

NO REBAPTISMS IN ACTS 18:24 THROUGH 19:7 -- by Francis Nigel Lee

[FROM Rev. Prof. Dr. F.N. Lee's "Rebaptism Impossible!" (S.T.D.), pp. 32-43:]

Apollos was never rebaptized. He was mighty in the Scriptures and knew much about the baptism of John -- even before his arrival in Ephesus. We are told he there received further instruction in the Christian way⁸⁵ -- yet without rebaptism! For we are never told he was ever rebaptized -- either there, or elsewhere. See my other article: *'The Baptism of John' and the fiery believer Apollos*.

Yet water-washed unitarians still needed Christian baptism!

On the other hand, non-trinitarian washings (whether by immersion or by sprinkling) were never regarded -- by the Apostolic Church -- as Christian baptisms. Hence, those previously immersed or sprinkled **non-** trinitarianly -- but then converted to the Triune God -- still needed to receive their one-and-only trinitarian baptism. Thus, the approximately twelve non-trinitarians who arrived in Ephesus -- though previously washed with water by their fellow unitarians -- had never even heard whether there **is** a Holy Spirit. **That** they learned -- only after they first met Paul, when he too subsequently arrived in Ephesus. Consequently, they then apparently still needed to receive Biblical baptism -- for the very first time. It seems this occurred after Paul had first preached the triune gospel to them. For only thereafter, apparently, did he give any of them Christian baptism.⁸⁶ God Himself really does seem to have given us, elsewhere, a vital -- and indeed an inspired -- comment on this "Ephesian" passage Acts 19:1-5. As the Holy Spirit, through Paul himself, later declared -- and precisely when writing specifically to the Ephesians -- there can be but only "**one** baptism." This one baptism, is triune baptism. For there is only "only Father"; "one Lord" Jesus; and "one Spirit." There is only "one God" -- the Triune God. There is only "one body" -- the Christian Church. There is only "one faith" -- the trinitarian faith. Therefore, there is also only "one baptism" -- triune baptism. That triune or 'trinitarian baptism' is administered in the Name of the one and only Triune God. He, as "Father of all, is above all"; He, as Son, is "through all"; and He, as Holy Spirit, is "in you all" -- in all of you who believe.⁸⁷ The trinitarian rite is thus the only baptism which can validly ingraft into the Christian Church.

Were any heretics ever rebaptized -- at Acts 19:1-7?

This is now the appropriate place to deal at length with the one and only passage of Scripture which some have thought permits, if not requires, the 'rebaptism' of converted heretics. We refer, of course, to Acts 19:1-7. At the very outset, we immediately give our own translation of this vital passage. "Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. Then, finding **certain** disciples, he said to them: 'Did you receive **the Holy Spirit**, when you believed?' However, they said to him: 'We have not so much as heard whether there **is** a holy spirit!' So Paul said: 'Into what, then, **were** you baptized?' And they replied: 'Into **John's** baptism!' "Paul then said: 'It is indeed with a baptism of repentance that John really did baptize! He said to the people that they should trust in the One coming after him' -- that is, in [the **Spirit**-anointed] Christ!' "Now when they heard this, they were baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus [Christ].... Paul laid his hands on them.... All the men were about twelve" in number.

⁸⁵ Here, *Iooanees men ebaptisen baptisma metanoias* clearly means: "John really baptized -- with a baptism of repentance!" For here, *ebaptisen baptisma* is probably the Greek-language version of

a Hebrew infinitive absolute -- such as *taabool taabal*. It would then mean: "John thoroughly baptized (with repentance)!" As also stated, there is some evidence (in p³⁸ & D and some other manuscripts) -- for the reading: "they were baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus **Christ**." So here, as the great seventeenth-century German-Swiss Reformed theologian Rev. Prof. Dr. John Wolleb(ius) rightly points out (while closely following the Frenchman John Calvin): "The Papists maintain that certain persons whom John had baptized, were rebaptized (Acts 19:1ff)." However, Wollebius himself then adds: "If they **were** 'rebaptized' by the apostle -- it could only have been because previously they had been **improperly** 'baptized' by some **imitators** of John.... It ought **not** to be concluded from this text that they were '**re**'-baptized!" Thus the Calvinist Wollebius (*Compendium of Christian Theology*, XXIII:1:xxi).

