

BAPTISM DOES NOT CLEANSE!

Calvinism versus 'christening': against baptismal regenerationism

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"Not to baptize but to preach the Gospel!" (First Corinthians 1:17)

FOREWORD

The Apostle Paul, Augustine of Hippo, and John Calvin - all rejoiced in being saved by grace alone! Being an *issus de Calvin*, as the author Dr. Lee prefers to call himself, he never grows weary of emphasizing that man is saved solely by the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dr. Lee is a man of astounding erudition and -- of much greater importance -- one who humbly and unreservedly accepts the authority and infallibility of Holy Scripture. He is one of the few scholars of our day who has really probed the literary heritage of the great Reformer John Calvin.

This paper is no exception to the rule: solely by grace! Infant baptism is based on the covenant of grace. Depraved man has no meritorious works. Regeneration and the seed of faith, thus implanted in the heart of the smallest child, are indispensable for baptism. But these are gifts of God!

The prior existence of faith as deserved merit, could never be proved -- not even before baptism. That is why the *Belgic Confession* (Art. XXI) explains: "We do not mean that faith itself justifies us."

However, faith is indeed the implied prerequisite for all advocates of adult baptism alone! Indeed, the heathen - who have as yet had no participation in the covenant -- do need to profess their faith, before receiving baptism.

Professor Lee brings out in bold relief that even children of believers "while yet in the womb -- according to Calvin - have been adopted into the covenant of eternal life." Compare too the *Canons of Dordt*, I:17. What a comfort for so many worried and wondering parents!

Calvin once wrote: "Doubtless the design of Satan, in assaulting paedobaptism with all his forces, is to keep out of view and gradually efface that attestation of divine grace which the promise itself presents to our eyes." *Institutes* IV:16:32.

May this piece of painstaking research into the *Opera* of Calvin, be used by the Spirit of God to make many a seeking soul conscious of the real meaning of the grace of God!

(Rev. Professor Dr.) F.J.M. Potgieter (Th.D., Ph.D.),
Emeritus Prof. of Systematic Theology, Reformed Theological Seminary,
University of Stellenbosch, Republic of South Africa.

Note by Dr Lee: The late Professor F.J.M. Potgieter was my teacher, and is the author of scores of Calvinistic publications. His Th.D. dissertation was on Calvin, and he is an authority especially on Calvin's view of baptism. Below, I would not be innovative. I simply present Holy Scripture and Calvinism -- almost without comment.

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BAPTISM DOES NOT CLEANSE: Calvinism versus 'christening'

Not even holy baptism can regenerate a single sinner! That can only be effected directly by God's Holy Spirit. He it is Who cleanses us from all our sins. He does so only by virtue of the precious blood -- shed for us once and for all, at Calvary, by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself alone.

In the words of the well-known hymn: "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! O, precious is the flow - that makes me white as snow! No other fount I know -- nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

The Spirit-filled Holy Bible repudiates both circumcisonal and baptismal regeneration. So too do the uninspired Jewish writings which made their appearance between the Old and the New Testaments. Thus: the *Tanna* on Genesis, the *Talmud*, Philo and Josephus. Similarly, so too do all extant documents of the Early Christian Church which arose during the first two hundred years after Calvary.

It was as late as 250 A.D. when the ritualist Cyprian perhaps unconsciously began to syncretize Christianity and paganism. Before then, no patristic writings had advocated baptismal regeneration. Indeed, even baptism as such is but little mentioned in the earliest post-apostolic evidence.

It is true that the latter indeed maintains a high view of the sacrament -- and properly so! Yet therefrom, it is clear that faith and regeneration were often construed as preceding baptism. This naturally disproves baptismal regenerationism. Thus: the Epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, Justin Martyr, Theodotus, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and even Tertullian.

However, especially from about 250 A.D. onward the uninspired and syncretizing Christian Church began to backslide. Then, for many centuries, she more and more abandoned covenant theology. Instead, for hundreds of years, she increasingly taught the quasi-magical theory of baptismal regenerationism.

Yet even during those darkening dynasties, there were some bright and shining lights. For some of the Post-Cyprianic church fathers -- at least at times -- still conceded the possible existence of faith and salvation in infants, even before their baptism. Thus: Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and even Augustine. Proof of all these assertions now follows.

Intertestamental literature denies circumcisonal regenerationism

The *Tannaim* were those Israelitic authorities who expounded the Law of God for a period of about two centuries, starting with Hillel and Shammai (who were born around 70 B.C.). Their comments on Old Testament Scripture are called the *Tanna*.¹ The latter are a very valuable indication of how the Bible was interpreted after the close of the Old Testament (with the prophet Malachi), and before the beginning of the New Testament (from Matthew onward).

From these intertestamental *Tanna*, the Israelitic understanding of Holy Writ right before the birth of Jesus can be seen quite clearly. In the *Tanna* on Genesis 6:9f, it is clear that these rabbinical commentators regarded Noah's whole family as

¹ See the arts. *Hillel* and *Tannaim* in A.M. Hyamson & A.M. Silbermann's *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Shapiro & Vallentine, London, 1939, pp. 286 & 633.

already just[ified] prior to the later inception of circumcision. Indeed, also from the *Tanna* on Genesis 17:12-14, it is clear that those born in Abraham's household were regarded as already "bought" (and thus as already in the covenant) even before their circumcision. Compare too Genesis 12:5; 14:14; 15:2-6; 17:24-27.

It is for this reason that all their males were to be circumcised. Not circumcising those born in the household - or those bought with money as household servants and thus added to the homestead -- was indeed a grievous sin. Yet such was not the sin of refusing to enter into covenant. To the contrary, it was the sin of having "broken" the covenant already binding upon them all! Genesis 15:18; 17:10-14; Exodus 4:24-26; Joshua 5:6-11.

Now this obviously presupposes the existence of the covenant with God's people **prior** to their circumcising (or their non-circumcising) of their own infant children of the covenant. The latter was to be done through the agency of a Minister of the Word and Sacraments. Genesis 17:23f *cf.* 20:7 & 21:4. Consequently, the adults' non-circumcising of their own children in this way, constituted those adults' breach of a covenant already there for them -- and binding upon them.

The *Talmud* is a large body of Jewish teachings first written down from the second century A.D. onward. It rests, however, upon generations of prior oral traditions -- going back at least to the time of Ezra (*circa* 450 B.C.).²

In the *Talmud*,³ prenatal and thus precircumcisional teachability -- and therefore regeneratedness -- is presupposed. For even prenatal illumination is assumed -- when unborn children were then "taught" religious lore. *Cf.* Psalm 139:15f; Jeremiah 1:5; Second Timothy 1:6 & 3:14-16.

Thus, a Hebrew male baby did not become a Hebrew by being circumcised. To the contrary, a Hebrew baby was circumcised as a baby -- precisely because he was already a Hebrew before his infant circumcision. See: Philippians 3:5 *cf.* Second Timothy 1:3-6. Indeed, uncircumcisable Hebrew female babies were fully Hebrewesses and later Israelitesses -- regardless of their lifelong uncircumcision. Genesis 34:1-31; Num. 27:8f & 36:2f; Luke 13:16 & 23:28f.

According to the *Talmud*,⁴ the babies of Gentile proselytes themselves became Jews -- before their infant circumcisions. For they became Jews as soon as their parents were adopted by Jewish families, or alternatively themselves professed the Jewish faith. For, declares the *Talmud*, "whenever one becomes a proselyte he is accounted as an infant newly born" -- and hence as one not yet circumcised.⁵

Indeed, ancient Israelitic missionaries, continues the *Talmud*,⁶ "baptized the little young proselyte" along with his parents. This refers to the practice of the Judaic infant baptism of the babies of proselytes -- before and during the earthly lifetime of John the baptizer and of Jesus Christ Himself. First Kings 18:30-37; Malachi 3:1f & 4:4-6; Luke 1:13-17; John 1:25-34f; Matthew 21:25 & 23:15.

² See the arts. *Ezra the scribe* and *Mishnah and Talmud*, in A.M. Hyamson & A.M. Silbermann's *op. cit.*, pp. 219 & 433 & 630f.

³ *Niddah* 30b

⁴ *Keth.* 11a

⁵ *Yeb.* 48b; *Bar. par. Ger.* 2:6f; *Yeb.* 22a,62a,97b; and *b. Bek.* 47a.

⁶ *Erub.* 11:1 & *Test. Levi* 14:6. See too *b. Shab.* 135#b# *Ber.*; *Ger.* 2:1; *Keth.* 1:2-4; 3:1-2; *Qid.* 78a; *Ber. par. b. Yeb.* 60b; *Qid.* 4:66a.10; *j. Bik.* 1:64a.31f; *j. Yeb.* 8.9b.62f; and *Pes.* 8:8.

The famous antiquarian Rev. Prof. Dr. Joachim Jeremias lived and wrote as a confessionistic and consubstantiationistic Lutheran. Yet, explaining First Corinthians 7:14, he nevertheless rightly insists regarding proselyte baptism: "Judaism distinguishes between [baptizable] children who are begotten and born...before conversion to Judaism, and children who were begotten and born...after conversion to Judaism [without baptism].... We conclude that the 'holiness' of the children [referred to in First Corinthians 7:14] rests not on baptism -- but on their descent from a Christian father or a Christian mother."⁷

The Alexandrian Jew Philo, who died around 40 A.D., asks and answers how Eve conceived 'children of God.' Philo asks: "Who then is the One Who sows...the things that are good?" Philo then answers: "It is God, then, Who indeed sows the seed.... He bestows His own offspring whom He has sown." Further, Philo adds that Jewish babies are taught religion even "in their swaddling clothes" -- and therefore again even before their circumcisions.⁸

About half a century later, the Judaistic Sadducee and famous historian Josephus wrote his 93 A.D. autobiographical *Life* and his *Antiquities of the Jews*. Therein, looking back several decades, he tells us: "I am not only sprung from a sacerdotal family.... By my mother I am of the royal blood.... I was born in the first year of the reign of Caius Caesar [37 A.D.].... Jesus, a wise man, was about this time.... He was Christ.... John that was called the baptizer...was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue both as to righteousness towards one another and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism.... The washing would be acceptable to him if they made use of it **not in order to the putting away of some sins**, but for the purification of the body: supposing still that **the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness**."⁹

Very clearly, all this presupposes "piety" and "righteousness" and "virtue" in candidates **before** their "baptism." The "washing" was "**not** in order to the putting away of some sins." For John the baptizer supposes "that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand" -- and indeed by "righteousness" (whether imputed or inherent). A stronger discounting of any theory of **baptismal** regenerationism, is scarcely imaginable!

Early patristic literature denies baptismal regenerationism

After Christ's final bloodshedding on Calvary, the bloody sign of Old Testament household circumcision was replaced by the unbloody sign of New Testament household baptism. Genesis 17:10-27 & Exodus 4:24-26 *cf.* Romans 4:11 to 6:3f & Colossians 2:11-13.

In the early-patristic *Epistle of Barnabas*, written perhaps around 100 A.D., God is said to declare¹⁰ that "circumcision was not of the flesh, but of the heart." So too do many of the Christian apocryphal writings.¹¹ For example, the so-called

⁷ *The Origins of Infant Baptism*, Allenson, Napierville, Ill, 1962, pp. 46 & 75.

⁸ *De Cherub.* 12-15, and *Ad Gajum* 16 *cf.* 31. See too: Lk. 2:7 & 2:21

⁹ *Antiq.* 18:3:3 & 18:5:2 compare *Life* 1 & 23.

¹⁰ *Epistle of Barnabas* 9.

¹¹ *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 32,34,40; the *Acts of Paul* 3,24,31; the *Acts of Peter* 5; the *Acts of Xanthippe & Polyxena* 2,13,28; and the *Rest of the Words of Baruch* 6,23

*Gospel of Thomas*¹² regards a pre-circumcisional [compare a 'pre-baptized'] "little child of seven days" -- as being among "those who enter the Kingdom." Cf. Genesis 17:12f & Second Samuel 12:18-23.

