even in the Church of Rome is without question thoroughly valid.<sup>100</sup>

For Calvin rightly distinguishes the Visible from the Invisible Church. As regards the former, the Reformer states that "by the name of 'Church' is designated the whole body of mankind scattered throughout the world who profess to worship one God and Christ -- who by baptism are initiated into the faith.... In this Church, there is a very large mixture of hypocrites!"

Naturally, he continues, "it is necessary to believe the Invisible Church -- which is manifest to the eye of God only." Yet we may not neglect the Visible Church either. For "we are also enjoined to regard this Church which is so called with reference to man; and to cultivate its communion."<sup>101</sup>

As Dr. Georg Steitz observes<sup>102</sup> in his article (on 'Baptism') in the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge*, "both Lutherans and Reformed...came to the conclusion that every baptism in the Name of the Trinity was valid and efficacious to the believing soul." Indeed, in the words of the great Reformed theologian Gravemeijer:<sup>103</sup> "It never entered into the thoughts of Luther and Zwingli and Calvin to get themselves rebaptized."

For, as Rev. Professor Dr. Philip Schaff has succinctly stated:<sup>104</sup> "The Reformers were baptized, confirmed and educated -- most of them also ordained -- in the Catholic Church" in fellowship with Rome. They "had at first no intention to leave it -- but simply to purify it by the Word of God. They shrank from the idea of schism and continued, like the apostles, in the communion of their fathers -- until they were expelled from it."

History had repeated itself. Paul had first preached the Gospel to the Church of Israel. However, when that body refused to be reformed, he declared: "Seeing you push it away from yourselves, and regard yourselves as unworthy of everlasting life -- look, we turn to the Gentiles.... And they shook off the dust of their feet against them." Acts 13:46-51.

John Calvin did the same with the Church of Rome. Yet just as Paul never renounced the validity of the circumcision he had received in Israel -- neither did Calvin ever renounce the validity of the baptism he had received in Rome. To the contrary. As Paul challenged Israel to undergo the circumcision of the heart -- so too did Calvin challenge Rome to improve its baptism, and to start living the way all baptized people should live.

### **Conclusion: Calvinism versus Catabaptism**

Calvinism is the true teaching that all men everywhere should rest upon Christ alone. It urges especially those who are trapped in any grossly deformed part of the Christian Church, to trust only in the Triune God of their once-and-for-all and true triune baptism.<sup>105</sup>

Thereafter, it further urges them to 'pro-test' -- that is, to witness for Christ and against anti-christ. This is what makes them Protest-ants. Because of their protests, they are opposed from within their mother church -- and often feel forced ultimately to leave their unreforming deformed denomination. Then they end up associating themselves with the Reformed Church catholic.<sup>106</sup>

Catabaptism is the false and sectarian teaching that the Roman Catholic Church is a totally pagan religion and not even a false part of the Christian Church at all. It regards all alleged baptisms, though indeed performed in the Name of the Triune God, as being no baptism at all -- whenever performed by or under the direction of Romanism.

Accordingly, Catabaptists regards Romanists as unbaptized pagans -- so that all converts from Romanism are regarded as still needing baptism. Thus Catabaptism is not principally Pro-testant at all. Principally, Catabaptism is sectarian -- and preponderantly Anti-Romish. Quite *per contra*, however, the Lord Jesus Christ and his inspired apostle Paul.<sup>107</sup>

Calvinism opposes both Romanism and Catabaptism. Already Zwingli, in his 1527 book *Against the Catabaptist Catastrophe*, opposed those who repudiated the validity of infant baptism in general. Yet, while strongly attacking the Romish doctrine as to the consequences of baptism, he also insisted on the essential validity and unrepeatability of all baptisms performed by Romanists.<sup>108</sup>

Within ten years, in the first edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Se. John Calvin in turn had compared Catabaptism to Donatism.<sup>109</sup> For the Donatists, while practising infant baptism themselves, repudiated the validity of all 'Catholic baptisms.'

Catabaptism rightly opposes Romanism. Wrongly, however, it also opposes consistent Calvinism. Some inconsistent Catabaptists have preserved infant baptism. Indeed, others actually even call themselves not just Calvinists but sometimes even Presbyterians. The more consistent Catabaptists, however, have abandoned even that. Many of them then end up calling themselves 'Calvinist Baptists' or 'Reformed Baptists' -- both of them gross contradictions in terms!