Acts 19:5-7 widely misunderstood to imply a fresh baptism

To the Romanist Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* III:38:7), and to Roman Catholicism, Johannine baptism was not Christian baptism. Nor was Jesus Himself ever Christianly baptized. Nor were His Ex- Johannine disciples left 'unrebaptized.' So, the Christian apostle Paul is held to have 're-baptized' at Ephesus in the Name of Christ -- some twelve men previously baptized in Palestine by the 'Pre-Christian' John the Baptist. Thus Romanism. The Anabaptists (and also many Baptists) conclude in addition from the same passage Acts 19:1-7, that all of those 'allegedly baptized' in infancy, before making a personal 'profession of faith' -- still need (re)baptizing, after making such a 'profession' when older. For (Ana)baptists deny 'infant baptism' to be Biblical baptism. And they assert that each, personally -- for himself alone -- is first to be required to give a creditable profession of faith, before ever being baptized. Anabaptists and Baptists say that (re)baptism is therefore to be urged not just upon converted Ex-Romanists -- but also upon those converts who previously received **merely**(!) 'infant baptism' even in Lutheran or Calvinistic congregations. Curiously, antipapal paidobaptistic Catabaptists here frequently follow the Romanists and the Anabaptists in their misinterpretation of Acts 19:1-7. For even paidobaptistic Catabaptists often argue that this passage applies also to protestantized Ex-Romanists (and other formerly ritualistic trinitarians) after their conversion to Protestantism. From this passage, such Catabaptists then conclude that protestantized Ex- Romanists (and Ex-Campbellites or Ex-Adventists *etc.* all need to be (re)baptized. Once more. Extreme 'Eastern Orthodox' hard-liners appeal to Acts 19:1-7. They give their own mandatory triple submersion to all of their converts who earlier had received baptism differently -- by way of a single sprinkling, or a single submersion, or even a triple sprinkling. Such extreme 'Greek-Orthodox' hard-liners thus insist on 'rebaptizing' all previously baptized persons who convert to them from the Adventists, from the Baptists, from the Campbellites, from the Protestants, or from the Romanists *etc.* Thus, Papists and Anabaptists and Catabaptists (and also the 'Eastern Orthodox' denominations) have all made Acts 19:1-7 their happy hunting ground. A very careful consideration of the exegesis of this passage, is therefore quite essential. When this is done, it can be seen quite clearly that the passage neither mentions nor sanctions any kind of rebaptism whatsoever. Quite to the contrary, it instead implies the obvious need to receive a specifically **trinitarian** baptism -- and that, **unrepeatably**.

The unitarians in Ephesus had not been baptized by John

When Paul later returned to Ephesus, he found some ignorant non-trinitarians there. It is obvious that these 'ignoramuses' had been altogether uninfluenced by (and were quite probably even unaware of) the incisive and instructive Spirit-filled Scripture-preaching of that eloquent and learned Christian, Reverend Apollos.

Indeed, those ignorant non-trinitarians seem to have arrived in Ephesus -- only after Apollos had departed thence for Corinth.⁸⁸ It had been some twenty-five years since the death of that great trinitarian, John the Baptizer. The whole Christian Church Universal knew that John had baptized especially the Lord Jesus -- the central Person of the Holy Trinity, and the Only-begotten and Spirit-anointed Son of God the Father. Yet, most surprisingly, a group of ignorant non-trinitarians was now making the claim to Paul that its approximately twelve members had priorly been initiated "into John's baptism." Still more remarkably, each of them was apparently altogether ignorant about the very existence of the Holy Spirit -- and perhaps even of the Lord Jesus Himself. Now John the Baptizer, while baptizing people, had always pointed his baptizees (and prospective baptizees) away from himself -- and toward the coming Messiah (Jesus Christ). In so doing, John had always told them how this Spirit-anointed One would soon Himself endue them -- not with water, but indeed with His Holy Spirit.⁸⁹ The unitarians in Ephesus, however, not even alleged they had received their 'baptism' by or from John himself. They only claimed -- and even that claim itself is suspect! -- to have been initiated: "into John's baptism."⁹⁰ Indeed, they frankly admitted to Paul that they themselves had never even heard whether there **is** a Holy Spirit.⁹¹ This "John's baptism" which these unitarians here alleged they had received, was therefore quite devoid of the Holy Spirit. Even if it really had been given to these unitarians -- this "John's baptism" had obviously not been administered to them by the trinitarian John himself. For he had been a Spirit-filled person (ever since his conception and also from his mother's womb). Indeed, even after growing up, John still testified about the Holy Spirit. He did so during his Spirit-filled preaching, and also while baptizing. Luke 1:15- 17,44-44,80; 3:3-16f; Matthew 3:2-11f; Acts 10:37f; 13:24f. So this 'Spirit-less' rite referred to in Acts 19:3b by the unitarians -- was certainly not Johannine. Nevertheless, an important question must still be asked. What indeed had happened to those unitarians -- before they met Paul in Ephesus? It seems almost certain that, earlier, other unitarians -- people like the syncretistic Essenes -- had misled the men Paul now met in Ephesus. Even those earlier unitarians had perhaps never even seen or heard the trinitarian preacher John himself. They had certainly quite misunderstood his teachings -- probably encountering them by hearsay, or even third-hand. They had then -- perhaps quite inadvertently -- gone and started yet one more judaistic sect. Compare Acts 22:16 & 23:6-9 and First Corinthians 15:29. The men Paul met in Ephesus were apparently members of just such a sect. For it seems that after John's death, syncretizing unitarians had themselves started initiating people "into John's baptism." By this, they probably meant they were purporting to initiate 'in the name of John' or perhaps even 'into the name of John' -- neither of which John himself would ever have done. Clearly, this 'Spirit-less' rite was certainly not the Christian baptism John himself had administered. For even while baptizing with water, John had urged his baptizees soon thereafter to become the disciples of the **Spirit**-baptizing One -- Jesus Himself. Indeed, John's disciples were never even supposed to be 'rebaptized' -- neither by Jesus, nor by anyone else. It is quite inconceivable that anyone could have been baptized by John himself without, right then, hearing about the Holy Spirit from the Spirit-filled and Spirit-witnessing John himself. However, the 'Spirit-less' rite referred to in Acts 19:3b -- was quite devoid of the Spirit. Consequently, it could not have been Johannine. Indeed, that Spirit-less water-rite -- previously received, if at all, by the Spirit-less men who now met Paul in Ephesus -- could itself have started probably only **after** John's own death.