The abiding influence especially of New Testament texts, is very clearly evident in the patristic writings. As regards baptism, this is notably the case with Romans 4:11 and Ephesians 4:5 & 4:30 and Colossians 2:11-13. Thus, the important pastoral letter known as the *Shepherd of Hermas* constantly calls baptism specifically a "seal" of repentance.¹³

The 150 A.D. Samaritan Christian Justin Martyr describes even unbaptized and aborted children as "immaculate."¹⁴ Indeed, he claims that some had been "illuminated" as "disciples - from childhood."¹⁵

Asks Justin in his *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*:¹⁶ "What need have I of circumcision -- I who have been witnessed to by God? I who have been baptized with the Holy Ghost -- what need have I of that other baptism [namely that with water]?" For "Abraham was justified -- when he was he was in uncircumcision!"¹⁷

The Church Father Theodotus states¹⁸ that "baptism...is the sign of regeneration" -- and not that baptism is or effects regeneration! Indeed, he also declares that unbaptized "aborted infants share a better fate" than do unbelieving adults.¹⁹

Around 185 A.D., Irenaeus says²⁰ that Jesus "sanctified every age" of humanity. For "He came to save all...who are 'born again' to God -- infants and children and boys and youths." Irenaeus also quotes Jeremiah 1:5 with approval²¹ -- as regards prenatal (and therefore prebaptismal) justification. Indeed, he further asserts Jesus taught that even the 'speechless infants' in Matthew 11:25-27 "believed in Him."²²

About 190 A.D., Clement of Alexandria states that aborted embryos are led into everlasting life.²³ This is apparently so, because they have already been made righteous -- before baptism!²⁴

The 200 A.D. Tertullian approvingly quotes²⁵ the prenatal and therefore

¹² *Gospel of Thomas*, (Logia 4 & 22).

¹³ *Herm.* II:4:3 & III:9:16f.

¹⁴ *1st Apology to the Emperor Antoninus Pius* 18.

¹⁵ *Ib.* 15:6 cf. chs. 27 & 29.

¹⁶ *Dial.* 29

¹⁷ *Ib.* 23.

¹⁸ *Excerpts* 7 & 5 & 48.

¹⁹ *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1970, VIII pp. 43-48.

²⁰ *Against Heresies* II:22:4.

²¹ *Ib.* V:15:3.

²² *Ib.* IV:6:7. See too J. Inchley: *All About Children*, Coverdale, London, 1976, pp. 20f; and F.N. Lee's *Revealed to Babies*, Commonwealth, Rowlett Tx., 1986, pp. 1 & 6f.

²³ *Eclogia* 41 & 48 (cf. *Revelation of Peter* 25).

²⁴ *Stromata* II:9.

²⁵ See his *On the Soul* 19 & 25-27.

prebaptismal texts Jeremiah 1:5 and Luke 1:41-46. Indeed, he declares that believers washed with the blood of Christ are justified even when not able to receive water-baptism.²⁶

He also asks the impenitent: "Who will grant to you...one single sprinkling of any water whatever?" Yet he then remarks of those who have repented, that "we are not washed in order that we may escape from sinning; but because we have ceased, since in heart we have been bathed already!"²⁷

Prebaptismal regeneration even in some late patristic literature

As we shall see below, it was the 250 A.D. catabaptist Cyprian who introduced the swiftly spreading and paganistic pollution of baptismal regenerationism into the Early Church catholic. Yet resistance against it still continued, for more than a century thereafter.

Thus, around 370 A.D., Gregory of Nazianzus declares:²⁸ "Have you an infant child? From his very tenderest age, let him be consecrated by the Spirit! ... Hannah even before Samuel was born, promised him to God; and after his birth consecrated him at once.... You have no need of amulets or incantations....

"Some will say, in the case of those who ask for baptism - what have you to say about those who are still children, and conscious neither of the loss nor of the grace? Are we to baptize them too? Certainly.... A proof of this is found in the circumcision on the eighth day, which was a sort of typical seal, and was conferred on children."

His contemporary, Gregory of Nyssa, teaches that even unbaptized covenant babies receive blessing -- not wrath.²⁹ And around 400 A.D., even Augustine admits it is only in the elect that the sacraments accomplish what they represent.³⁰ Indeed, he also states: "Though the sacraments were common to all, the grace was not common!"³¹

According to Calvin, "by the mouth of Augustine...there is a sanctification without a visible sacrament, and a visible sacrament without internal sanctification."³² For the rest, however, Augustine unfortunately promoted the false theory of baptismal regenerationism -- though rebuttably so!³³

²⁶ *On Baptism* 16.

²⁷ *On Repentance* 6.

²⁸ *Oration* 40:18,28.

²⁹ *On the Untimely Death of Infants*, in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* XLVI:161-92.

³⁰ *Concerning the Baptism of Tiny Children*.

³¹ *On Psalm 78*.

³² *Institutes of the Christian Religion* IV:19:16, citing Augustine's: *Old Testament Questions* Bk. III; his *80th Homily on John 13*; and his *On Baptism Against the Donatists* Bk. V. See too our nn. 494 & 539 & 541 & 594 below.

³³ For a good Calvinian refutation of these unbiblical baptismal views of Augustine, see at nn. 603-606 below.

Syncretistic Cyprian: the father of baptismal regenerationism

We hardly ever agree with Dr. Samuel Angus, sometime Professor of New Testament and Historical Theology at St Andrew's College, University of Sydney. He was greatly in error -- where he attributed also New Testament Christianity to Pagan Greek roots.

Yet what Angus claimed about the Late-Patristic Church, is true! For it is undeniable that the form-ed Church soon became increasingly de-formed. This occurred especially from the (250 A.D.) time of Cyprian onward. It continued until the Church re-formed -- in the days of the 1517f Protestant Re-form-ation.

Wrote Angus: "It was inevitable that [heathen] Hellenic religion should leave a deep impression upon...later Christianity..., mainly because Hellenic converts became the pillars of the Church.... In considering the history of Christian sacramentarianism..., the organization of the Catholic Church was largely the creation of the genius of Cyprian, who was a firm believer in magic....

"In several of the [Pagan] Mystery-Religions, 'baptism' was the means to the remission of the penalties of sin and of regeneration. Compare Tertullian *De Bapt.* 5; *Adv. Haer.* 40. The baptism of the *taurobolium* [alias the pagan showering with bull's blood] was valid for twenty years."³⁴

Unintended yet striking corroboration of the above, comes also from the camp of Traditionalistic Romanism. Thus Dr. B.V. Miller, Oscott Professor of Dogmatic Theology at St Mary's College.

According to Miller: "All competent scholars are agreed that from the end of the third century, the Catholic theology of the Mass was fixed.... It is maintained by many that this is a perversion of the primitive doctrine.... The principal author of the innovation and of the change in the current of theological tradition, is said to be St Cyprian."³⁵

Let it never be forgotten that Cyprian, though an Early Catholic Christian, was also a heterodox catabaptist! For Cyprian deviated from mainline Christianity at that time -- with his insistence upon rebaptizing all those catholicized from trinitarian sects. This rebaptistic viewpoint was essentially magical and ritualistic. Fortunately, it was then successfully opposed -- in the middle of the third century -- by Stephen of Rome and by Dionysius of Rome. Yet it introduced a permanent element of superstition, which soon spread throughout the Early Catholic Church and poisoned her for many centuries.

Ritualistic baptismal regenerationism challenged by the Reformation

The implications of this for baptism, now unfolded. Down through the subsequent centuries, it led to the entrenched baptismal regenerationism of the Mediaeval Church. That of scholastics like Thomas Aquinas was especially influential.

But God, in His blessed providence, then sent the Protestant Reformation. So now, we ourselves can rejoice in the famous Lutheran Schwarzerd's defence of the 1530 *Augsburg Confession*. Wrote this Rev. Dr. 'Melanchthon' (Professor of Greek and New Testament at the University of Wittenberg): "Here we condemn the whole rabble

³⁴ S. Angus: *The Religious Quests of the Graeco-Roman World*, Murray, London, 1929, pp. 166f & nn. 1.

³⁵ B.V. Miller: *The Eucharistic Sacrifice*, Burnes Oates & Washbourne, London, 1930, p. 17.

of Scholastic doctors, who teach that the sacraments confer grace upon him who interposes no obstacle, *ex opere operato*, without any good motion on the part of the recipient.... This impious and superstitious opinion is taught with great authority in the whole kingdom of the Pope."³⁶

The Vatican replied to this at her historic Romish Council of Trent, in 1545f. For Trent firmly repudiated both Lutheran and Calvinistic Protestantism. Indeed, it implicitly further rebuffed some of the counter-reformational claims even of that pugnacious papist -- Cardinal Cajetan himself.

Writes the modern Romanist Dr. Murphy:³⁷ "The theologian Cajetan...expressed the opinion that in the case of infants dying in their mother's womb, the prayers of the parents could secure the justification and salvation of the children. He thought that a blessing of the child in the womb, given in the Name of the Blessed Trinity, would secure this.

"This opinion was regarded with great disapproval by the theologians of the Council of Trent [Session V, Decree 1].... Though it was not actually condemned, Pope Pius V ordered that it should be expunged from the works of Cajetan.... Even St Bonaventure seems to have nodded. For he says³⁸ that an infant would be deprived of grace if unbaptized -- unless God made it the object of some special privilege."

Modern ritualism maintains baptismal regenerationism

The further implications of all this, even for Romanism today, are still being stated very clearly. For Murphy continues:³⁹ "If a pregnant mother dies, and the foetus is extracted, it should be baptized -- if alive. If there is doubt as to its being alive, it should be baptized conditionally -- 'if thou art capable' *etc.*.... A foetus baptized in the womb should be baptized conditionally after birth -- 'if thou art not baptized' *etc.*.... All abortions, at whatever period of pregnancy they may occur, should be baptized if they are alive, and should be baptized conditionally ('if thou art capable') if there is doubt of their being alive."

Thus, modern Romanism still promotes baptismal regenerationism. Moreover, her custom of 'conditional baptism' also tends to perpetuate the practice of rebaptism -- prohibited in Ephesians 4:4-6 and Hebrews 6:1-6 *etc.* This prohibited practice is at least Neo-Anabaptist, if not Neo-Donatist!

In his above-mentioned *nihil obstat* book, bearing the *imprimatur* of Edm. Can. Surmont the Romish Vicar-General, Murphy further⁴⁰ tells us why all humans -- whether fetuses or octogenarians -- must be baptized before they die. "We must conclude," he declares, "that infants dying in their mother's womb do not enjoy the Beatific Vision in Heaven."

Thus say the lords of the Roman Catholic Church! But the Lord of lords states the very opposite. For the Word of God assures us that infants of believing parents

³⁶ P. Melancthon: *Apology* (cited in R. Bellarmine's *De Sacramentis* I:iii).

³⁷ J.P. Murphy: *The Sacrament of Baptism*, Burns Oates & Washbourne, London, 1929, p. 31.

³⁸ J. Bonaventura: *IV Sentences* I iv, dist. Iv.

³⁹ *Op. cit.* p. 60.

⁴⁰ *Ib.* p. 32.

are sanctified even from their conception, long before they could ever be baptized! First Corinthians 7:14. Compare too: Genesis 17:5-12; Luke 1:5-7,39-45; II Timothy 1:3-5 & 3:14-15.

Consistent Christianity *alias* Calvinism teaches that baptism is only for those sinners who are already Christians (whether infants or adults). Ritualism, however, teaches: to baptize is to christianize; to 'christen' is to cleanse.

May the following pages convince the reader that baptism does not cleanse. More importantly, may they show that the blood of Jesus alone washes away all our sins. Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:14f; First Peter 1:18f; First John 1:7-9; Revelation 1:5.

May all who read, clearly see that unbelievers remain unholy -- both before, during, and after being baptized. Yet may they also see that those who profess to be Christians, and their infant children, are indeed to be regarded as already holy - even before the baptism with which they should all be sealed!

Statement of the problem of baptismal regenerationism

All Romanists believe infant baptism itself regenerates 'unholy' babies. So too do all Eastern 'Orthodox' ritualists. So too do many 'Church of Christ' Campbellites, and some Anglo-Catholics and Scoto-Catholics.

Luther always admitted and Lutherans often concede the possibility of faith in covenant infants even prior to their baptism. Yet Lutherans do seem to believe that the Holy Spirit usually regenerates precisely during baptism! Similarly, trinitarian Seventh-day Adventists and unitarian Jehovah's witnesses and polytheistic Mormons -- all attach far too much importance to their submersions (of adults alone).

Zwinglians, on the other hand, generally support the infant baptism of children of believers. Zwingli himself did this, out of conviction, from 1525 onward. It is true that Zwingli never fully understood how baptism (unregeneratively) engrafts the baptizee into membership of Christ's Church Visible. Yet Zwingli rightly perceived that the soul is cleansed by the grace of God alone, and not by anything external whatsoever. He properly saw that baptism itself certainly cannot wash away sin.

Like the affusive Anabaptists, also the immersionistic Baptists rightly reject baptism as a requirement for justification. Yet they wrongly believe that even the children of believers should never be baptized during infancy. 'Hardshell' Hypercalvinist Baptists sometimes deem even their own infants to be unsaved children of the devil. 'Softshell' Arminian Baptists, on the other hand, usually regard their own infants as 'safe' persons. Yet they also believe those infants might later lose that 'safeness' or salvation!