All of the Catabaptists claim to be Christians. It is certainly true that many of them are. It is also true that many Catabaptists greatly admire much of the Calvinistic system -- outside the area of baptism. It is also true that some Catabaptists would call themselves Calvinists. Many modern Catabaptists still do.

Absurdly, Catabaptists believe that Calvin was an inconsistent Calvin-ist -- in the area of baptism! Yet the truth is, that it is the Catabaptists who -- at best -- are only inconsistent Sub-Calvinists. At the time of the Protestant Reformation, the Catabaptists did not consider Calvin to be sufficiently Anti-Romish. Calvin in turn considered the Catabaptists to be Sub-Protestant -- because unbiblical and sectarian as regards their views on holy baptism.

Thus, on the matter of baptism, the Catabaptists are quite irreconcilable with that greatest of all Calvinists -- the 1547f John Calvin himself. Catabaptism is also quite irreconcilable with those greatest of all Calvinistic documents -- the doctrinal standards of the 1647f Westminster Assembly.

We conclude. Let us urge the reader again to read the earlier-cited excerpts from Calvin's 23rd January 1556 *Sermon on Deuteronomy* (23:7). There, Calvin recognizes the validity of baptism

administered even by Romanists in the Romish Church. Very far from urging Romanists to get (re)baptized, Calvin instead urges them to 'improve' their baptism (Romans 6:1-5). He implores them to become True Protestants and thus enjoy what their baptism already urges them to do -- namely to trust fully in the Triune Father and Son and Holy Spirit Himself in Whose Name they have already been baptized. Compare the *Westminster Larger Catechism* 167.

Neo-Presbyterians should forthwith quit building *de facto* Baptist churches on the mission field. If only Neo-Presbyterians would follow Calvin's above advice -- instead of sponsoring sectarian Baptist missions -- South America and Southern Europe would speedily embrace Calvinism!

The following is a true story. Once upon a time -- there were four Roman Catholic cousins. When babies --- all of them were baptized in the Roman Catholic Church. When still little boys -- they often played together. Each of them then resolved -- when he grew up -- to go study for the priesthood. Three did; but today are priests no more. The fourth, Nigel, wrote this article.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Francis Nigel Lee was born in 1934 in the Westmorland County of Cumbria (in Great Britain). He is the great-grandson of a fiery preacher whose family disintegrated when he backslid. Though Lee's father was an Atheist, he married a Roman Catholic who raised her son in that faith.

At the onset of the Second World War, Lee's father was appointed by the Royal Navy as Chief Radar Officer (South Atlantic). So the family then moved to South Africa. There, Lee became a Calvinist; had the great joy of leading both of his parents to Christ; and became a Minister of God's Word and Sacraments in the Dutch Reformed Church of Natal.

Emigrating to the U.S.A., Lee attended the very first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America; transferred his ministerial credentials to that denomination; and pastored Congregations in Mississippi and Florida. He was also: Professor of Philosophy at Shelton College in New Jersey; Visiting Lecturer at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Ms.; Staley Distinguished Visiting Lecturer at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis; Research Scholar-in-Residence at the Christian Studies Center in Memphis; and Academic Dean of Graham Bible College in Bristol, Tennessee.

Preacher, Theologian, Lawyer, Educationist, Historian, Philosopher and Author, Lee has produced more than 330 publications (including many books) -- and also a multitude of long unpublished manuscripts. Apart from an honorary LL.D., he has many earned degrees -- including 11 earned doctorates for dissertations\* in Education, Law, Literature, Philosophy and Theology.

Lee reads God's Word in ten languages; has been round the World seven times; has visited one hundred and ten countries (several repeatedly); and also every Continent (except Antarctica). He is in demand as a Promoter of Doctoral Students in Australia, England, Germany, South Africa and the United States; and has lectured and/or preached in all those lands as well as in Brazil, Scotland, Korea, Japan, Namibia, New Zealand, and Zambia. He lives in Australia, where he was the Professor of Systematic Theology and Caldwell-Morrow Lecturer in Church History at the Queensland Presbyterian Theological College until he retired in 2000.

