

WHO MAY BAPTIZE?

I, Francis Nigel Lee, strongly oppose licensing women as Preachers. Indeed, I wrote the successful legal opinion in the 1991 New South Wales court case Bartholomew & Others vs. the Presbyterian Churches of Australia. See F.N. Lee: *Women Ministers? Law and Litigation* -- dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.), Rutherford School of Law, Lakeland, Florida, U.S.A., 1992.

Second, I am a Calvinist. Like Calvin, I accept the validity and unrepeatability of circumcision by the woman Zipporah; of trinitarian baptism by sprinkling or submersion by perverse priests of the Roman Catholic Church; of trinitarian baptism by affusion and later also by submersion by unordained leaders of the Anabaptists -- and even by the devil!

In his 1536 *Institutes* IV:15:16-18, Calvin wrote: "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... Catabaptists...deny that we were duly baptized, because we were baptized in the Papacy by wicked men and idolaters. Hence they (those rebaptizing Catabaptists) furiously insist on anabaptism. Against these absurdities, we shall sufficiently be fortified 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.... 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 of sacrilege but into the faith of Jesus Christ -- because the name which they invoked, was not their own but God's.... It did not harm the Jews that they were circumcised by impure and apostate priests..., so as to make it necessary to repeat it.... 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.... Circumcision was anciently vitiated by many superstitions, and yet ceased not to be regarded as a symbol of grace (Colossians 2:11-13)."

Anabaptists "allege the Paul rebaptized those who had been baptized with the baptism of John (Acts 19:3-5).... By our confession, the baptism of John was the same as ours.... It was (not John but) a foolish imitator of John who by a former 'baptism' had initiated them into vain superstition.... They acknowledged their entire ignorance of the Holy Spirit -- an ignorance in which John never would have left his disciples!... They knew not whether there was a 'spirit'!... John's was a true baptism, and one and the same with the baptism of Christ.... I deny that the were rebaptized! See Calvin's *Instructions against Anabaptists*" (1544).

In the latter, Calvin declares that the Anabaptists "on several principal points of Christianity...agree closely with the Papists, holding a view directly repugnant to all the Holy Scripture -- as with free will, predestination, and the cause of our salvation.... The First Article of the...Anabaptists declares that 'baptism...ought to be administered to those who request it for themselves, not for infants.'" Calvin responds: "'Infant baptism...has always been a holy ordinance observed in the Christian Church.... God did not fail to command little children to be circumcised!' Genesis 17:7-14. 'Go and turn all the nations into disciples' (Matthew 28:19)" -- including their babies!... "The Anabaptist have stormed greatly against infant baptism.... (But) Christ orders (His Ministers)...to convey to all nations the message of

eternal salvation, and confirms it by adding the seal of baptism... That promise which was formerly given to the Jews, must now be in force towards the Gentiles -- 'I will be your God, and the God of your seed after you!'" Genesis 17:7-14 and Isaiah 59:19-21.

Old Testament circumcision was triune. Genesis 1:1-3,26 & 3:8,22 & 6:3-8 & 11:7 & 17:1-14 & 18:2,16,20 & 19:2,27 & 20:7 & 21:4 & 22:13-18 and John 8:56-58 and Exodus 3:14 & 4:24-26 & 6:3. So too was New Testament baptism. Luke 3:3-22 and Matthew 28:19 and Ephesians 4:4-6 and Colossians 2:11-13 and First John 5:6-8. The unfallen Adam knew the Trinity (thus Basil, Epiphanius, Zanchius, and Witsius). So too the fallen Noah, Abraham, and Moses. Yet Abraham started circumcising, before we learn he was a Prophet!

Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro the priest of Midian Their first son, Gershom, was apparently circumcised in infancy. But, after the birth of their second son Eliezer (Exodus 3:16-22 & 12:44-48 & 18:1-5,10-20) -- Moses neglected to have him circumcised in infancy! At the lodging place on the way with his family to Egypt, the Lord met Moses and was about to kill him (Ex. 4:24) -- for neglecting to have his second baby son circumcised (Genesis 17:14).

Moses then guiltily sensed the Lord was about to kill him! Knowing the reason why, the patriarch immediately repented of his evil neglect. When the son was circumcised by his unordained mother, the wrath of God abruptly turned away from Moses -- and the Lord then "let him go" (Exodus 4:26)! How was this accomplished? By Moses' wife Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro the godly priest of Midian, herself irregularly yet validly performing that unrepeatable circumcision. The mere fact that Zipporah well knew that her second son Eliezer now needed to be circumcised (Exodus 4:25), evidences that she had previously witnessed the prior circumcision of her firstborn son Gershom (*cf.* Acts 7:8,20,29).

Calvin irregularized but did not invalidate Zipporah's circumcision of her son in his 1536 Institutes IV:15:20. There, he wrote: "It is improper for private individuals to take upon themselves the administration of baptism.... For Christ did not give command to any men or women whatever to baptize, but to those whom He had appointed apostles" -- and not to Elders or Deacons (or even to Ministers who were not apostles?!)... The practice which has been in use for many ages and **almost from the very commencement of the Church for laics to baptize**...cannot, it appears to me, be defended on sufficient grounds...

"Augustine...says...: 'A laic has given baptism, when compelled by necessity'.... Tertullian...says that a woman is not permitted to...baptize.... Epiphanius...upbraids Marcion with giving permission to women to baptize....

"Zipporah...took a stone and circumcised her son.... There was something special in the case.... Seeing her son (and his father Moses)...in danger..., she...throws down the foreskin." Then God stopped killing Moses -- indicating He recognized the circumcision!