Consistent Calvinists, however -- together with Holy Scripture -- totally repudiate the baptism of unbelievers, and of the infant children of unbelievers. They require the baptism of adult believers -- and of the infant children of such believers. Yet they affirm that God often regenerates and gives unlosable saving faith to covenantal fetuses long before their baptism.

This prebaptismal faith is bestowed before such infants might be sealed. Formerly, the seal was circumcision. Since New Testament times, it is baptism. Romans 4:11; Colossians 2:11-12; Ephesians 4:4,5,30.

Many covenant children survive fetushood, and are born alive. If they then look like continuing to live -- they should be sealed while still babies. This should be done as soon as possible and feasible, shortly after their birth. Such sealing then occurs -- during their infant baptism.

The saints before Abraham were justified without circumcision

The very first gospel promise was made to our forebears Adam and Eve, right after their fall in the Garden of Eden. There they repented and believed the Gospel. Genesis 3:15-21 and 4:1-4. Very significantly, not just those uncircumcised adult believers but also their uncircumcised seed or descendants were and are included in that Gospel promise.

Thus also the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession of Faith*, which refers to the first passage above. It does so, where declaring that "the visible church...consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children."⁴¹

For after man's fall, yet before the institution of circumcision, it is obvious that many were justified by God -- through saving faith alone. This was accomplished without their ever receiving any sacrament of initiation (such as circumcision or baptism). Thus: Adam, Eve, Abel, Seth, Enoch, etc.⁴²

The never-circumcised Noah "found grace" in the eyes of God. He was justified or made just. Indeed, he was then also pronounced to have been made just -- and therefore to be just, in the eyes of God. Then God brought Noah and his family to safety, inside the ark -- quite before the rainstorm began. Only thereafter were they all 'baptized' -- by the rainwater falling on the roof of the ark.⁴³ So they were justified, before they were baptized!

We might point out that not just Noah and his family but even all the animals with him in the ark were advantaged by God's covenant. The mere fact that those animals could not understand what was going on, did not mean that they could not be preserved. Nor, after the flood, does their ongoing inability to understand the covenantal significance of the rainbow -- cause them to forfeit the benefits of that covenant. Genesis 6:18-22 and 9:8-17!

Abraham too was justified in full -- long before he was circumcised.⁴⁴ Even after the institution of circumcision, no Israelitic women -- Israelitic by birth or by choice -- were ever circumcised. Indeed, that was not even possible! Yet many such were justified -- such as Sarah, Rahab, Ruth, Elisabeth, etc.⁴⁵

Conversely, Esau (and probably also Ishmael) -- though circumcised in childhood -- was never justified!⁴⁶ On the other hand, David's first-born son by Bathsheba was justified before and without circumcision -- before he then died in infancy.⁴⁷

⁴¹ *Westminster Confession of Faith* 25:2c, citing Gen. 3:15.

⁴² Gen. 3:15-21; 4:2f,25f; 5:21f; Heb. 11:4-6 (all before Gen. 17:7-10f).

⁴³ Gen. 6:8f & 7:1-11. See too below at: Heb. 11:7f; I Pet. 3:20f; II Pet. 2:5.

⁴⁴ Gen. 15:6 cf. 16:1,16 & 17:1-10,26.

⁴⁵ Ruth 4:10-13; Luke 1:5f; Heb. 11:11,31,35.

⁴⁶ Gen. 17:12-26; Rom. 9:6-13; Heb. 12:14-17.

⁴⁷ II Sam. 11:27 & 12:15-23. Compare Gen. 17:12 & 21:4 with II Sam. 12:18.

For circumcision was only for the living -- and never for the dying. Nowhere in God's Word do we detect any desire to circumcise the dying -- whether they be dying infants or dying adults. At Calvary, circumcision was replaced by baptism.⁴⁸ So modern sacramentalists who scurry to baptize the dying, are far removed from the scenario of Scripture!

The circumcised Abraham and his uncircumcisable womenfolk

Now Abraham had already⁴⁴ been justified by God -- long before both he and his entire circumcisable household were commanded to be circumcised.⁴⁹ Indeed, as already seen above⁵⁰ -- circumcision never justified anyone.

Yet, after the institution of circumcision, it was nevertheless very disadvantageous for circumcisable covenantal babies to be left uncircumcised. For God Himself declares to Abraham: "I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and your seed after you in their generations..., to be a God to you, and to your seed after you.... He who is eight days old, shall be circumcised among you.... The uncircumcised male child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, shall be cut off from his people. He has broken My covenant."⁵¹

This can only mean that the male Israelite was conceived and born **within** the covenant prior to his subsequent circumcision, and that he himself was thus in covenant with God from his very first coming into being embryonically. Judges 13:5-25; Psalm 139:13-14; Jeremiah 1:5; First Corinthians 7:14. Otherwise it would not be possible for the infant, through the neglect of his own parent, to have "broken" the covenant -- if and when he was not later circumcised on the eighth day after his birth!

Moreover, the female Israelites -- whether embryo, baby, child or adult -- was always uncircumcisable. Yet she too was in covenant with Jehovah -- even prior to her birth, and indeed throughout her earthly existence. Genesis 30:21; 34:7-16; First Samuel 1:11f; Luke 1:28-55.

Consequently, it is not circumcision -- compare, similarly, baptism -- which establishes the covenant. Yet non-circumcision -- compare, similarly, non-baptism -- is certainly one of the ways a covenant already operative pre-circumcisionally (and/or pre-baptismally), can be broken! Genesis 17:2-14.

The Calvinistic *Westminster Confession of Faith* repeatedly cites from this passage. It does so to prove: that the church consists of believers and their children;⁵² that the sacraments are seals of the covenant of grace;⁵³ that there is a spiritual relation between the sacramental sign and the thing signified;⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Rom. 4:1-25 & Col. 2:11-13.

⁴⁹ Gen. 15:6; 17:7-27; 21:4; Rom. 4:9-11; Heb. 11:8-16.

⁵⁰ See our text at nn. 41 to 49 above.

⁵¹ Gen. 17:7-14.

⁵² *W.C.F.* 25:2c.

⁵³ *W.C.F.* 27:1a.

⁵⁴ *W.C.F.* 27:2f.

and that infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized.⁵⁵

The passage is also repeatedly referred to by the Calvinistic *Westminster Larger Catechism*. This is done to prove: that sacraments were instituted by Christ in His Church;⁵⁶ that infants descending from either one or both parents professing faith in Christ, are to be baptized;⁵⁷ and that the sacrament of baptism is to be administered but once and with water even to infants.⁵⁸

After Abraham, all believers who then left their circumcisable infants uncircumcised (before Calvary) -- thereby cut their own children off from membership in the visible community of believers! After Calvary, exactly the same is done by Baptist Christians who leave their own baptizable infants unbaptized. For baptism now, like circumcision then, is a token and sacrament of God's covenant of grace.

It is certainly injurious to believers (and to their children) -- to leave their infant children outside of the visible believing community. Yet even this great sin⁵⁹ cannot deprive those infant children of any faith in Christ they possess pre-baptismally (and keep on possessing). Hence, whether infants or adults, unbaptized believers today -- just like uncircumcised believers before Calvary -- are nevertheless justified. Thus they are safe -- both for time and for all eternity.

The circumcised yet still unregenerate male Shechemites

In his comment on the initial instituting of circumcision,⁶⁰ Calvin explains that "God threatens punishment only to despisers." This means those who formerly despised infant circumcision -- and those who today despise infant baptism. Where there was no actual despising or rejection of the sacrament for the covenant infant, however, the mere lack of infant circumcision (or baptism) did no harm to those infants. Of course, some harm might well devolve upon adults who despised infant circumcision (and who still despise infant baptism).

Calvin states that if any covenantal "infants were deprived by death of the tokens of salvation -- He [God] spared them.... For they had done nothing derogatory to the covenant of God. The same reasoning is at this day in force respecting baptism.... Uncircumcision of children would do them no harm -- if they died before the eighth day. To consign to destruction those infants whom a sudden death has not allowed to be presented for baptism -- before any neglect of parents could intervene -- is a cruelty originating in superstition."

On the other hand, circumcised unbelievers -- such as the unrepentant rapist Shechem and his fellow-tribesmen -- remained unjustified! As the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards* point out, God instituted the sacrament to put a visible difference between those that belong to the church -- and those that belong to the rest of the world. Thus the circumcised sons of Jacob rightly told the pagan

⁵⁵ *W.C.F.* 28:4m.

⁵⁶ *Westminster Larger Catechism* 162t.

⁵⁷ *W.L.C.* 166o.

⁵⁸ *W.L.C.* 177s; *etc.*

⁵⁹ Gen. 17:14; Ex. 4:24-26; Lk. 7:30f; *W.C.F.* 28:4m-5p.

⁶⁰ *Comm.* on Gen. 17:14.

Shechem: "We cannot...give our sister to one that is uncircumcised. For that were a reproach to us." Indeed, the sons of Jacob (rightly again) still regarded Shechem and his kinfolk as unregenerates -- even after the latter got themselves circumcised.⁶¹

Calvin too calls these circumcised yet unregenerate Shechemites "miserable men" -- alias circumcised but still faithless pagans. He denies that "anyone, [simply] by laying aside his uncircumcision, might suddenly pass over into the Church of God." To Calvin, those circumcised Shechemites were still "foreigners" and "unbelievers." Significantly, he also adds: "So also, at the present time, our baptism separates us from the profane!"⁶²

God threatened disobedient Moses; not his uncircumcised son!

Later, Moses neglected to circumcise his son Gershom. Significantly, God then threatened with death not the infant Gershom -- but his wayward father Moses! "The Lord met him, and sought to kill him."

So, to prevent the death of her husband, Moses' unordained wife Zipporah took a sharp stone. She cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his [Moses'] feet. Then she said: 'You are surely a husband-of-blood to me!' Then He let him go. "Thus she said: 'You are a husband-of-blood!' -- because of the circumcising."⁶³

Now the Romanists believe that all unbaptized infants are lost. However, they could hardly hold that all uncircumcised infants -- including even all Israelitic females -- were previously lost. For that would strain even their doctrine of the essential sinlessness of the Virgin Mary -- had she died, uncircumcised, when still an infant!

Yet the Romanists nevertheless love pointing to this bizarre and non-normative circumcision performed by the unordained woman Zipporah. They do so, to try and justify their own practice of permitting the emergency baptism of dying infants. Indeed, they permit even unordained nurses to act thus -- whether the latter profess to be Christians, or not!

However, Rome here overlooks the fact that the unquestionable validity and unrepeatability of this single and highly irregular act -- can no way be made normative as a *regula* alias a general rule. Still less can it be made to apply to the completely different case of dying infants!

For Rome here also overlooks the fact that it was not the uncircumcised healthy infant Gershom but only the circumcised and threatened adult Moses that was then dying! The wrath of God was kindled not by Gershom's lack of being circumcised -- but by Moses' sinful neglect to circumcise that baby boy.

Zipporah's circumcising of her son was highly irregular

⁶¹ Gen. 34:14,22-25f (*W.C.F.* 27:1d compare *W.L.C.* 162b).

⁶² *Comm.* on Gen. 34:13.

⁶³ Ex. 4:24-26. For an extended discussion on this, see my own *Have You Been Neglecting Your Baby?* (Jesus Lives, Wavell Heights, Australia), 1981, pp. 5-7 & 12 nn. 39-42.

Calvin comments:⁶⁴ "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 otherwise never have occurred to himself or his wife to circumcise the child to appease God's wrath....

"The child [Gershom] was not duly [alias *regula-rly*] circumcised.... It was improper in itself.... We must not take this as an example [to follow].... The confusion of Zipporah, and the stupor of Moses, were pardoned.... She rashly hastened to circumcise her son.... Let us then learn from hence, to use reverently the sacraments which are the seals of God's grace -- least he should severely avenge our despisal of them!"

What, though, of the Romanists' practice? Explains 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!"

In his *Appendix to the Tract on the True Method of Reforming the Church*, Calvin adds⁶⁵ the following: "The example of Zipporah is quoted, in which some -- pleasing themselves more than they ought -- betray their own want of discernment.... First, even on their own shewing, the cases of circumcision and of baptism are different. For they do not say that that ancient symbol [of circumcision] was absolutely necessary.

"Secondly, I think it is erroneously inferred...that the act of Zipporah was approved by God. Were it so, we must say that He was pleased with the worship perfunctorily paid to Him by the inhabitants of Samaria who had been transported thither from Assyria! II Kings 17. Thirdly, it was a special act, and cannot properly be drawn into a precedent....