- \* Th.D.: *The Covenantal Sabbath*
- Ph.D.: *Communist Eschatology*
- D.Min.: *Daily Family Worship*
- D.Ed.: *Catechism Before Communion!*
- S.T.D.: *Rebaptism Impossible!*
- D.R.E.: *Baby Belief Before Baptism!*
- D.Jur.: *Women Ministers & Australian Litigation*
- D.Litt.: *Holinshed on the Ancient British Isles*
- D.C.L.: *The Roots and Fruits of the Common Law*
- D.Hum.: *Tiny Human Life -- Abortion and IVF*
- D.Phil.: *Miracles -- What and When and Why?*

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> T.H.L. Parker: *John Calvin -- A Biography* (Westminster, Philadelphia), 1975, pp. 1-3; W.F. Dankbaar: *Calvin -- His Way and Work*, Callenbach, Nijkerk, 1957, pp. 1-2.
- <sup>2</sup> R. Schippers: *John Calvin -- his Life and Work*, Kok, Kampen, 1959, pp. 21-23.
- <sup>3</sup> J. Calvin: *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1963, I pp. xl-xlix.
- <sup>4</sup> J. Calvin: *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Beveridge ed., Clarke, London, 1957, IV:17:13-15.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ib.* IV:15:16-18 & IV:16:1,17-25.   <sup>6</sup> *Ib.* IV:16:31.   <sup>7</sup> J. Calvin: *Prefatory Address to King Francis*, 7.
- <sup>8</sup> T.B. van Halsema: *This Was John Calvin*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1959, pp. 96 & 121.
- <sup>9</sup> Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* II pp. 99B & 113f & 129f.   <sup>10</sup> *Ib.* pp. 114f.   <sup>11</sup> *Ib.* pp. 117f.   <sup>12</sup> *Ib.* pp. 134f.
- <sup>13</sup> Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* I p. 121   <sup>14</sup> *Ib.* pp. 137 & 167.   <sup>15</sup> *Ib.* p. 166.
- <sup>16</sup> *Acts of the Council of Trent*, V:5 & VI:4:8.   <sup>17</sup> *Ib.*, 7th Sess., cans. VIII & IX (*Of the Sacraments*).
- <sup>18</sup> Schaff: *Creeds of Christendom*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1983, II pp. 118f.
- <sup>19</sup> Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III pp. 19f.   <sup>20</sup> Sess. VII, *Of the Sacraments in General*, cans. I & III.
- <sup>21</sup> Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 173.   <sup>22</sup> Sess. VII, *Of the Sacraments in General*, can. VIII.
- <sup>23</sup> Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 176.   <sup>24</sup> Sess. VII, *Of the Sacraments in General*, can. IX.
- <sup>25</sup> Westminster Assembly's *Form Presb. Ch. Gov.*, Rules for Examination 10f, in *Sub. Stand. Free Ch. Scot.*, p. 319.
- <sup>26</sup> Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 176.   <sup>27</sup> Sess. VII, *Of the Sacraments in General*, can. XI.
- <sup>28</sup> Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III pp. 177f.   <sup>29</sup> Sess. VII, *Of the Sacraments in General*, can. XII.
- <sup>30</sup> Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 178.   <sup>31</sup> Sess. VII, *Of the Sacraments in General*, can. XIII.
- <sup>32</sup> *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 178.   <sup>33</sup> Sess. VII, *Of Baptism*, can. III.   <sup>34</sup> *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 179.
- <sup>35</sup> Sess. VII, *Of Bapt.*, can. IV.   <sup>36</sup> *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 180.   <sup>37</sup> Sess. VII, *Of Bapt.*, can. X.
- <sup>38</sup> *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 182.   <sup>39</sup> Sess. VII, *Of Bapt.*, cans. XI-XIII.   <sup>40</sup> *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 182.
- <sup>41</sup> Sess. VII *Of Confirmation* can. 1.   <sup>42</sup> Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.*, III p. 183.
- <sup>43</sup> See F.N. Lee's Ed.D. dissertation *Cat. Bef. Comm.*   <sup>44</sup> Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 182.
- <sup>45</sup> Council of Trent, Sess. VII *Of Bapt.* cans. XI-XIII.