Paul explained baptism to the unbaptized unitarians

This is why Paul now explained,⁹² to those ignorant unitarians at Ephesus, the nature of the true Christian baptism which John himself had indeed administered. "Then Paul said: 'John truly baptized with the baptism of repentance, while saying to the people that they should believe in Him Who would come after him' -- that is, in Christ Jesus" the Spirit-anointed One. "When they heard [and heeded] this, they were baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus."⁹³ This could

mean that Paul did not baptize them at all, but simply told those men that John himself had indeed baptized people into the Name of the then-coming Messiah -- that is, the Lord Jesus. Thus: Calvin, Beza, Wolleb(ius), the 1637 Dordt Dutch Bible, Georg Calixtus, Lightfoot, Budde, Rambach, Gravemeijer, H. Hoeksema Sr., and others.⁹⁴ On the other hand, the above Scripture could also mean that after those men repented -- Paul now baptized them into the Name of the Lord Jesus. This would then be because, as former unitarians, they had previously never been baptized by John at all -- and also never yet in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ as God the Son (and indeed as quite the Central Person of the Holy Trinity). Thus: all the old versions, the Syriac, and Jerome's Vulgate;¹¹⁷ Abraham Kuyper Sr.;¹²⁰ and myself (Francis Nigel Lee).^{121f} Yet either way, there is no **re**-baptism at Acts 19:5. Indeed, it says there: "they were baptized." It does not there say that they were re-baptized. The fact is, according to Luther and Calvin -- and all Classic Lutherans and Classic Calvinists -- 'Johannine baptism' is 'Christian baptism.' Thus, on this identification specifically in this very passage Acts 19:1-7, nearly all Calvinistic scholars. See: Calvin, Beza, Wolleb(ius), the 1637 *Dordt Dutch Bible*, Lightfoot, Cocceius, a Marck, De Moor, J.H. Heidegger, J.H. van der Palm, H. Heppe, Gravemeijer, A. Kuyper Sr., H. Hoeksema Sr., *etc.*⁹⁵ So too, apparently, also the great and godly Lutheran Rev. Dr. Rudolph Stier. He rightly states⁹⁶ there is nothing said about re-baptism in Acts 19:4-7. Those who had been baptized by John the Baptist, were not - - at the beginning of the evangelical preaching -- ordinarily baptized again with water. See Acts 1:5. But here in Acts 19:5f, in the case of those who were already removed and estranged from the proclamation of John, it was needful that the law of the Kingdom should be maintained and attested by their new baptism. This was their first-ever Christian baptism, right then administered by the Apostle Paul. Thus Stier. The text could thus mean that Paul was here informing those men at Ephesus about what John himself⁹⁷ had really taught. This would then show that those who had heeded John's preaching -- namely John's preaching that they should believe in Jesus -- were there and then baptized by John into the Name of the then-coming Messiah (Jesus Christ). In that case, after explaining this to the confused men in Ephesus, all that Paul then further did -- after they had heeded him -- was 'waterlessly' to lay his hands upon those ex-heretics. Alternatively, Luke's words -- "when they heeded this, they were baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus"⁹⁸ -- may instead be referring to what those ex-unitarians in Ephesus next did in relation to Paul. This would mean that Paul himself then proceeded to give those ex-unitarians *inter alia* their first-ever triune water-baptism. Perhaps Paul did not then give water-baptism to those men. On the other hand, to us it seems more likely that he did.⁹⁹ Either way, however, the entire passage Acts 19:1-5 cannot properly be taken to mean that the trinitarian Paul **re**-baptized those ex-unitarians -- after they had heeded his teaching. If Paul indeed baptized them with water -- that would then have been the first and the only Christian baptism those previously ignorant ex-unitarians had ever received.

Acts 19 teaches baptism by John is unrepeatable (says Calvin)

The men concerned were about twelve in number.¹⁰⁰ In commenting,¹⁰¹ Calvin here denies that these confused men had been influenced by Apollos. "It is not likely that so few 'disciples' were left at Ephesus by Apollos." For then, "they would have been instructed more correctly by him -- seeing that he himself had learnt the way of the Lord precisely.... I do not doubt the [Ephesian] 'brethren' whom Luke mentioned previously [Acts 18:27]...were different from these particular men" in Acts 19:1f. "Then Paul said: 'John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance!'" Thus records Luke.¹⁰² Here Calvin comments¹⁰³ "that the baptism of John was a sign of repentance.... Today, there is no difference between it and our own baptism.... It [baptism by 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 who came over to Him from John. "In addition, Christ received baptism in His own flesh -- so that He might associate Himself with us by that visible symbol. But if that fictitious difference [between

baptism by John and our own baptism today] be admitted, there will vanish and be lost to us this unique favour -- that we have a common baptism with the Son of God." Calvin continues: "It [baptism by John] is the same baptism [as Christian baptism]. But now, the question is asked whether it was right to repeat it.... Fanatical men of our day, relying on this evidence [cf. Acts 19:3-5], have tried to introduce Anabaptism.... I deny that the baptism of water was repeated!" Calvin also explains¹⁰⁴ that the rebaptizing Anabaptists of his own day and age "seem to think the weapon which they brandish [to be] irresistible -- when they allege that Paul rebaptized those who had been baptized 'with the baptism of John.' Acts 19:3-5." Against that erroneous view, Calvin upholds his own correct conviction and "confession [that] the baptism of John was the same as ours." Yet Calvin also clearly states that those ignorant heretics in Ephesus "had been improperly trained" before receiving their previous and so-called "John's baptism." Subsequently, however, "they learned the true faith" -- from Paul. Precisely here -- continues Calvin -- the Anabaptists maintain that it was only since the ignorant heretics "learned the true faith" from Paul, that they were "(re-)baptized into it." This was necessary, say the Anabaptists, because the previous 'baptism' of the ignorant heretics was in fact no baptism -- because it occurred "without true doctrine" and should therefore "be accounted as nothing.... Hence, we ought to be baptized anew into the true religion with which we are now for the first time imbued." Thus say the Anabaptists. And they add that those born and baptized and raised in the erroneous Church of Rome -- were never truly baptized there, at all.