"It betrays a want of common sense to seek a precedent in the act of Zipporah. In the presence of her husband, she circumcises her son. And who was that husband? Moses, the chief prophet of God -- than whom no greater ever arose in Israel! Let the woman-baptists tell me, whether they will permit a woman to baptize in presence of a bishop? Such a monstrosity would certainly horrify them!"

Calvin's *Institutes* on the circumcising by Zipporah

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin further states:⁶⁶ "It is improper for private individuals to take upon themselves the administration of baptism.... Christ did not give command to any men or women whatever to baptize, but to those whom He had appointed.... The practice which has been in use...for laics to baptize, in danger of death when a minister could not be present in time, cannot...be defended on sufficient grounds.... With regard to women, it was decreed without exception in the [257 A.D.] Council of Carthage (ch. 100) that they were not to presume to baptize at all."

⁶⁴ *Comm.* on Ex. 4:24f.

⁶⁵ Calvin's *Tracts and Treatises*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1958, III, pp. 356-8.

⁶⁶ *Inst.* IV:15:20-22.

However, some object: 'But there is a danger that he who is sick, may be deprived of the gift of regeneration -- if he decease without baptism!' Calvin responds: "By no means. Our children, before they are born, God declares that He adopts for His own.... How much evil has been caused by the dogma...that baptism is necessary to salvation...."

"For when the opinion prevails that all are lost who happen not to be baptized in water -- our condition becomes worse than that of God's ancient people [Genesis 17:7-12 & II Samuel 12:12-23]. In that case, Christ will be thought to have come not to fulfil but to abolish the promises. Since the promise, which was then effectual in itself, to confer salvation before the eighth day -- would [then] not now be effectual without the help of a sign!"

"Before [the 430 A.D.] Augustine's day, [it] is gathered [before 200 A.D.] first from Tertullian [*On Baptism* chapter 17]...that a woman is not permitted...to teach or baptize or...claim to herself any office of the man.... Of the same thing we have a sufficient witness in [the 400 A.D.] Epiphanius, when he upbraids Marcion with giving permission to women to baptize.... He declares it mockery to allow women to baptize, and makes no exception.... He says that it was not even permitted to the holy mother of Christ...."

"The example of Zipporah, Exodus 4:25, is irrelevantly quoted.... There was something special in the case, making it unfit for a precedent.... In baptism by women...it is plain that the rule delivered by Christ is violated [Matthew 28:19 and Hebrews 5:4].... Children who happen to depart this life before an opportunity of baptizing them in water, are not excluded from the Kingdom of heaven.... Unless we admit this position, great injury is done to the covenant of God -- as if in itself it were weak.... Its effect depends not either on baptism or on any accessaries!"

"The sacrament is afterwards added, as a kind of seal -- not to give efficacy to the promise as if in itself invalid, but merely to confirm it to us. Hence it follows that the children of believers are not baptized in order that, though formerly aliens from the Church, they may then for the first time become children of God -- but rather are received into the Church by a formal sign because, in virtue of the promise, they previously belonged to the body of Christ! Hence if, in omitting the sign, there is neither sloth nor contempt nor negligence -- we are safe from all danger."

The Calvinistic *Westminster Confession of Faith* states that "the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized."⁶⁷ Immediately thereafter, it rightly cites⁶⁸ this very incident of Moses neglecting to circumcise his infant son Gershom. Thus, it rightly concludes that "it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance."⁶⁹

However, the *Confession* then immediately adds a most important caveat about the sacrament of initiation. "Yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it -- or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated."⁷⁰

⁶⁷ *W.C.F.* 28:4m.

⁶⁸ Ex. 4:24-26, quoted in *W.C.F.* 28:5n.

⁶⁹ *W.C.F.* 28:5n.

⁷⁰ *Ib.* 28:5op, citing Rom. 4:11; Acts 10:2,4,22,31,45,47; 8:13,23.

Moses: fleshly circumcision pointed to that of the heart

Through Moses, God decreed that no uncircumcised person might partake of the Passover. This important *caveat* is twice cited in the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards*. For God instituted the sacraments precisely to put a difference between those that belong to the Church, and the rest of the world - and to exhibit the benefits of Christ's mediation to those within the covenant of grace.⁷¹

Moses also predicted that future generations of Israelites -- circumcised indeed in flesh -- will nevertheless be uncircumcised in heart. Indeed, Moses told even his own contemporary circumcised Israelites as a whole: "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and no longer be stiffnecked!"⁷² Clearly, they had not earlier been regenerated -- during their infant circumcisions!

Very important is the circumcision of the heart -- mentioned by Moses. Calvin here comments:⁷³ "To 'circumcise the heart' is equivalent to cleansing it.... He reproves their former perverseness, when he desires them to be no more stiff-necked.... Circumcision is, as it were, the solemn consecration - whereby the children of Abraham were initiated unto the worship of God and true piety, and at the same time were separated from heathen nations to be His holy and peculiar people.... They were to be admitted to this elementary rite in their infancy, that by its visible sign they might learn that the defilements of the flesh and the world were to be renounced....

"God had chosen them as His people...to prove that they differed from heathen nations and that they were circumcised in spirit no less than in the flesh. For Paul declares that they alone are truly Jews who are circumcised 'inwardly' as he says, and not those who only have to boast of 'the letter' of circumcision. Romans 2:28-29. Therefore, the Prophets frequently taunt the transgressors of the Law by calling them 'uncircumcised' -- although they bore the visible sign in their flesh."

Yet Moses assured the Israelites that there was hope for them even after future apostasy! For even then, if they would nevertheless return to the Lord -- "God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed" *etc.*⁷⁴

Here, Calvin comments⁷⁵ that "this promise...would be the chief advantage of their reconciliation -- that God should endow them with the Spirit of regeneration. There is a metaphor in this word: circumcise. For Moses alludes to the legal sign of consecration whereby they were initiated into the service of God. The expression, therefore, is equivalent to his saying -- 'God will create you spiritually to be new men'....

"Whatever God offers us in the sacraments, depends on the secret operation of His Spirit. Circumcision was then the sacrament of repentance and renewal, as baptism is now to us. But 'the letter' as Paul calls it (Romans 2:27), was useless in

⁷¹ Ex. 12:48 (*W.C.F.* 27:1d & *W.L.C.* 162w).

⁷² Lev. 26:41 & Dt. 10:16.

⁷³ *Comm.* on Dt. 10:16, in his *Harmony of the Pentateuch*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948f, I, pp. 357.

⁷⁴ Dt. 30:2-6.

⁷⁵ *Comm.* on Dt. 30:6.

itself -- as also now many are baptized to no profit. So far then is God from resigning the grace of His Spirit to the sacraments, that all their efficacy and utility is lodged in the Spirit alone.... Still, it is not His intention to restrict the circumcision of the heart to the subsequent course of their lives -- as if it depended on their own will and choice to 'circumcise' themselves, before God should work in them.... In fact, He regenerates by His Spirit!"

The psalmist trusted in God before he was born!

Later, David said to God: "You are He Who took me out of the womb. You made me hope -- [even] when I was on my mother's breasts.... You are my God -- from my mother's womb!"⁷⁶

Here we are told, under the infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that David had already put his "hope" or trust or confidence in God -- even before he had been weaned! "I" thus hoped or confided in God -- wrote David -- even "when I was on my mother's breasts." Nay more! David added: "You made me hope" even before my birth! For "You are my God from my mother's the womb!"⁷⁶

Calvin comments here⁷⁷ that God had caused David "to confide" in Him -- before he was weaned, and even before his birth. Observes Calvin of David: "'I was cast upon You from the womb.' That is, I was left in Your hands in the womb. 'You are my God from my mother's belly!'"

Calvin then immediately applies the above also to other believers. Says he: "We have experienced Him to be a Father from our earliest infancy." For, as far as covenantal babies are concerned, "He is said to give them confidence" or *fiducia* alias absolute assurance of faith. Indeed, "God in this manner, by His grace, anticipates little infants -- before they have, as yet, the use of reason."

Similarly, the psalmist later declared: "You are my hope, O Lord God. You are my trust, from my youth. By You I have been upheld -- from the womb!"⁷⁸

Here, Calvin comments⁷⁹ that the psalmist had "trust or confidence" in God -- even while the Lord was "nourishing his hope" during his tenderest youth. For the psalmist "not only celebrates the goodness of God which he had experienced from his childhood -- but also those proofs of it which he had received previous to his birth!"

Jeremiah on prenatal sanctification and heart-circumcision

Later, the Lord said to Jeremiah: "Before you came forth out of the womb, I sanctified you!"⁸⁰ Comments Calvin:⁸¹ "God declares that He knew Jeremiah before He formed him in the womb.... 'Before you came forth from the womb, I sanctified you'.... It is nothing strange that God declares that He had sanctified

⁷⁶ Ps. 22:9f.

⁷⁷ *Comm.* on Ps. 22:9f.

⁷⁸ Ps. 71:5f.

⁷⁹ *Comm.* on Ps. 71:5f.

⁸⁰ Jer. 1:5.

⁸¹ *Comm.* on Jer. 1:5.

Jeremiah...in the womb!"

Through Jeremiah, Jehovah also said to His wayward people: "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart!"⁸² Because adult circumcision of the heart was necessary, this clearly implies that the previous circumcision of their flesh had not regenerated them!

Comments Calvin of Jeremiah's contemporaries:⁸³ "Circumcision was their great boast; but only before men.... Hence the prophet bids them not to value what was of no importance, but to become 'circumcised' before Jehovah.... When God commanded the seed of Abraham to be circumcised (Genesis 17:10-12), it was not His object to have a small portion of skin cut off.... He had regard to something higher -- even that 'you should be circumcised in heart.'

"The prophet, in short, teaches us here what Paul has more clearly explained (Romans 2:29).... The external sign is worthless -- except accompanied by the reality within.... In the same manner, baptism with us may be called 'the letter' - when there is no repentance and faith.... Though God circumcises the heart..., men are to 'circumcise' themselves....

"The same is the case with baptism. For when Paul exhorts the faithful to fear God and to lead a holy life, he refers to baptism. It is yet certain that men do not bestow on themselves what God signifies by the sign of baptism. But He counsels them to seek from God the grace of His Spirit, that they might not in vain be sealed by the external rite of baptism -- while destitute of its reality!"

God then also predicted⁸⁴ that He "will punish all the circumcised together with the uncircumcised." He mentioned Egypt together with Judah -- and grouped the latter with Edom, Ammon, Moab and "all nations uncircumcised." For "all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart!"

Calvin on heart-circumcision in Jeremiah

Here, Calvin comments⁸⁵ "that God threatens vengeance on the Jews...because they were circumcised and still retained 'uncircumcision'.... There was a mixture which corrupted the sacredness of circumcision and made it like the uncircumcision of the Gentiles.... All were uncircumcised in heart; that is, all the Jews....

"The prophet...had reference to the Jews who, being degenerated, thus adulterated God's covenant and at the same time violated circumcision so that it differed nothing from uncircumcision.... The Jews are classed with the Gentiles, so that he ascribes even to them 'uncircumcision'.... The circumcision of each is vain, and is like uncircumcision....

"He names the circumcised together with the uncircumcision.... It is indeed true that the Idumeans were circumcised.... But their circumcision was altogether a mockery, as Esau had departed from the Church of God. The circumcision of the elect people [Israel] was in itself efficacious. But, as they had alike fallen into superstitions, they were like the uncircumcised....

⁸² Jer. 4:4.

⁸³ *Comm.* on Jer. 4:4.

⁸⁴ Jer. 9:25-26.

⁸⁵ *Comm.* on Jer. 9:25f.

"The prophet...denounces vengeance on the Jews as well as on the Egyptians, and names the circumcised with the uncircumcision; for the latter had uncircumcision, the former circumcision.... Thus they had blended profane and sacred things together.... By saying that 'all nations' were uncircumcised, he doubtless includes the Israelites.... The Jews would have otherwise denied that they deserved to be classed with the Gentiles. But the prophet deprives them of every excuse, and says that they were but one nation, having no difference: 'All these nations,' then, 'are uncircumcised'....

"He says the Jews are 'uncircumcised in heart'.... Circumcision might have been pleaded by them. Hence the prophet says that though they had the visible symbol in the flesh, they were yet uncircumcised in heart.... For God cares not for the external symbol, but regards the chief thing -- the circumcision of the heart. It is a common thing with Moses and the Prophets to call an unrenewed heart 'uncircumcision' and to say that the people are uncircumcised in heart....