In Calvin's 1547 Appendix to the Tract on the True Method of Reforming the Church (in which Calvin refutes the censure of an anonymous printer on the sanctification of infants and baptism by women), Augustine says "If a layman...shall have given baptism, I know not if any one can piously say that it is to be repeated!... If there is urgent necessity, it is not fault!....

"(Calvin says:) There is a great difference between common use, and an extraordinary remedy adopted under the most urgent necessity.... The example of Zipporah is quoted.... It is erroneously inferred from the fact of the angel being appeased, that the act of Zipporah was approved by God.... It was a special act.... Whoever baptizes without a lawful call, rashly intrudes into another's office.... Zipporah...throws the foreskin on the ground.... I am not unacquainted with the stories of the Jews on this passage."

Calvin, in writing to the Pastors of Mompelgard, rightly disapproved of ordaining women as Pastors. But what does one do with a would-be transferree who produces a baptismal certificate from a Trinitarian Church claiming he was previously baptized by "Rev. J. Doe"? Accept this, without first trying to establish that Rev. J. Doe was a John Doe and not a Jane Doe? Or does one go ahead and rebaptize? I think the unrecircumcisability of Zipporah's circumcised second son, should caution one against all rebaptisms!

In Calvin's maturer year 1563, he wrote his *Harmony of Exodus*. There, God let Moses go (Exodus 4:26) -- after his unordained wife circumcised their son who was never recircumcised! He commented: "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 shown him -- so that he hastened to seek for a remedy.... It would never otherwise have occurred to himself for his wife to circumcise the child to appease God's wrath.... It will appear a little further on, that God was...propitiated by this offering. Since He withdrew His hand, and took away the tokens of His wrath....

"Vengeance was declared against Moses for his negligence.... For he had not omitted his son's circumcision from forgetfulness or ignorance or carelessness only.... He neglected to obey God.... Let us learn from this to use the sacraments reverently which are the seals of God's grace, lest He should severely avenge our despisal of them... At the same time, we should remember that the external profession of piety and the worship of God is a sacrifice so pleasant to God, that He will not allow us to omit the care of diligently testifying (about) it -- as if it were a matter of small importance!...

"Moses was deficient in perseverance.... 'Then Zipporah took a sharp stone' (to cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at the feet of Moses).... The wife here improperly assumed this office.... 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' (or then refrained from continuing to kill the negligent Moses).... 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) in itself. Not that imperfect obedience is pleasing to God absolutely. But relatively, through indulgence, it is sometimes approved.... When therefore Zipporah...circumcised her son with her own hands..., yet God was contented...to cease from afflicting Moses....

"The confusion of Zipporah and the stupor of Moses were pardoned.... She rashly hastened to circumcise her son." Nevertheless, the circumcision performed by Zipporah was valid, because unrepeatable. Too, God thereupon immediately ceased killing the delinquent Moses. Indeed, being valid though irregular, the circumcision was never repeated. Once

performed, it was unrepeatable anyway! Colossians 2:11-12 and Hebrews 6:1-6. In his 1563 *Commentaries on Amos* (5:25-26), Dr. John Calvin therefore wrote "baptism...is a sacred...testimony of the grace of God, though it were administered by **the devil!**"

The unordained John the Baptizer first baptized. He validly baptized Jesus! 'Jesus Himself baptized not; but His disciples' did -- including even the apostate apostle Judas! Cf. John 4:2. Calvin comments: "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...and stretched it out to us.... 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 Minister -- and disturb the Church with this madness!"

Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ (Mark 16:15f & Acts 8:37f) but also the infants of one or both [Christ-professing] parents are to be baptized (Genesis 17:7,9; Galatians 3:9,14; Colossians 2:11-12; Acts 2:38-39; Romans 4:11-12; First Corinthians 7:14; Matthew 28:19; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15). "It be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance (Luke 7:30; **Exodus 4:24-26!**)" Thus the *Westminster Confession* 28:3-5 -- cf. too the *Westminster Larger Catechism* Q. 166.

It should not be thought Calvin made all his above comments as if he himself were personally unacquainted with Moses' situation! The cases of the various baptisms in Calvin's own family circle, are most instructive. Calvin himself was baptized but once, in infancy -- in the trinitarian Roman Catholic Church. He was never rebaptized subsequently -- for he was opposed to rebaptism, on Biblical grounds. Romans 6:1-11 & Hebrews 6:1-8; cf. Calvin's *Institutes* IV:15:16-17 & IV:2:11-12.

His wife Idelette was baptized as an Anabaptist by affusion trinitarianly when an adult -- by an unordained Anabaptist, before meeting Calvin. After being won by Calvin to the Reformed Faith in later life, she then joined the Presbyterian Church of Switzerland, married the Reformer -- and was like Calvin himself never rebaptized. Calvin himself, never ordained in the Romish Church, baptized their eldest child by sprinkling, in the Reformed Church. Thereafter, the baby died in early infancy. Their subsequent children died practically at birth, unbaptized -- but already sanctified by the precious blood of Jesus even from their godly father's loins and their faithful mother's womb!

Similarly, my own wife was baptized trinitarianly in infancy in the Reformed Church -- while I myself was baptized trinitarianly in infancy by copious affusion in the Romish Church. Our elder daughter was baptized trinitarianly in infancy by a male Protestant Minister before I was ordained, and later our younger daughter was sprinkled trinitarianly in infancy by me.

Only the Trinity validates baptisms! I believe all circumcisions and baptisms mentioned in the above paper, are unpeatedly valid -- and need nothing further, though administered by Calvin's "**whomsoever**" and even "**the devil!**" Yet, for order's sake, preferably only by ordained Pastors!

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