Calvin's explanation of the baptismal passage Acts 19:1-7

At this point, our concern with Acts 19:1-7 is to deal only with the bearing it has on the absolute impossibility of rebaptism. With that alone presently in view, let us now look at the relevant portion of Calvin's discussion thereof. Calvin himself takes the position that the verses Acts 19:1-3 refer to true disciples of John. The Swiss Reformer then states¹⁰⁵ "The baptism of John was the same as ours." Yet Dr. Calvin also very fairly admits: "It seems to some that it was a **foolish imitator** of John who...had initiated them [the ignorant heretics] into vain superstition. This, it is thought, may be conjectured from the fact that they acknowledge their entire ignorance of the Holy Spirit -- an ignorance in which John never would have left his disciples." Calvin himself then adds that he regards this long-held view as "not probable."

That is, Calvin himself regards as improbable the long-held view that the 'disciples' mentioned in Acts 19:1-3 were disciples only of "a foolish imitator of John" -- but not disciples of John himself. That long-held view,¹⁰⁶ however, was -- later still -- very convincingly elaborated by the great Rev. Prof. Dr. Abraham Kuyper Sr. We ourselves also hold it. Calvin did present this view very fairly (though all too shortly). Indeed, he forthrightly acknowledges that "some" indeed hold it. Magnificently, Calvin then goes on to insist¹⁰⁷ that "John's baptism was a true baptism -- and one and the same with the baptism of Christ. But I deny that they [these ignorant heretics] were re-baptized" in Acts 19. See too Calvin's *Instructions Against the Anabaptists*. Calvin thus strongly opposes the repetition (or repetitions) of water baptism. Especially does he oppose this, because of intervening ignorance (or ignorances). For, he rightly concludes,¹⁰⁷ "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!" Elsewhere, Calvin indicates¹⁰⁸ that "the ministry of John was the very same as that which was afterwards delegated to the apostles. For the different hands by which baptism is administered, do not make it a different baptism. "But sameness of doctrine proves it to be the same.... John baptized in the Name of Him Who was to come; the apostles in the Name of Him Who was already manifested. Luke 3:16; Acts 19:4.... "Baptism, administered by the apostles while He was still on the earth, was called His baptism.... [Certain] ancient writers...say that the one baptism [of John the Baptizer] was only preparative to the other [baptism in the Name of the Triune God]....

because they read that those who had received the 'baptism of John' were again baptized by Paul (Acts 19:3-5 & Matthew 3:11). How greatly they are mistaken in this!"

Our own evaluation of Calvin's view of Acts 19:1-7

We ourselves agree with Calvin's above views almost *in toto*. However, with Gravemeijer,¹⁰⁹ we disagree with Calvin that Acts 19:5 is describing a non-watery 'Spirit-baptism' administered by Paul. And with Kuyper,¹¹⁰ we disagree with Calvin's view that Paul did not give precisely water-baptism to the penitent unitarians at Ephesus. For we ourselves are inclined to think that Paul then indeed baptized those men with water -- and not just with the Spirit. If we are right in this, that would then have been the first and the only Christian baptism those previously ignorant ex-unitarians had ever received. Calvin's chief reason for disagreeing with this, is his impression that "it is not probable that the Jews...would have been destitute of all knowledge of the Spirit." Calvin thus assumes that these ignorant heretics were Jews. That, however, is not claimed in this passage (nor anywhere else in Holy Scripture). For Luke merely states they were "disciples" -- alias 'taught ones.' This word 'disciples' could probably apply to Gentile heretics just as much as it certainly could to Jewish heretics.¹¹¹ Moreover, even some Jewish heretics may very well have been ignorant about the Holy Spirit.¹¹² Here, Calvin does not seem to have weighed sufficiently the clear difference between the statement in John 7:39 that "the Holy Ghost **was** not yet **given**"¹¹³ -- and the different statement in Acts 19:2 about the unitarians at Ephesus who said: "We have not so much as heard whether there **be** any Holy Ghost."¹¹⁴ For, in the Greek of John 7:39, quite apart from the disputed word for "given" (*dedomenon*), there is also the undisputed word for "was" -- namely *een*. This word is quite different from the equally undisputed Greek word for "is" -- namely *estin* -- which the Holy Spirit of God Himself infallibly inscripturated at Acts 19:2.