"The same is the case now. When we boast of baptism alone and are at the same time destitute of repentance and faith, our boasting is absurd and ridiculous.... Literal baptism avails hypocrites nothing, for they receive only the naked sign.... Therefore we must come to the Spirit of baptism, to the thing itself. For the interior power is renovation, when our old man is crucified in us and when we rise again with Christ into newness of life!" So, grace before baptism -- must also be followed by grace after baptism too!

Ezekiel: God says tiny covenant infants are "My children!"

God through the prophet Ezekiel⁸⁶ called even the tiny and just-born Israelites -- "^M^y children." So too does the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession* -- where it asserts that the Visible Church consists of those that profess the true religion, together with their children.⁸⁷ Indeed, it certainly seems that God was calling them "^M^y children" - even before their infant circumcision!

As Calvin comments:⁸⁸ "Here God places Himself in the position of a parent -- because He had adopted the people as His own.... All their offspring were His sons, since [at least until later disproved]...all who spring from the people ought to be esteemed His children.... They are called sons of God.... So Paul says that the children of the faithful are holy -- since...the adoption of God remains fixed. First Corinthians 7:14."

Through Ezekiel God further castigated the Hebrews, because they had also "brought [adult pagans] into My sanctuary - strangers uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh!" Yet He also predicted the later arrival of baptism -- as the 'full of hope' New Testament sign and seal of regeneration.⁸⁹

Promised the Lord: "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new Spirit within you.... I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh -- so that they may walk in My Statutes.... I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean.... I will cleanse you. I will give even a new

⁸⁶ Ezk. 16:20-21.

⁸⁷ *W.C.F.* 25:2c.

⁸⁸ *Comm.* on Ezk. 16:20-21.

⁸⁹ Ezk. 44:7 *cf.* 36:25-27.

heart to you, and I will put a new Spirit within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh.... For I [will] pour out My Spirit upon the house of Israel!"⁹⁰

All this came to pass with the inauguration of the New Testament. This was initiated some time after the conceptions and births of John the baptizer and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Spirit filled John the baptizer from his mother's womb

A messenger from God brought good news to Zacharias - the father-to-be of John the baptizer. The messenger gave that new father a very precious assurance about his unborn son. Said the angel: "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost -- even from his mother's womb!"⁹¹

This occurred in John prenatally -- long before he could possibly have been either circumcised or baptized! Nowhere in Holy Writ are we told of him receiving baptism. Indeed, it seems he never did! For John later admitted to Christ: "I need to be baptized by You!"⁹² And Scripture itself later implies⁹³ that John the baptizer had not himself received baptism. Yet John had still been filled with the Holy Spirit -- even before his birth!

Calvin here comments⁹⁴ about the unborn John that "the power and grace of the Spirit would appear in him.... Even from the womb he shall excel in the gifts of the Spirit.... 'From the womb' means from his earliest infancy. The power of the Spirit, I acknowledge, did operate in John while he was yet in his mother's womb.... Let us learn by this example that, from the earliest infancy to the latest old age, the operation of the Spirit in men is free!"

Six months after the conception of John in the womb of his mother Elisabeth, Jesus was conceived in the womb of Elisabeth's cousin Mary.⁹⁵ In an absolutely unique way, Jesus too was filled with the Holy Spirit prenatally. He, our great High Priest, was not baptized till the commencement of His priestly ministry -- when about thirty years of age.⁹⁶ Yet even in His human nature, He had been indwelt by the Holy Ghost -- ever since His conception!⁹⁷

As Calvin comments of Jesus:⁹⁸ "He was conceived in a remarkable manner, by the power of the Holy Spirit.... The truth of His human nature is not inconsistent with His deriving peculiar honour above all others from His divine generation -- having been conceived out of the ordinary way of nature by the Holy Spirit.... Christ, because He was conceived by a Spirit-ual power, is called 'the Holy

⁹⁰ Ezk. 11:19; 36:25-27; 39:29.

⁹¹ Lk. 1:15.

⁹² Mt. 3:14.

⁹³ Mt. 11:11 *cf.* Jh. 1:17f & Acts 18:25 to 19:5.

⁹⁴ *Comm.* on Lk. 1:15, in *Harmony of the Evangelists*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948f, I, pp. 17f.

⁹⁵ Lk. 1:36.

⁹⁶ Lk. 3:21-23 *cf.* Lev. 8:12f & Num. 4:1-3.

⁹⁷ Lk. 1:35f & Mt. 1:18-20 *cf.* Lk. 2:40,52.

⁹⁸ *Comm.* on Lk. 1:35.

Seed'.... Yet He contracted no defilement from a sinful nature. For the Spirit of God kept Him pure from the very commencement.... This was done not merely so that He might abound in personal holiness -- but chiefly so that He might sanctify His own people!"

John the baptizer prenatally acknowledged his Saviour Jesus

Soon after Christ's conception, Mary was "found to be with child by the Holy Spirit." So God assured Joseph that the One Who "had been conceived" within Mary his betrothed, had been so conceived by the Holy Ghost.⁹⁹

"Mary arose in those days...and saluted [her cousin] Elisabeth.... When Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the baby leaped up in her [Elisabeth's] womb. Then Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost and she said [to Mary]...: 'As soon as the sound of your salutation echoed in my ears, the baby leaped up in my womb for joy!'"¹⁰⁰

Very clearly, the unbaptized Spirit-filled John -- three months before his own birth -- joyfully acknowledged the not-yet-baptized yet already Spirit-filled Jesus soon after His conception! Also the unbaptized Elisabeth herself "was filled with the Holy Ghost."¹⁰⁰ And the unbaptized Mary, comments Calvin,¹⁰¹ "cherished in her heart by faith the Son of God as already conceived in her womb."

Inside Elisabeth, continues Calvin, John leaped up joyfully. For "the babe started [or was startled] -- by a secret movement of the Spirit.... Elisabeth affirms that her cousin [Mary] was 'blessed' -- on account of the blessedness of her child [Jesus].... She [Mary] is justly called 'blessed' -- on whom God bestowed the remarkable honour of bringing into the world His Own Son, through Whom she had been Spirit-ually re-new-^e^d!" Indeed, renewed without baptism!

Was John the baptizer regenerated before his birth?

The prenatally Spirit-filled John the baptizer (Luke 1:15) thus acknowledged the prenatal Christ (Luke 1:41). In so doing, John indicated that he himself had already been regenerated - at least a full three months before his own birth and later circumcision.

This is an appropriate place to deal with the important statement in John 1:12-13. We mean the statement about Christ the Son of God that "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe in His Name -- who were [re-]generated (*egenneethesan*) not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

On the above word 'power' (alias authority), Calvin comments: "I take the word *exousia* here to mean an honour (*dignitatem*).... It would be better to translate it so, to refute the papist fiction [especially of baptismal regeneration].... Implanted into Christ by faith, we attain the right of adoption as the sons of God.... They who believe, are already born of God.... By faith, we conceive the incorruptible seed by which we are born again to new and divine life....

⁹⁹ Mt. 1:18-20.

¹⁰⁰ Lk. 1:39-44.

¹⁰¹ *Comm.* on Lk. 1:39-42.

"Faith is a part of our regeneration and entering into the Kingdom of God, that He may number us among His children.... Since by this same faith we receive Christ Who sanctifies us by His Spirit, it is called the beginning of our adoption.... When the Lord breathes faith into us, He regenerates us in a hidden and secret way that is unknown to us. But when faith has been given, we grasp with a lively awareness not only the grace of adoption but also newness of life and the other gifts of the Holy Spirit.... Faith receives Christ.... We begin to be the sons of God, only after we believe."

Right after John's birth, his father Zacharias prophesied that John would go out before the Lord Messiah to prepare His ways. That Messiah was 'the Dayspring from on high.' Already at His conception -- and also when soon thereafter acknowledged by the prenatal John -- that Messianic Dayspring had already dawned. The Messiah, exulted Zacharias, "has visited us -- to give light to them that sit in darkness!"¹⁰²

Comments Calvin:¹⁰³ "The mere sight of his son, while still a child, led Zacharias to discourse in so lofty a strain respecting the grace and power of Christ before He was born.... The Holy Spirit bore testimony, while He was still in His mother's womb!"

After John's birth and infant circumcision, "the child grew and became strong in spirit."¹⁰⁴ Calvin comments¹⁰⁵ this "implies that the great and uncommon excellence of the child gave proof that there [already] dwelt in him a Heavenly Spirit [cf. Luke 1:15-17 & 1:41-44].... John remained unknown in the deserts...till the day on which the Lord had purposed to bring him into public view..., though he was fully aware of his calling!"

The sinless Jesus was holy from His human conception onward

Six months after John's birth, Jesus Himself was born. One week later, He -- the sinless One! -- was circumcised.¹⁰⁶ Then, when Jesus was later reaching puberty, "the child grew and became strong in Spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.... He was twelve years old.... And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour -- with God and man."¹⁰⁷

Here Calvin comments¹⁰⁸ about Christ that "the endowments of His mind grew with His age. The gifts and graces of the Spirit grew also and increased in Him. Hence we infer that this progress or advancement relates to His human nature. For the divine nature could receive no increase!

"But a question arises. From the time that He was conceived in His mother's womb -- did He not abound in all fulness of spiritual gifts? For it appears absurd

¹⁰² Lk. 1:79.

¹⁰³ *Comm.* on Lk. 1:79.

¹⁰⁴ Lk. 1:59,80.

¹⁰⁵ *Comm.* on Lk. 1:80.

¹⁰⁶ Lk. 2:21.

¹⁰⁷ Lk. 2:40,42,52.

¹⁰⁸ *Comm.* on Lk. 2:40 (*Avec l'aage des dons et graces d'Esprit croissoyent aussi et augmentoyent en Luy...en dons et graces de l'Esprit*).

to say that the Son of God [ever] wanted anything that was necessary to perfection!

"The reply is easy.... He chose not only to grow in body, but to make progress in mind.... Christ received, in His human nature, according to His age and capacity, an increase of the free gifts of the Spirit -- so that 'out of His fullness' (John 1:16) He may pour them out upon us. For we draw grace -- out of His grace!"

John the baptizer demanded faith before baptizing

With the later commencement of the mature ministry of John the Baptizer, circumcision now began to yield to baptism. It is clear that when John baptized -- he did not believe that baptism regenerated. To the contrary. He looked for evidences of the prior existence of renewal and repentance and faith in the people -- before he baptized them.

Thus John came -- "preaching in the desert of Judaea and saying, 'Repent!'"¹⁰⁹ Indeed, "John the Baptizer was in the desert, preaching a baptism of repentance."¹¹⁰ This was his message to all the believing people -- whether crowds, tax-collectors, or soldiers.¹¹¹

"The whole region of Judaea and all the Jerusalemites went forth to him, and were baptized by him at the River Jordan -- while professing their sins."¹¹² Thus, "all the people and even the publicans who heeded him, having been baptized with the baptism of John, declared God to be just."¹¹³

"Matthew," comments Calvin,¹¹⁴ "differs from the other two Evangelists [Mark and Luke].... He relates the substance of John's doctrine as uttered by John himself.... Mark has one word more.... He says, 'he [John] came baptizing and preaching the baptism of repentance.' But in substance, there is the most perfect agreement. For they all connect repentance with the forgiveness of sins."

As Calvin further explains,¹¹⁵ "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 [baptism]. John and the apostles agreed in one doctrine. Both baptized unto repentance; both for remission of sins; both in the Name of Christ from Whom repentance and remission of sins proceed.... 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."

Now Luke¹¹⁶ says John came "preaching the baptism of repentance." Here, Calvin

¹⁰⁹ Mt. 3:2.

¹¹⁰ Mk. 1:4.

¹¹¹ Lk. 3:10,12,14.

¹¹² Mk. 1:5.

¹¹³ Lk. 7:29.

¹¹⁴ *Comm.* on Mt. 3:2.

¹¹⁵ *Inst.* IV:15:7.

¹¹⁶ Lk. 3:3.

comments¹¹⁷ that "a sacrament...is not a dumb ceremony exhibiting some unmeaning pomp without doctrine. But the Word of God is joined to it, and gives life to the outward ceremony. By 'the Word' -- I mean not mutterings of a magical character made by some exorcist between his teeth, but what is pronounced with a clear and distinct voice and leads to the edification of faith" -- that is, of faith already present.

Further: "We are not simply told that John 'baptized unto repentance' as if the grace of God were contained in a visible sign.... He explained, in his preaching, the advantage of baptism.... The meaning, power and nature of that baptism are the same as ours.... It is incorrect to say that the baptism of John is different from the baptism of Christ."