- <sup>46</sup> See F.N. Lee: *Baptism Does Not Cleanse!*, Jesus Lives, Brisbane, 1990, at its nn. 556-63.
- <sup>47</sup> *The Interim or Declaration of Religion of His Imperial Majesty Charles V -- Being a Constitution prescribing the Mode in which the States of the Holy Roman Empire [in Germany] should mutually conduct themselves and treat each other until the decision of a General Council*, ch. 26:1. In Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III pp. 190 & 235.
- <sup>48</sup> J. Calvin: *The True Method of Giving Peace to Christendom and Reforming the Church.* In *Tracts & Treat.* III pp. 189, 240, 253 & 276.
- <sup>49</sup> J. Calvin: *Appendix to the Tract on the True Method of Reforming the Church.* In *T. & T.* III p. 351.
- <sup>50</sup> Calvin: *Comm. on Ex. 4:24-26*, in his *Harm. of the Pent. I; West. Conf. 28:5n-7s.*
- <sup>51</sup> Calvin: *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1963, pp. v & xiv and 73f (on Heb. 6:2-4).
- <sup>52</sup> Calvin: *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1552, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1965 ed., I pp. v & 80 (on Acts 2:38).
- <sup>53</sup> R.S. Wallace: *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, Geneva Divinity School Press, Tyler Tx., 1982, pp. 187f.
- <sup>54</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles* I p. 233 (on Acts 8:13). <sup>55</sup> *Ib.* II pp. 150f (on Acts 19:5f).
- <sup>56</sup> *Corp. Ref.* XIII:308 & 486, and Calvin's *Letter 6th Sept. 1554.*
- <sup>57</sup> Calvin's *The Gospel according to St John*, Grand Rapids, 1959. I pp. v & 88 (on John 4:2).
- <sup>58</sup> *Corp. Ref.* IX:26. Cited in Wallace: *op. cit.*, p. 174.
- <sup>59</sup> *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, 1563 French ed., Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, n.d., I pp. xxi-xxiii & II p. 295.
- <sup>60</sup> *Inst.* IV:2:11.
- <sup>61</sup> Especially in his *Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians* (2:3-11), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1961.
- <sup>62</sup> *Inst.* IV:2:11-12. <sup>63</sup> *Inst.* IV:10:20. <sup>64</sup> *Ib.* IV:15:16. <sup>65</sup> *Ib.* IV:15:17. <sup>66</sup> See n. 55.
- <sup>67</sup> *Inst.* IV:15:18-19. <sup>68</sup> *Ib.* IV:15:19. <sup>69</sup> *Ib.* IV:15:19 & IV:19:11.
- <sup>70</sup> Calvin's *Comm.* on Acts 8:38; and *T. & T.* III pp. 182 & 253. <sup>71</sup> *Inst.* IV:19:4. <sup>72</sup> *Inst.* IV:19:10.
- <sup>73</sup> *Inst.* IV:19:11. <sup>74</sup> *Inst.* IV:19:12. <sup>75</sup> *Inst.* IV:19:17.
- <sup>76</sup> *Selected Works of John Calvin*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1983, VIII, pp. 73f. For the conditions under which such children, if unbaptized, might perhaps be baptized in the Protestant Church, see: at n. 674 below; and also Lee's *Bapt. Does Not Cleanse!*, at its nn. 615f.
- <sup>77</sup> Schaff: *Creeds* I pp. 493f & 497 and III pp. 356 & 376-79 (arts. 28 & 35).
- <sup>78</sup> Calvin: *1563 Reply to the French Reformed Church.* Cited in Quick's *Synodicon* I p. 48, and requoted

by Charles Hodge in his art. *Val. of Rom. Bapt.* in his *Ch. Pol.* p. 204.

<sup>79</sup> Schaff: *Creeds* I pp. 93f & II pp. 77f. <sup>80</sup> *Ib.* II pp. 118f. <sup>81</sup> *Ib.* II pp. 139, 141 & 143.

<sup>82</sup> See the *Minority Report* (by Dr. Thompson), of the Committee To Study the Validity of Certain Baptisms, to the 1984 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America. There, he implies that the architects of the *Majority Report* (namely Barker, Bogue, Knight and Settle) -- had departed from Calvin's Calvinism and catabaptistically followed the arguments of the maverick Thornwell.

<sup>83</sup> Calvin: *Harm. of the Pent.*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, n.d., I pp. ix & xiii. <sup>84</sup> *Ib.* II pp. 105f.

<sup>85</sup> Calvin: *Commentaries on the Book of Joshua*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, n.d. p. v. <sup>86</sup> *Ib.* pp. 79f.