Again, Calvin has gratuitously assumed that Paul in Acts 19:5 administered only a 'non-watery' and a purely 'spiritual' baptism. We say Calvin gratuitously assumed this, in light of the argumentation referred to in our footnotes 97-99 (*q.v.*). Indeed, even unlike Gravemeijer,¹¹⁵ Calvin here takes the words "they were baptized" to describe what Paul then did -- rather than as referring to what Paul then said John had done. Thus, right after these words "they were baptized" -- John Calvin here assumes the implicit existence of the explicitly non-existent words: 'with the Spirit.' Again, there is the question of the **plural** forms.' We should observe that the plural form "when they heard this" (*akousantes*) in 19:5a, as well as the plural "they were baptized" (*ebaptistheesan*) in Acts 19:5b,¹¹⁶ both seem to refer not to John's (singular) people but to **Paul's** (plural) listeners. Indeed, that is certainly the case in the immediately preceding context of Acts 19:1-3. There, the consecutive corresponding plurals obviously refer not to John's singular people but to Paul's plural listeners. Thus there we find "certain disciples" (*tinas matheetas*) and "them" (*autous*) and "we have not...heard" (*oude...eekousamen*) and "were ye baptized" (*ebaptistheete*) and "they said" (*hoi de eipan*). This is also the case with the corresponding plurals in the immediately succeeding Acts 19:6-7. Thus, there we find: "upon them" (*autois*) and "on them" (*autous*) and "they spake" (*elaloun*) and "they prophesied" (*epropheeteuon*) and "all the men were about twelve" (*eesan de hoi pantes andres hoosei doodeka*). Coupled with the above, it seems to us to be of some significance that in Acts 19:4a the inspired Luke differently refers in the **singular** to "the people" (*too; laooi*) that **John** had addressed and also "verily baptized" or *ebaptisen* (once again at Acts 19:4a). This would then imply that in the **next** verse those (**plural**) who are there said to have been "baptized" (*ebaptistheesan*) -- thus received that baptism not from John but from Paul. Indeed, all the old versions -- including even the Syriac and the Vulgate¹¹⁷ -- seem to suggest that in Acts 19:5-6, Paul himself really did baptize his listeners with water. So to us (and also to the great Rev. Prof. Dr. Abraham Kuyper Sr.),¹¹⁸ it certainly seems that Paul here really did give water

baptism to the approximately twelve confused men he encountered at Ephesus. Yet for the rest, we heartily concur with Calvin that the passage Acts 19:1-7 certainly precludes any repetition of water baptism. Indeed, it so precludes all 'rebaptism' -- whether in the Name of the Triune God (*cf.* Matthew 28:19), or whether 'in the Name of the Lord Jesus' (*cf.* Acts 8:16).

Wollebius and the 1637 Dordt Dutch Bible: no rebaptisms in Acts 19

The great Frenchman Calvin's view of Acts 19:1-5 was followed (in essence) also by the later German-Swiss theologian Wolleb(ius) in 1626, and in Holland by the *Dordt Dutch Bible* of 1637. In his *Compendium of Christian Theology* (XXIII:1:xxi), Wolleb argues that, in respect of the twelve men Paul met in Ephesus, "it ought not to be concluded from this text [Acts 19:1-5] that they were 'rebaptized.' For the words in verse 5 ['they were baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus'] are not spoken by Luke concerning Paul, but by Paul concerning John and his disciples. They lend no support, therefore, to either the Papists or the Anabaptists." The 1637 *Dordt Dutch Bible* or *Statenvertaling* was commissioned by the great 'Five-Point' Calvinistic "T-U-L-I-P" Synod of Dordt in 1618f. The Dordt Dutch Bible makes some very interesting observations¹¹⁹ about Acts 19:1-7. First, it comments on the words which "Paul said" in Acts 19:4. ("John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in Him Who came after him -- namely in Christ Jesus.") Here, the *Dordt Dutch Bible* states that John the Baptist "preached conversion, and obligated the baptizees to repent. Hereby, and also by what follows, he [Paul] indicates that as regards its essence the baptism of John in itself is the same as the baptism of the apostles. It has one and the same sign and one and the same signified matter. The [only] difference is that John with his doctrine and baptism pointed to Christ Who came after him and Who would still accomplish all things, while the apostles pointed to Christ Who had come and Who had completely accomplished everything necessary for our salvation." Commenting on the word "him" in Acts 19:5 (in the phrase "and those who heard him were baptized"), the *Dordt Dutch Bible* there further notes that "him" here refers not to Paul but to "John the Baptist." It then states: "For these are the words of Paul, relating how John baptized his disciples. This is clear from the Greek text in which the two words *men* (or 'indeed') in verse 4 and *de* (namely 'but' or 'and') in verse 5, indicate that the things stated in these two verses must be combined, and that it is one and the same person and matter being discussed. Consequently, it cannot be proved from this that these disciples would have been rebaptized by Paul."

Kuyper: Paul baptized those never before baptized by John

When discussing Acts 19:1-7, that great Calvinist Rev. Prof. Dr. Abraham Kuyper (Sr.) rightly explains:¹²⁰ "The twelve men had not been baptized by John. They themselves say: 'We have not heard whether there is a Holy Spirit!' So Paul explains what the baptism of John meant.... "One group of John's disciples had sought to perpetuate themselves; had gone astray. This is easily to be grasped. For John himself fell into doubt. Part of John's circle had [previously] joined Jesus. Another part perpetuated itself as a sectarian group." Before meeting Paul, "these twelve [Acts 19:1-7] had been 'baptized' *eis to Iooannou baptisma*" -- into the 'baptism of John.' "This *eis* [or 'into'] indicates what was regarded as the highest within their group. For them, it was as if John was **the** revelation of God.... The preaching about Jesus and about the Holy Spirit fell away!" Kuyper concludes that "Paul did not here **re**-baptize. But he administered baptism -- in the Name of Jesus." Acts 19:5f. That is to say, Paul then gave the ex-heretics in that group the very first triune water-baptism they had ever received. Kuyper also gives an even more detailed explanation. "Paul asked them more closely: 'Into what were you baptized?' They modestly replied: 'Into **John's** baptism!' They had, therefore, been misled. They had apparently not been baptized by John himself. For they could not then have