Calvin on John's demand for repentance before baptism

Still more, continues Calvin:¹¹⁸ "John preached 'the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.' Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3.... 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. But, lest you should think this our invention -- it was generally regarded in the Early Church as an indubitable axiom! For in the short *Treatise on Faith* ...bearing the name of Augustine, it is called: 'The sacrament of faith and repentance.'"

Indeed, Holy Scripture itself clearly states that the faithful "were baptized [while] confessing their sins."¹¹⁹ Here, Calvin comments:¹²⁰ "The confession was a testimony of repentance. For, as the Lord in the sacraments brings Himself under obligation to us..., so it is our duty on the other hand to reply to Him.... That men may come forward in a right manner to be baptized, confession of sins is demanded from them. Otherwise, the whole performance would be nothing but an idle mockery!"

Most of these texts are referred to also by the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards*. There, Mark 1:4 is quoted -- to prove that baptism is a seal of the remission of sins.¹²¹ Indeed, also the somewhat similar Matthew 3:11 is cited -- to prove: that the grace exhibited in or by baptism, depends upon the work of the Spirit;¹²² that inward and spiritual grace is signified by baptism;¹²³ and that baptism is a seal of our regeneration.¹²⁴

Now Holy Scripture further states: "All the people...who heeded him, having been baptized with the baptism of John, declared God to be just."¹²⁵ Comments Calvin:¹²⁶

¹¹⁷ *Comm.* on Lk. 3:3.

¹¹⁸ *Inst.* IV:19:17.

¹¹⁹ *Ebaptizonto...exomologoumenoi* (in both Mt. 3:6 & Mk. 1:5)

¹²⁰ *Comm.* on Mt. 3:6 & Mk. 1:5.

¹²¹ In *W.C.F.* 28:1f & *W.L.C.* 165g.

¹²² *W.C.F.* 27:3h.

¹²³ *W.L.C.* 163c.

¹²⁴ *W.L.C.* 177r.

¹²⁵ Lk. 7:29.

¹²⁶ *Comm.* on Lk. 7:29.

"This is a very remarkable expression. Those who respectfully embrace the Son of God and assent to the doctrine which He has brought, are said to ascribe righteousness to God....

"The word 'justify' applies generally, no doubt, to everything connected with the praises of God.... Since faith 'justifies' God, it is impossible...but that unbelief must be blasphemy against Him.... It was already an evidence of their piety, that they presented themselves to be baptized."

John the baptizer refuses to baptize unbelieving Pharisees

Calvin comments further¹²⁷ that John "addresses directly the Pharisees and Sadducees -- and at the same time addresses, through them, a warning to all not to hold out a hypocritical appearance of repentance instead of a true affection of the heart.... If John, the organ of the Holy Spirit, employed such severity of language in his opening address to those who voluntarily came to be baptized and to make a public profession of the gospel -- how ought we now to act towards the avowed enemies of Christ...? Most certainly, if you compare the Pope and his abominable clergy with the Pharisees and Sadducees - the mildest possible way of dealing with them will be to throw them all into one bundle!"

John commanded the Pharisees: "Yield therefore fruits worthy of repentance!"¹²⁸ Comments Calvin:¹²⁹ "Repentance, which is attested by words, is of no value -- unless it be proved by the conduct.... It ought to be observed that 'good works' (Tit. 3:8) are here called 'fruits of repentance.' For 'repentance' is an inward matter which has its seat in the heart and soul, but afterwards yields its fruits in a change of life."

Yet John refused to baptize the obviously faithless (however 'religious' they were)! For "when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to baptism, he said to them: 'You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Therefore, bring forth fruits which evidence repentance! And don't think to tell yourselves "We have Abraham as father!"' "¹³⁰

Thus the unrepentant and unbelieving "Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God, against themselves -- not having been baptized by John." For they would not repent. So John never baptized them! Luke 7:30. As Calvin here comments:¹³¹ "The scribes, in despising the baptism of John, shut against themselves -- through their pride -- the gate of faith!"

While John baptized the penitent adult members of the covenant together with their covenant children, he refused to baptize the impenitent snake-like hypocrites and their brood of little snakes. Nevertheless, it was still a great sin for the Pharisees to refuse to repent -- in order to be able to receive baptism, together with their children!

Thus the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession* states that only "the infants of one

¹²⁷ *Comm.* on Mt. 3:7.

¹²⁸ Mt. 3:7f.

¹²⁹ *Comm.* on Mt. 3:8 & Lk. 3:8.

¹³⁰ Mt. 3:7f.

¹³¹ *Comm.* on Lk. 7:29.

or both believing parents are to be baptized."¹³² However, this excludes the children of unbelievers. For the *Confession* then rightly goes on to cite the case of the unrepentant Pharisees resisting baptism - to show that "it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance."¹³³

John's baptism of the righteous Jesus Christ our Lord

It surely needs no demonstration that the Son of man Jesus Christ was righteous¹³⁴ in the eyes of God, and had faith¹³⁵ in Him even before John baptized Him. Indeed, as Jesus had always been uniquely sinless¹³⁶ -- there could be no question of Him being regenerated at any time -- and thus neither during His baptism. Certainly there was no baptismal regeneration -- then!¹³⁷ Yet, He was baptized for us. Hence, through His baptism, we ourselves 'partake'¹³⁸ at our baptism¹³⁹ -- in the very baptism administered by John to Jesus: a baptism which did (and does) not regenerate!

At the baptism of the man Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him anew. This then occurred, even though that Spirit had previously indwelt Him -- ever since His conception!¹⁴⁰ He the Unregeneratable -- He Who Alone regenerates others -- was at His baptism apparently ingrafted into the sins of His people. This He did so that they, once regenerated by Him, could at their baptisms be ingrafted into their sinless Saviour.

As Calvin comments anent Christ's baptism:¹⁴¹ "This was the first time that the Spirit was seen descending upon Him. Not that before this He had been empty of the Spirit -- but now He is, as it were, consecrated with a solemn ceremony [baptism].... When He wished to make Himself known to the world, He began with baptism. He therefore received the Spirit on that occasion -- not so much for Himself, as for His people!"

On Christ's actual water baptism, Calvin comments further:¹⁴² "For what purpose did the Son of God wish to be baptized? This may be learned in some measure from His answer.... He received the same baptism with us -- in order to assure believers that they are ingrafted into His body and that they are 'buried with Him in baptism' so that they may rise to 'newness of life.' Romans 6:4....

"Christ received baptism...so that He might render full obedience to the Father. And the special reason was, so that He might consecrate baptism in His own body

¹³² *W.C.F.* 28:4m.

¹³³ *Ib.* 28:5n, citing Lk. 7:30.

¹³⁴ Heb. 7:26.

¹³⁵ Lk. 2:40,49,52 & Mt. 3:14-15.

¹³⁶ Lk. 1:31-35, & Heb. 4:15.

¹³⁷ Mt. 3:17 & Lk. 3:22.

¹³⁸ Mt. 20:22; compare *Second Helvetic Confession* ch. 20.5.

¹³⁹ Rom. 6:3f & Col. 2:12.

¹⁴⁰ Lk. 1:35-48.

¹⁴¹ *Comm.* on Jh. 1:32.

¹⁴² *Comm.* on Mt. 3:13f (*Que c'est pour le profit des autres, et non pas pour le sien, que Christ demande d'estre baptize'*).

-- that we might have it in common with Him.... There was no doubt...that Christ had no need of His baptism.... It was for the sake of others, that baptism was asked [by Him].... It is for the benefit of others, and not for His own, that Christ asks to be baptized."

Right after the baptism of Jesus, God the Father said from heaven: "This One is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased!"¹⁴³ This was said of Christ [the 'Anointed One'] -- the son of man, everlastingly throughout the future. Yet it was not at His baptism that Christ the son of man became God's Own Son!

Indeed, ever since His conception -- long before His baptism! -- He had already been the Son of God (and hence, like Adam before the fall, also the perfectly just son of man).¹⁴⁴ Indeed, unlike Adam prior to his creation, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity has always been the Son of God -- unchangeably, and from all eternity past.

Jesus evangelized the circumcised but unrighteous Judeans

Thus did Jesus Himself commence His public ministry. Soon thereafter, He evangelized an infantly-circumcised Jewish ruler who had been deputized by his co-teachers to come and talk with Jesus. For "a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus...came to Jesus...and said to him: 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God.'¹⁴⁵

No way did Jesus thereupon suggest that this religious man had already been regenerated -- during his previous infant circumcision! To the contrary. Jesus instead told him that Nicodemus and his fellow Pharisees -- "you" [plural] - still needed to get regenerated. "You must be born from above!"

For Jesus told the circumcised (yet still unregenerate) Nicodemus: "Unless a person be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.... Do not marvel that I told you, 'You people must be born from above!' The Spirit keeps on blowing wherever He wants to, and you hear His sound. But you cannot tell where He is coming from, and where He is going. So is everyone who has been born from the Spirit!"¹⁴⁶

This passage makes no specific reference to baptism. Here, the verses John 3:3 and 3:7 both mention being born again. Indeed, the verses John 3:6 and 3:8 both further mention being born specifically of the Spirit. Yet in all four of these verses, there is no mention at all even of 'water' (and still less of baptism). Moreover, in the immediately subsequent verses,¹⁴⁷ the infallible Jesus goes on to speak (some seven times) only of belief or unbelief in Christ -- and not once of baptism, or even of water!

However, even if one were to construe the word "water" (here mentioned solely in

¹⁴³ Mt. 3:16-17.

¹⁴⁴ Lk. 3:22,23,38 *cf.* Gen. 1:26-27 & 5:1-2.

¹⁴⁵ John 3:1-2 *cf.* v. 10.

¹⁴⁶ Jh. 3:5-8 (*Ean mee tis genneethee-i~ ex hudatos kai Pneumatos, ou dunatai eiselthein eis teen Basileian tou Theou.... Mee thaumasee-i~s hoti eipon soi#. # dei humas ^g^e^n^e^t^h^e^a^i. To Pneuma hopou thelei pnei, kai teen phooneen Autou akoueis, all' ouk oidas pother erchetai kai pou hupagei. Houtoos estin pas ho ^g^e^g^e^n^e^m^e^o^s ek tou Pneumatos).*

¹⁴⁷ Jh. 3:12-18.

John 3:5) as implying specifically baptism -- it still would not teach baptismal regeneration through the water of baptism. For the rebirth specified, is not here stated to come from water alone -- but from water and the Spirit. Compare John's First Epistle 5:6. Indeed, even in John 3:5 itself, the "water" -- even if it were to be taken to refer to baptism -- would still be quite useless without "the Spirit" Who is also (there too) clearly mentioned. Furthermore, in the immediate context of this John 3:5 -- in both John 3:6 and 3:8 - rebirth is specified as being from "the Spirit" (alone).

Water and Spirit and entry into the Visible Church

Again, the passage John 3:3-8 is not speaking of admission into heaven. For heaven is still invisible even to Christians, as long as they are still here on earth. The verses John 3:3 and 3:5 speak only of entry into the Kingdom of God.

The latter does not mean heaven -- thus Calvin, below. Apparently, it refers to the Visible Church here on earth -- thus the Calvinist Charles Hodge. That Kingdom can be seen. "Unless a man be born from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." That Kingdom can also be entered. Indeed, "unless a man be born from water and from Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

So, even if one were to take the word "water" in John 3:5 to refer to water baptism -- which the passage does not specifically state -- it would then still not imply baptismal regeneration. It would then only mean that, whether regenerate or not, one would then enter into the Kingdom of God (alias the Visible Church) -- by the non-regenerating action of the water and the Spirit, during water baptism.

It would then simply mean that the visible Kingdom of God was already beginning to be seen there -- even in the midst of still unbaptized Pharisees like Nicodemus!¹⁴⁸ For that Kingdom then consisted of Christ's baptized and visible disciples -- including even the very visible yet never-regenerated (and never to be regenerated) Judas Iscariot!¹⁴⁹

Frankly, even if "born of water" were here to mean baptism -- and "born of the Spirit" to mean regeneration -- it is very significant that the two terms are nevertheless distinguished from one another. This could then only mean that being "born of water" alias being baptized -- is not congruent to being "born of the Spirit" alias being regenerated!

Further. If "water" in John 3:5 indeed were to imply the necessity of specifically baptismal regeneration -- then all who ever lived before John started baptizing, would be lost everlastingly! So too, every unbaptized believer in Christ who has ever lived since John started baptizing -- would then also be lost! Moreover, that would then be hard to reconcile with the stated fact that the loving Saviour Jesus Himself -- never even tried to baptize anybody with water!¹⁵⁰

Once more. If baptism were to justify, it would also be inexplicable that Paul should simply tell the Philippian jailer: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!'!¹⁵¹ Instead, Paul would then have told him: 'Be baptized, and

¹⁴⁸ Jh. 3:1f cf. Lk. 17:20-22.