<sup>87</sup> Calvin: *Commentaries on the First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, n.d., II p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> *Ib.* pp. 122 & 120f. <sup>89</sup> *Inst.* IV:1:1-4,7,9,12f,16,18f. <sup>90</sup> *Comm.* on I Cor. 1:2 & *Inst.* IV:1:14.

<sup>91</sup> See: Calvin's *Comm.* on Ps. 51:5, Jh. 3:3-8, Rom. 5:12-17 & Eph. 2:1-3; his *Inst.* IV:16:17f; his *True Meth. Giv. Peace* (with its *Append.*; in *Corp. Ref.* VIII:615; and his *Op. Omn.* VIII:522).

<sup>92</sup> See: Calvin's *Comm.* on Gen. 17:7-14, Ex. 11:7 - 13:5, Ps. 22:9f; Lk. 1:15-45, Rom. 9:11f, 11:16, I Cor. 7:14 & II Tim. 1:5f; his *Serm. on Eph.* 1:7-10; his *Inst.* IV:16:5f,17f,24f; his *Lit. Form for Admin. Bap.*; and his *True Meth. Giv. Peace*.

<sup>93</sup> See: Calvin's *Comm.* on Ezk. chs. 20-21, Mt. 19:14, Acts 2:38f, 10:47, 16:15, 22:16, Rom. 4:10-12 & Heb. 6:2; his *Inst.* IV:16:20f; his *True Meth. of Giv. Peace*; his *Antid. to Trent*; his *2nd Def. Vs. Westphal*; and his *True Partak. Holy Sup.*

<sup>94</sup> See: Calvin's *Comm.* on Gen. 17:14, I Cor. 1:17, 12:13, Gal. 5:3, Eph. 5:26, Tit. 3:5 & Heb. 6:2; his *Antid. to Arts. of [Rom.] Paris Theol. Fac.*; his *True Meth. Giv. Peace*; his *Append. True Meth. Reform. Church*; his *Antid. to Trent*; his *Cons. Tig.*; his *2nd Def. Vs. Westphal*; and his *Let. to a Chr. Gent. of Provence* (in his *Sel. Works*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1983, VI pp. 71f).

<sup>95</sup> See: Calvin's *Comm.* on Dt. 30:6, Jer. 4:4, 9:25f, Rom. 2:25-29, 6:1-9, I Cor. 10:1-6 & 15:29; his *Inst.* IV:15:20f; his *True Meth. Giv. Peace*; his *2nd Def. Vs. Westphal*; and his *Op. Omn.* XV:227f.

<sup>96</sup> See: Calvin's *Comm.* on Gen. 17:7f, Mk. 16:16, Acts 3:25, 8:12-16, 8:37, 13:33, Rom. 11:16 & I Cor. 7:14; his *2nd Def. Vs. Westphal*; and his *Let. to Farel* (in *Corp. Ref.* XIV:567).

<sup>97</sup> Calvin's *Comm.* on Ex. 4:22-26, I Cor. 4:1, 10:1-11 & Heb. 5:4; his *Inst.* IV:15:20-22; his *Liturg. for Admin. Bap.*; his *Eccl. Ord.*; his *Regist. of Genev. Past.*; and his *True Meth. Giv. Peace* (with *Append.*).

<sup>98</sup> Calvin's *Form for the Administration of Baptism*, in *Corp. Ref.* VI:188; *Sel. Works Calv.* VI:71f.

<sup>99</sup> Calvin's *Letter to Farel* (in *Corp. Ref.* XIV:567f) and *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 182. For the contents of this important letter, see at n. 674 below.

<sup>100</sup> *Append. Tract True Meth. Reform. Ch.*, in *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 351; *Inst.* IV:15:16-18.

<sup>101</sup> *Inst.* IV:1:7. <sup>102</sup> *ERK* I p. 209. <sup>103</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 179. <sup>104</sup> *Creeds* I p. 206.

<sup>105</sup> Eph. 4:4-6. <sup>106</sup> II Th. 2:3-13 & Rev. 18:2-4. <sup>107</sup> Mk. 9:38-42 & Acts 13:14-49 etc.

<sup>108</sup> See our text in ch. VIII at its nn. 136-37 above.      <sup>109</sup> See at n. 64 above.

<sup>110</sup> See Calvin's letters to King Edward; his 22nd Oct. 1548 letter to the regent Protector Somerset; and esp. the *Dedication* in his *Commentary on First Peter*.