expressed themselves thus. No, they had been 'baptized' by somebody who pointed them through that 'baptism' to John -- as if he had been the highest teacher! "What lurks behind this, is not unclear. Indeed, the Gospels report to us that -- after the actions of Jesus -- a certain competition began to occur with a few disciples of John who had refused to go to Jesus. They had not understood that the baptism of John itself fell away when Jesus began to act. Therefore they continued John's work, after his decapitation. In this way, the contrast arose automatically. They baptized into the name of John, while the disciples of Jesus baptized in the Name of the Messiah. "Here one therefore encounters a false sect -- a sect of **John's men**, who had not understood John himself. Wholly in conflict with his intention, they had gone and upheld his [John's] work as an independent revelation -- **over against** the Messiah.... Shortly after John had undergone the martyr's death, it was far from unnatural that a few short-sighted persons among his disciples would start to honour this martyr excessively -- and place him wholly alongside and even above Jesus. In that way, this sect of John's disciples seems to have propagated itself. As then often happens, it **falsified** the true character of John's baptism more and more. "John himself from the very beginning of his water baptism pointed only to that greater baptism with the Holy Spirit which Jesus would give. But the sect was silent about that! It ceased to refer to Jesus altogether, and did not even mention the Holy Spirit. Whereas the **genuine** disciples of John were led to Jesus automatically, these **false**-disciples of John slid further and further away from Jesus. John himself became their one and all. And thus they had started baptizing in the name of **John!** "For Paul, the matter was therefore very simple. All he had to do, was to point these misguided men to the **genuine** John and his **genuine** preaching.... This implies that Paul refuted them that they had indeed received Johannine baptism. They had not been baptized by John himself, and none of John's disciples possessed the right or the power to baptize into his name.... "They had therefore not been baptized at all -- neither by John himself, [nor by the true disciples of John,] nor by the disciples of Christ. Therefore, they could not be regarded as anything other than unbaptized.... They had not been baptized by John. For, says Paul, the baptism of John pointed precisely to a promise in connection with the Messiah.... "One therefore sees that even this episode does not support the assumption that those whom John baptized, only later received the **actual** Christian baptism. To the contrary, it contradicts it as unfounded.... Paul's pointing of these so-called disciples of John to the **genuine** baptism of John -- in contradiction to the pseudo-baptism which they had received from incompetents, indeed goes to prove precisely what the Reformed have always maintained. Namely, that he who had actually been baptized by John the Baptizer who pointed to the Messiah -- was rebaptized neither by Paul nor by any other apostle!"

Fringe fanatics after the death of John the Baptizer

Also to us ourselves -- as previously to the great Rev. Prof. Dr. Abraham Kuiper Sr.¹²⁰ -- it indeed seems that, at an earlier time than Paul's Acts 19 return to Ephesus, "some" of the followers of John had become confused. This probably occurred only after John himself had temporarily questioned Jesus' Messiahship, and especially after John's own violent death. Matthew 11:2f,11f & 14:10-12. Instead of then following Jesus, those confused followers of John had then started trusting in falsehoods. Thereafter, it seems even they themselves had then started teaching erroneous doctrines. Unlike John himself (Mark 1:4-11), they were certainly not trinitarians. Like the Judaists who had apostasized from Old Testament Trinitarianism, they too were doubtless unitarian. Yet unlike those Judaists they also seem to have begun to deify even John himself, at least incipiently. For either they or their even more confused pupils, unauthorizedly and erroneously, had then themselves gone and started baptizing not just "in" but even "into the name of John" (after he had pre-deceased them). Compare First Corinthians 15:29. It was, then, some of their heretical pupils and 'baptizees' in turn -- that Paul later encountered at Ephesus. Acts 19:1-3. Very strongly, however, did Luke (in his inspired Book of

Acts) identify true Johannine baptism¹²¹ with the later 'Christic' baptism. By the latter, we mean that administered in the Name of the Triune God and upon the authority of the Lord Jesus as the Central Person of the Trinity.¹²² Very strongly did also Paul wish to underline the unrepeatability of all triune baptisms. So, he later reminded the saints in that **same** city of Ephesus that there was indeed only "**one** baptism." Indeed, there is only "one God and Father" and only "one Lord" Jesus Christ and only "one Spirit" -- into Whose Triune Name all Christians should be baptized, even with water.¹²³ Thus, at Ephesus, Paul gave trinitarian baptism "in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" -- for their first time ever -- to these recently converted ex-unitarians. Such, then, apparently, were previously altogether ignorant of the Spirit's very existence (and perhaps even of Christ Himself). Such would themselves priorly have been initiated probably with water -- but only "in John's own name" or, worse still, "into the name of John." The latter initiation rite, of course, was not Christian baptism at all. It was not Christian baptism, precisely because it was not the same as the Johannine baptism which Jesus Christ Himself had received. For Christ received true baptism -- on behalf of all Christians everywhere. Thus: Irenaeus;¹²⁴ Hippolytus,¹²⁵ Lactantius;¹²⁶ Athanasius;¹²⁷ Basil;¹²⁸ Gregory of Nyssa;¹²⁹ Augustine;¹³⁰ and Calvin.¹³¹ So too Post-Calvinian Calvinists -- like those who wrote the *Dordt Dutch Bible*;¹³² like Kuyper;¹³³ and like Rev. Dr. R.W. Dale¹³⁴ etc.

As Paul himself wrote precisely to the **Ephesians**:

“**One Lord; one Faith; one Baptism!**”
Eph.4:5.

ENDNOTES

85) Acts 18:24-26f.

86) Acts 19:1-7.

87) Acts 18:24 to 19:3.

88) Acts 18:24 - 19:3.

89) Mt. 3:3-11f; Jh. 1:25f cf. Isa. 11:1-10f; 61:1f; Acts 19:4-6.