¹⁴⁹ Cf.: Lk. 3:7-16; 17:20-22; Mk. 14:21; Jh. 6:70f; 17:12; Acts 1:16-22,25.

¹⁵⁰ Mt. 1:21 cf. Jh. 4:2.

¹⁵¹ Acts 16:31f.

then you shall have been justified!'

To the contrary, however. Paul, under the infallible inspiration of the Holy Ghost, clearly declared: 'Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel!'¹⁵²

If anything, then, the above words of Jesus clearly imply that the continually renewing work of the Spirit -- can no way be restricted to whatever might or might not happen at the moment of baptism with water. Significantly, the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession*¹⁵³ quotes this very passage to prove that "elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit." It also cites this passage to show that "the efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered."

Indeed, such of the elect as die in fetushood, generally die unbaptized (even in Roman Catholic hospitals). Yet they so die only after being justified without baptism. Therefore, in their cases at least, they get justified without getting baptized at all!

Calvin states the passage John 3:3-8 does not refer to baptism

Calvin himself comments:¹⁵⁴ "To 'see' the Kingdom of God, comes to the same thing as 'entering into' the Kingdom.... They are mistaken who think the Kingdom of God means heaven. It is rather the spiritual life which is begun by faith in this world, and daily increases according to the continual progress of faith. So the meaning is that no man can be gathered truly into the Church and be reckoned among the children of God -- until he has first been renewed....

"I cannot at all bring myself to believe that Christ is [here] speaking of baptism.... He used the words 'Spirit' and 'water' to mean the same thing.... It is a frequent and common way of speaking in Scripture, when the Spirit is mentioned, to add the word 'water' or 'fire' to express His power. We sometimes hear of Christ baptizing with the Holy Spirit and with fire, where fire does not mean something different from the Spirit but only shows what is His power in us.... By 'water' therefore is meant simply the inward cleansing and quickening of the Holy Spirit.... When Christ at once adds the reason why we must be born again, He shows without mentioning water how the newness of life which He requires [in us], comes from the Spirit alone."

Calvin also states¹⁵⁵ that even if, in the Nicodemus passage, he were to "grant the words in question to refer to baptism -- still the necessity is not absolutely insisted on. But an external sign is added as...an accessory to newness of life -- as if it had been said that the entrance into the Kingdom of heaven is not open to any one, without newness of life of which baptism is the symbol."

Calvin further¹⁵⁶ refutes those who, referring to John 3:5, allege that "a present

¹⁵² I Cor. 1:14.

¹⁵³ *W.C.F.* 10:3mn and 28:6q.

¹⁵⁴ *Comm.* on Jh. 3:3-8.

¹⁵⁵ J. Calvin: *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, ed. Beveridge & Bonnet, VI Pt. 3, p. 282.

¹⁵⁶ *Inst.* IV:16:25.

regeneration is required in baptism" -- and who claim that "baptism is termed regeneration" there. "They are in error," replies Calvin, "in imagining that there is any mention of baptism in this passage, merely because the word 'water' is used...."

"Yet, were we disposed to imitate these men in their mode of cavilling, we might easily...reply to them that baptism is prior to faith and repentance" -- or at any rate distinct therefrom. Consequently, the latter is not engineered by the former. Indeed, wherever faith precedes baptism -- as it often unquestionably does, especially in the case of the baptism of adults -- it is again clear that it cannot be a fruit thereof -- whether *ex opere operato*, or *ex post facto* !

Not Jesus but only His apostles then baptized in Judea

Thereafter, Jesus baptized in Judea -- "though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but [only] His disciples" alias His apostles.¹⁵⁷ Precisely by not Himself baptizing, Jesus guarded against the probable *ex opere operato* 'magical consequences' that could so easily have been attributed to any baptisms administered by Him personally. (From the Late Patristic Age onward, this was in fact done in respect of all baptisms deemed to have been administered by Christ's apostolic successors!)

The apostle John, comments Calvin,¹⁵⁸ "calls that which He administered by the hands of others: *Christ's baptism* -- to teach us that baptism is not to be valued from the person of the minister.... Its whole force depends on its Author, in Whose Name and by Whose command it is administered...."

"There is no doubt that He [Jesus] deliberately abstained from the outward administration of the sign while He was in the world -- so as to bear witness to all ages that nothing is lost from...baptism when it is administered by a mortal man.... Christ baptizes inwardly by His Spirit.... 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!"

So Jesus Himself baptized -- nobody! Instead, "He began to preach and to say: 'Repent!'"¹⁵⁹ Calvin comments¹⁶⁰ that "our Lord and John begin their preaching thus: 'Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!' Matthew 3:2.... He urged them to acknowledge that they were sinners..., so that thus they might be induced earnestly to seek the mortification of the flesh.... He called for faith.... 'John did baptize in the desert and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.' Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3.... Thus too Christ began His preaching, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand: you must repent and believe the Gospel!' Mark 1:15."

Matthew 9:2 & 18:6 clearly disprove baptismal regeneration

Later, when Jesus was in His own city of Nazareth,¹⁶¹ "they brought to Him a paralytic -- lying on a bed. But Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the paralytic: 'Child, cheer up! Your sins have been forgiven you!'"

¹⁵⁷ Jh. 3:22-26 & 4:1-2.

¹⁵⁸ *Comm.* on Jh. 4:2.

¹⁵⁹ Mt. 4:17.

¹⁶⁰ *Inst.* III:3:2,19.

¹⁶¹ Mt. 9:2.

Note here that the paralytic child (*paralutikon...teknon*) did not and could not come to Jesus in his own paralyzed strength! So others brought him to Jesus. "They brought to Him" the "paralytic...child" -- *prosepheron Autoo~i~ paralutikon...teknon*.

Note further that the Bible here mentions not the faith of the paralytic child himself -- but the faith of those [his parents?] who brought that child to Jesus. For the Bible here speaks of "their faith" (*teen pistin autoon*).

Note yet further that not because of the paralytic child's own faith, but because of the faith of those who brought him -- that the sins of the paralytic child himself were thereupon forgiven him. Forgiven! Not just shall be forgiven, but rather have been forgiven! For Jesus assured him: "Child, cheer up! Your sins have been forgiven you!" *Apheoontai soi hai hamartiai sou!*

Calvin's comment on the above event¹⁶² -- "with regard to all believers" -- is short and sweet. "By their faith, the grace of God is extended to their children -- and their children's children -- even before they are born!"

Here in Matthew 9:2, there is no reference to baptism. Hence, there is not even the possibility of baptismal regeneration there!

Jesus Himself once placed "a little child" of the covenant amid His adult disciples. Then He told them:¹⁶³ "Unless you keep on being converted and keep on becoming like little children -- you shall no way enter into the Kingdom of heaven.... Whosoever shall give offence to one of these little ones who believes in Me -- it were better for him that...he were drowned.... Permit the little children, and do not forbid them -- to come to Me. For the Kingdom of heaven -- is of such as these!"

Calvin refutes the Anabaptists from Matthew 19:14

In chiding certain Anabaptist heretics, Calvin here observes¹⁶⁴ that "baptism being, as they hold, necessary to salvation -- they, in denying it to infants, consign them all to eternal death. Let them now consider what kind of agreement they have with the words of Christ, Who says [in respect of covenant infants or *paidia*] that 'of such is the Kingdom of heaven.' Matthew 19:14.... In regard to the meaning of this passage, they will extract nothing from it -- until they have previously overthrown the doctrine which we have already established concerning the regeneration of infants!"

Calvin comments further:¹⁶⁵ "To the example of little children must be referred the conversion of which He [Jesus] now speaks.... The Anabaptists....refuse baptism to infants, because [they say] infants are incapable of understanding that mystery which is denoted by it. We, on the other hand, maintain that since baptism is the pledge and figure of the forgiveness of sins and likewise of adoption by God, it ought not to be denied to infants whom God adopts and washes with the blood of His Son...."

¹⁶² *Comm.* on Mt. 9:2.

¹⁶³ Mt. 18:3-6 & 19:14.

¹⁶⁴ *Inst.* IV:16:26.

¹⁶⁵ *Comm.* on Mt. 19:14.

"Infants are renewed by the Spirit of God, according to the capacity of their age -- till that power which was concealed within them, grows by degrees and becomes fully manifest at the proper time.... Hence it follows that they were renewed by the Spirit, to the hope of salvation. In short, by embracing them, He [Jesus] testified that they were [already] reckoned by Christ among His flock. And if they were partakers of the spiritual gifts which are represented by baptism, it is unreasonable that they should be deprived of the outward sign" -- viz. holy baptism!

The Calvinistic *Westminster Standards* repeatedly refer to Jesus blessing very young covenant children. They cite this action of His, to prove that "elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit." They also quote it -- to show that infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized.¹⁶⁶

Christ's Great Commission precludes baptismal regeneration

In Christ's Great Commission,¹⁶⁷ Jesus Himself commands His ambassadors to go and preach -- *keeruxate* -- and then to baptize those who would believe the preached Gospel. For He enjoins those evangelizing ambassadors -- His Ministers of the Word and Sacraments -- to "go disciple all nations" -- *matheeteusate panta ta ethnee*.

This obviously means the people in those nations - including that large percentage of such people which constitutes the babies and the children in all those nations. Christ's preaching ambassadors -- His Ministers of the Word and Sacraments - are thus to keep on baptizing them: *baptizontes autous*. Then His ambassadors are further to "keep on teaching them" -- *didaskontes autous*.

Comments Calvin:¹⁶⁸ "The meaning amount to this, that by proclaiming the Gospel everywhere, they should bring all nations to the obedience of the faith and...that they should seal and ratify their doctrine by the sign of the Gospel.... It is said in Mark, he that shall believe and be baptized shall be saved. By these words, Christ...by a sacred bond...connects baptism with doctrine.... But as Christ enjoins them to teach before baptizing, and desires that none but believers shall be admitted to baptism, it would appear that baptism is not properly administered unless when it is preceded by faith!

"On this pretext, the Anabaptists have stormed greatly against infant baptism. But the reply is not difficult.... Christ orders them [His Ministers] to convey to all nations the message of eternal salvation -- and confirms it by adding the seal of baptism....

"On what condition does God adopt as children those who formerly were aliens? It cannot indeed be denied that, when He has once received them [the aliens] into His favour, He continues to bestow it on their children, and their children's children.... Therefore, 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."

¹⁶⁶ *W.C.F.* 10:3m (citing Lk. 18:15f *etc.*) & 28:4m (citing Mk. 10:13f & Lk. 18:15f); and *W.L.C.* 166o (citing Lk. 18:15f).

¹⁶⁷ Mk. 16:15f & Mt. 28:19.

¹⁶⁸ *Comm.* on Mt. 28:19.

Calvin on "he who believes and is baptized"

Mark gives us additional information in his inspired version of Christ's Great Commission.¹⁶⁹ There, Christ is recorded to have said that "he who has started [and continues] to believe, and been baptized -- shall be saved." On the other hand, "he who does not start [nor continue] to believe -- shall be damned!" Note the order: first, believe; then, be baptized!

Comments Calvin:¹⁷⁰ "Salvation is promised to believers. For, by believing in the Only-Begotten Son of God..., they are reckoned among the children of God.... Baptism is joined to [and thus comes after] the faith.... 'They who shall believe and be baptized, shall be saved.' Yet at the same time we must hold that it [baptism] is not required as absolutely necessary to salvation (so that all who have not obtained it must perish). For it is not added to faith (*fidei adjungitur*), as if it were the half of the cause of our salvation (*tanquam dimidia salutis causa*) -- but as a testimony."

"Luther" too, observes Calvin,¹⁷¹ "remarked with great intelligence that when Christ is represented in the gospel of Mark as saying 'Whoever shall believe and be baptized shall be saved' -- He does not repeat in the second member of the sentence 'whoever shall not be baptized shall be condemned!' For if without baptism there is no salvation -- [then] the thief on the cross, who was admitted into the Kingdom of God without baptism, will have to be withdrawn thence!"

Summarizing the sacramental implications to believers of Christ's Great Commission as a whole, Calvin observes¹⁷² that "the nature of the apostolic function is clear from the command 'You must go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature!' Mark 16:15. No fixed limits are given them, but the whole world is assigned to be reduced under obedience to Christ -- so that by spreading the Gospel as widely as they could, they might everywhere erect His Kingdom.... When our Lord sent forth the apostles, He gave them a Commission...to preach the Gospel and baptize those who believed.... Matthew 28:19."