90) Acts 19:3 (*eis to Iooannou baptisma*). Note both the similarities and the differences between this expression and: "the baptism of John" or *to baptisma Iooannou* (in Mt. 21:35); "from the baptism of John" or *apo tou baptisματος Iooannou* (in Acts 1:22); "the baptism which John preached" or *to baptisma ho ekeeruxen Iooannees* (in Acts 10:37); and "John...preached beforehand...the baptism of repentance" or *prokeeruxantos Iooannou...baptisma metanoias* (in Acts 13:24).

91) Acts 19:2b (*oud' ei Pneuma Hagion estin eekousamen*).

92) Acts 19:4 (*Eipen de Paulos Iooannees men ebaptisen baptisma metanoias too; laoo; legoon eis Ton Erchomenon met' auton hina pisteusoosin, tout' estin Ton Christon Ieesoun*). It is the *Textus Receptus* which here has men. See n. 97 below. Note that *Christon* is omitted in P³⁸, 'AlephABE 614 pc lat, 13,25,40, Vulg., Boh., Syr. H., Aethr^{ro}; so Tisch., W.H., RV, Weiss, Wundt & Blass. D has *eis Christon*. The reading *eis ton Ieesoun Christon* is found in : Sah., Gig. & Pesch. Other readings have: *Christon Ieesoun*.

93) Acts 19:5 (*akousantes de ebaptistheesan eis to Onoma tou Kuriou Ieesou*). Here, *akousantes* is the aorist participle of the Greek verb for **hear** or **hear-ken** [*akouein*]. This, like the word for **hear-ken** in the Germanic languages, cf. the German *horchen* [hearken] and its cognate *gehörchen* [obey], usually means not merely to **listen** but to **hear well** and hence also to **heed**. See too n. 92 above.

94) Thus Dr. R. Stier: *The Words of the Lord Jesus*, Clark, Edinburgh, 1970, VIII p. 292 n. 2. See too Dr. H. Heppe's *Reformed Dogmatics*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1978 ed., pp. 625f; and Dr. H.E. Gravemeijer's *Gereformeerde Geloofsleer* III:20:25 p. 175 & nn. 1-3). After

asserting (very cogently) that baptisms administered by John were irrepeatable Christian water baptisms, Calvin himself went on to suggest (assailably!) that Paul did not himself give **water** baptism to his listeners in Acts 19:1-7. See Calvin's *Commentaries on the Acts of the Apostles* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, II, 1966), on Acts 19:1-6 and his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* IV:15:18 (in our text at nn. 97 & 104-107 below), and also see the *Dordt Dutch Bible* or *Statenvertaling*, Kok, Kampen, III:244:7 on Acts 19:4 (full text at our nn. 119 & 132 below). See too Wolleb(ius) in Beardslee's *op. cit.* p. 132. Also see our n. 95 below.

95) See n. 94 above. Also consult: De Moor's *Perpet. Comment. on Marck* V:400f; Gravemeijer's *op. cit.* III:20:25 p. 175 & nn. 1-3; Dr. A. Kuyper Sr.: *Sac.* pp. 134f (in his *Dog. Dict.*), Kok, Kampen, 2nd ed., IV) = in our text at n. 120 below. Also see Wolleb(ius), in Beardslee's *op. cit.* p. 132. Cf. H. Hoeksema: *Reformed Dogmatics*, Reformed Free Pub. Assoc., Grand Rapids, 1966, pp. 670-74 (see too our ch. IX at its n. 544 below).

96) *Op. cit.*, VIII p. 292 n. 1. However, as a very untypical Lutheran, Stier then further argues (*Ib.* pp. 292f): "The apostle cannot be regarded as having said that those who had obeyed the Baptist, *akousantes*, had been already baptized into the uttered and announced Name of the Lord Jesus.... 'For John at the end of his baptism pointed to Jesus [Acts] chap. 13:25; wherefore it cannot be said that he baptized them in the **Name** of the Lord Jesus'.... *Akousantes* refers back to *eipe te pros autous*, verse 3, and *ebaptistheesan* stands in parallel with *kai epithentos autois* [in Acts 19:6]." The historic Lutheran view, shared by historic Calvinists, is that Johannine baptism was Christian baptism, so that none of John's baptizees should have been rebaptized. See H.E. Gravemeijer: *op. cit.* III:20:10 pp. 76f & 81f.

97) Thus Calvin's *Comm. on Acts* 19:5 & *Inst.* IV:15:18 & *Treatise Against the Anabaptists* (Baker, Grand Rapids, rep. 1982). Gravemeijer, who agrees with Calvin on this particular matter, gives a detailed exposition of this position. In his *op. cit.*, III:20:25, p. 175, Gravemeijer argues that the verses Acts 19:4-6 do not at all teach that the heretics were then baptized by Paul with water. Gravemeijer reasons: Paul there merely told those men at Ephesus that after John himself had urged the people to believe in Jesus the Christ-ed One alias the Spirit- anointed Messiah, those who then heard or obeyed John's urgings were soon baptized by John himself in the Name of the One Who was then coming after him, that is the Lord Jesus. After Paul had finished telling the men this at Ephesus, claims Gravemeijer, Paul simply laid his hands 'waterlessly' on them *etc.* Gravemeijer grounds this view on the fact that the "foundational text" (*viz.* the *Textus Receptus*) has men...de in Acts 19:4-5. [Thus the various editions of the *Textus Receptus*. Compare those of Stephens (1550), of Bloomfield (1843), and of Knowling even in the 1908 *Expositor's Greek Testament* (where however the men is noted as omitted in 'AlephABD, Vulg., Sah., Arm., Tisch., W.H., RV, Weiss & Wendt). Kuyper too emphasized this omission (see n. 120 below).] Gravemeijer thus reads Acts 19:4-6 as follows: "Then Paul said, 'John truly (men) baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in Him Who would come after him,' that is, in Christ Jesus. When (de) they [John's people] heard [or heeded], they were baptized [by John and in Palestine] into the Name [or **unto the authority**] of the Lord Jesus. Then, when Paul had laid his hands on them [the ex-unitarians in Ephesus], the Holy Spirit came upon them" *etc.* For the whole statement of Acts 19:4-5 in the Greek *Textus Receptus*, see at nn. 92-93 above. According to Gravemeijer, these Lukan verses are thus to be taken together as stating what Paul said, in corrective response to the heretics' statement anent "the baptism of John" at the end of Acts 19:3. Only after recording this statement of Paul to the heretics about what John had really taught, does Luke go on to mention what Paul the apostle next did to them (in Acts 19:6). The heretics apparently repented under Paul's preaching. Yet further, Paul then applied no water whatsoever to those ex-heretics but simply laid his hands on them. They were, claims Gravemeijer, "baptized by John, and confirmed by Paul." If Gravemeijer is right in this, Calvin too (see at n. 106 below) would be right in suggesting that Paul did not at all apply water to those heretics. This would be so, even though in the opinion of Gravemeijer (*op. cit.* III:20:25 p. 175 n. 3) Calvin "wrongly understands Acts 19:5 of baptism with the Holy

Spirit." Consequently, there would then be no possibility of them having been rebaptized (with water) by Paul. Acts 19:4b uses the plural '*pisteusoosin*' (apparently still in respect of the singular *too; laoo;* in 19:4a). This, together with the *men...de* factor discussed above, lends some credence to Gravemeijer's hypothesis. See, however, n. 99 below.

98) Acts 19:5.

99) For our own refutation of this part of Gravemeijer's hypothesis set out in n. 97 above, a thesis which he in large part derived from Calvin, see our own main text immediately after its reference to n. 115.

100) Acts 19:1-7.

101) *Comm.* on Acts 19:2.

102) Acts 19:4a.

103) *Comm.* on Acts 19:4-5.

104) *Inst.* IV:15:18.

105) *Id.*

106) See below at nn. 109-120.

107) *Inst.* IV:15:18.

108) *Ib.* IV:15:7-8.

109) See above at n. 95.

110) See below at n. 120.

111) *Cf.* Mk. 2:18; Jh. 9:28; Mt. 23:15; Acts 5:36f *cf.* 17:18; Tit. 1:12f.

112) *Cf.* Rom. 2:28f; 8:2-9; Jude 4,11-19; Rev. 2:9; 3:9.

113) John 7:39 (*oupoo gar men Pneuma Hagion dedomen*).

114) Acts 19:2 (*all' oud' ei Pneuma Hagion estin eekousamen*).

115) See at n. 97.

116) For the Greek, see n. 93 above.

117) Acts 19:5-6 (Vulg.): *his auditis, baptizati sunt in nomine Domini Jesu. Et cum imposuisset illis manus Paulus.*

118) See below at n. 120.

119) See: *Het Nieuwe Testament of Alle Boeken des Nieuwen Verbonds onzes Heeren Jezus Christus door Last van de Hoog-Mog. Heeren Staten-Generaal der Vereenigde Nederlanden, en volgens besluit van de Synode Nationaal, gehouden te Dordrecht, in de Jaren 1618 en 1619, uit de Oorspronkelijke Talen in onze Nederlandsche Taal Getrouwelijk Overgezet, met Nieuwe Bijgevoegde Verklaringen op de Duistere Plaatsen en Aanteekeningen van de Gelijkkluidende Teksten* (Kok, Kampen, 1915, III p. 244 nn. 7-9).

120) A. Kuyper: *Sac.* pp. 134f (in his *Dog. Dict.*, IV. For an extended discussion, see Kuyper's *E Voto Dordraceno*, Wormser, Amsterdam, 1892, pp. 509f. In *ib.* p. 511 n. 1, Kuyper maintains against Calvin and others that the Greek particle *men*, upon which the Dordt Dutch Bible had relied, does not occur in the most reliable manuscripts at Acts 19:4. See too at nn. 97 & 119 above.

121) Lk. 3:3-22 *cf.* Acts 19:3.

122) Mt. 28:18 *cf.* Acts 19:5-6.

123) Eph. 4:5.

124) *Iren.*: *Against Heresies* III:17:1-4 & IV:22:4.

125) Hippol.: *Refutation of all Heresies* 9:7 and *Discourse on the Holy Theophany*.

126) *Lact.*: *Divine Institutes* IV:15.

127) *Ath.*: *On Holy Baptism*, in J.-P. Migne's *Patrologia Graecina-Latina* 28:760 ABC.

128) *Bas.*: *On the Holy Spirit* XII:28.

129) *Greg. Nys.*: *On the Baptism of Christ*, in *NPNF*, 2nd Ser., V, pp. 522f.

130) *Aug.*: *Tracts on John's Gospel* IV:11-15f.

131) *Calv.*: *Comm. on Acts 19:4-5*.

132) *Dordt Dutch Bible*: comments at Acts 19:1-7.

133) A. Kuiper: *De Sac.* pp. 134f.

134) Dale: *Baptism*, in Schaff-Herzog *Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge* I p. 197.