The Calvinistic *Westminster Standards* on the Great Commission

Also the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards* refer to Matthew's version of the Great Commission. There it¹⁷³ is cited, to prove that the sacrament: is a seal immediately instituted by God;¹⁷⁴ that it contains a promise of benefit to worthy receivers;¹⁷⁵ and that it signifies substantially the same spiritual things as did circumcision.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁹ Mk. 16:16.

¹⁷⁰ *Comm. on Mk. 16:16; cf. Gravemeijer's op. cit. p. 116 n. 1.*

¹⁷¹ *Sel. Works*, VI Pt. 3, p. 282.

¹⁷² *Inst.* IV:3:4-6.

¹⁷³ Mt. 28:19.

¹⁷⁴ *W.C.F.* 27:1b and *W.L.C.* 162t & 176m.

¹⁷⁵ *W.C.F.* 27:3ik.

¹⁷⁶ *W.C.F.* 27:51.

It is also quoted there, to show: that baptism was ordained by Jesus Christ¹⁷⁷ until the end of the world¹⁷⁸ -- and that the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized.¹⁷⁹ It is further given there, to prove that baptism involves the washing with water in the Name of the Triune God¹⁸⁰ -- and that it ought to be dispensed only by Ministers of the Gospel.¹⁸¹

The *Westminster Standards* further refer even to Mark's version of the Great Commission.¹⁸² In those *Standards*, Mark is quoted to prove that those who profess faith in Christ are to be baptized¹⁸³ -- and also to show that it should be administered by Ministers of the Gospel alone.¹⁸⁴

Jesus baptized His Church with His Spirit at Pentecost

On Ascension Day, Jesus reminded His Apostles that John had truly "baptized [them] with water." Yet He then added that they would also soon "be baptized with the Holy Spirit"¹⁸⁵ -- namely by Jesus Himself.¹⁸⁶

Certainly, those Apostles had already been regenerated previously¹⁸⁷ -- and probably even before John had baptized them.¹⁸⁸ Soon, however, they would receive a further massive strengthening -- of their already existing Christian faith!¹⁸⁹

As Calvin comments:¹⁹⁰ "John was sent to baptize with water." This pointed to the substitutionary and sin-cleansing work which Christ, the Son of God, would execute at Calvary. "To the Son it is given to baptize with the Spirit.... It seems absurd that what was spoken in general of the grace of regeneration, should be confined to the sending of the Spirit visibly....

"It is clear enough that John professed himself the Minister of the baptism of water -- and Christ the Author of the baptism of the Spirit.... John ministered to them [Christ's later disciples] only the external baptism. Yet he assures them too -- lest they should doubt, regarding the promise."

Clearly, Calvin here distinguishes between regeneration on the one hand -- and both water-baptism and Spirit-baptism on the other. For both John and Jesus gave

¹⁷⁷ *W.C.F.* 28:1a and *W.L.C.* 164d.

¹⁷⁸ *W.C.F.* 28:1h and *W.L.C.* 176q.

¹⁷⁹ *W.C.F.* 28:4m and *W.L.C.* 166o.

¹⁸⁰ *W.L.C.* 165e.

¹⁸¹ *W.L.C.* 176p; compare *Westminster Form of Presbyterial Church Government (WFOPCG)* ~p~.

¹⁸² *Mk.* 16:15f.

¹⁸³ *W.C.F.* 28:4l.

¹⁸⁴ *WFOPCG* ~p~.

¹⁸⁵ *Acts* 1:5f.

¹⁸⁶ *Acts* 2:32f *cf.* *Mk.* 1:8.

¹⁸⁷ *Jh.* 20:22f.

¹⁸⁸ *Lk.* 3:3f *cf.* *Jh.* 1:25-37f.

¹⁸⁹ *Acts* 1:4f *cf.* 2:4f.

¹⁹⁰ *Comm.* on *Acts* 1:5.

similar assurances to their prebaptismally regenerated disciples. They told them that, after the giving and receiving of those water-baptisms, those believers as Christ's "wheat" would be garnered into the Storehouse (of the Visible Church) -- even through the agency of the Holy Ghost. Matthew 3:2-12; Luke 3:16-17; Acts 1:5.

On Pentecost Sunday, the twelve apostles -- already baptized with water long beforehand -- now saw the significance of that water-baptism completed. For they then saw it 'confirmed' when they themselves were then "baptized" -- without water! This was when they were engrafted or "baptized" waterlessly -- "baptized" with the Spirit -- "baptized" into the new Visible Church right then being constituted.¹⁹¹

Even Christ's other disciples -- God's sons and daughters, His already water-baptized servants in Jerusalem -- were now waterlessly "baptized" by the Lord Jesus and with His outpoured Spirit.¹⁹² Very clearly, such were already His sons and daughters alias 'children of God.' Indeed, they had also already been water-baptized -- either by John (Luke 3:3f) or by Jesus' apostles (John 4:2) -- even before receiving the later baptism with the Holy Ghost on Pentecost Sunday. They had previously received water-baptism. So they did not now receive any rebaptism with water.

Comments Calvin:¹⁹³ "There was no age that did not have its share of the grace of the Spirit.... All godly men, from the foundation of the world -- were endowed with the same Spirit of understanding, of righteousness and of sanctification with which the Lord today illuminates and regenerates us....

"By these words ['sons and daughters' and 'servants'], the promise is restricted to those who worship God.... It is undeniable that it is by the Spirit that we are made servants of God. So we are not His servants, until we have received the Spirit. But it is those whom God ^h^a^s adopted into His own family, and ^h^a^s designed by His Spirit to serve Him -- whom He afterwards furnishes with new gifts."

Calvin was writing here about those who, even from the time of Adam onward, the Lord had made 'righteous' (each at his or her own appropriate time) -- ^b^e^f^o^r^e their later water-baptism (if that latter was indeed ever administered to them). For the Pentecost Sunday 'sons and daughters' and 'servants' of God had previously been regenerated already. This had occurred probably even before their ^P^r^e-Pentecost water-baptism, and certainly long before their later Pentecost Sunday Spirit-baptism!

Be baptized: for the promise is to you and to your children!

Now this outpouring of God's Spirit on Pentecost Sunday attracted the attention even of many unconverted bystanders. Peter accordingly preached the Gospel to those witnesses. Then he told them: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you -- in the Name of Jesus Christ.... For the promise is to you, and to your children." Consequently, "they that gladly received his word, were baptized."¹⁹⁴ Note once again the order: first, repent; then, be baptized!

¹⁹¹ Acts 1:2-5,26 *cf.* 2:1-4,14-17a.

¹⁹² Acts 2:16-18.

¹⁹³ *Comm.* on Acts 2:16-18.

¹⁹⁴ Acts 2:38-41.

He who has repented toward God and who trusts or believes in Jesus, is obviously already regenerate -- before his baptism. Regeneration may thus precede baptism. Therefore it cannot be its effect! For it was only after Peter's listeners had received his preached word -- by believing it -- that they were then baptized!

Only by denying that faith and repentance are fruits of regeneration by the Spirit alone, can Romanists and Romanizers cope with the above argument. They then construe such pre-baptismal faith and repentance -- as non-gracious and purely 'natural works' done before baptism. But then, these would have been works which would still have left those faithful penitents in perdition. This, of course, contradicts Christ. For He says that whosoever believes in Him, has been justified already!¹⁹⁵

Further. No Christian believes that all who merely listen to the Gospel being preached, are thereby justified. It is obvious that this must necessarily be preceded -- or alternatively be accompanied or succeeded -- by a sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. So then, how could the baptismal water itself justify -- *ex opere operato* -- without also another distinctly different action of the Holy Ghost?

For multitudes of those who are baptized -- shall nevertheless end up in perdition. But no truly regenerated person -- by the very definition of the word 'regenerated' -- could ever be lost!¹⁹⁶ The inescapable message of Pentecost Sunday, then, is that regeneration must be quite distinct from baptism.¹⁹⁷ This is so not just in respect of the earlier Christians, such as the apostles.¹⁹⁸ It is also the case in respect of the three thousand they now baptized!¹⁹⁹

Calvin's baptismal comments on Acts 2:38f

Commenting here, Calvin insists²⁰⁰ that "we can be reconciled to God only by the intercession of the death of Christ.... Our sins cannot be purged and done away -- other than by His blood. Peter recalls us to Him -- by Name! He put baptism...as the seal -- by which the promise of grace is fulfilled....

"This message therefore must continually be heard in the Church: 'Repent!' Mark 1:15. Not that those who desire to be accounted faithful, and have their place already within the Church, are to make a beginning in this. But they are to continue to proceed in it....

"Those who up to now have lived to the world and to the flesh, should begin to crucify the old man -- so that they may rise to newness of life.... Those who have already entered upon the course of repentance, should continually press forward towards the mark.... Baptism...is nothing else but a sealing of the blessing which we have through Christ....

"The Papists...confess that sins are freely forgiven - in baptism.... They mingle

¹⁹⁵ Jh. 3:16 *cf.* 5:24.

¹⁹⁶ Rom. 8:9,14-16,30.

¹⁹⁷ Acts 2:1f.

¹⁹⁸ Acts 1:5f *cf.* Jh. 1:25,37f.

¹⁹⁹ Acts 2:38-41.

²⁰⁰ *Comm.* on Acts 2:38-39.

the grace of Christ -- with this." To the contrary, however! "Baptism is a help for confirming and increasing our faith.... The sign will be profitable to us -- only if we seek the power and effect of it in Christ....

"Christ did not give the apostles magic words to be used for incantation, as the Papists imagine.... The promise was made first to the Jews, and then to their children, and finally...to the Gentiles.... God reckons the children with the fathers, in the grace of adoption.

"This passage therefore sufficiently refutes the Anabaptists, who deny baptism to the children of the faithful while they are still infants -- as though they were not Members of the Church.... Peter spoke thus, because God adopted one nation as peculiarly His Own. And circumcision bears evidence that the right of adoption was shared even by infants....

"God made a covenant with Abraham when he [Isaac] was not yet born -- because he [Isaac] was the seed of Abraham.... So Peter teaches that all the children of the Jews are covered by the same covenant -- because the word continues in force which says 'I will be the God of your seed!'" Compare Genesis 17:7.

Calvin further observes²⁰¹ that Abraham "received the sign of circumcision [as] a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, [while] yet being uncircumcised; so that he might be the father of all them that believe [Romans 4:11f].... The election of God reigns freely.... He was pleased specially to embrace the seed of Abraham with His mercy -- and for the better attestation of it, to seal it by circumcision.... To the same effect is the declaration of Peter to the Jews: 'The promise is unto you and to your children.' Acts 2:39."

Acts 2:38f in the Calvinistic Westminster Standards

Also the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards* repeatedly cite this passage Acts 2:38-41. They quote it in the *Westminster Confession* to prove that "elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit." They also employ it to demonstrate that the Visible Church consists of those that profess Christ, together with their children.²⁰² Indeed, they further quote this same passage to show that such infants are to be baptized²⁰³ -- and that in His appointed time the Holy Ghost confers grace to those baptizees to whom it belongs.²⁰⁴

The Westminster theologians also quote this same passage - in the *Westminster Larger Catechism*. There, they use it to prove: that baptism seals those who are within the covenant of grace;²⁰⁵ that it is not to be administered to any who are outside of the Visible Church;²⁰⁶ that therein one's name is given up to Christ;²⁰⁷ and that it is to be administered even to infants.²⁰⁸

²⁰¹ *Inst.* IV:16:13-15.

²⁰² *W.C.F.* 10:3m and 25:2c.

²⁰³ *W.C.F.* 28:4m compare *W.L.C.* 166o.

²⁰⁴ *W.C.F.* 28:6r.

²⁰⁵ *W.L.C.* 162w.

²⁰⁶ *W.L.C.* 166n.

²⁰⁷ *W.L.C.* 167x.

²⁰⁸ *W.L.C.* 177s.

Acts 3: The Abrahamic covenant predicted Christian baptism

Shortly after Pentecost Sunday, Peter spoke²⁰⁹ to some still unconverted Jews. Even to them, he said: "You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham: 'And in your seed shall all of the families of the earth be blessed!' To you first, God - having raised up His Servant [Jesus] -- sent Him to bless you, to turn each of you away from your iniquities!'"

Here, Calvin correctly comments²¹⁰ that "God made His covenant with our fathers.... Therefore we who are their descendants, are included within it.... Peter....affirms that this is applicable within the Kingdom of Christ -- that God's adoption extends to the children as well as the fathers...."

"Thus the grace of salvation may be extended to those who are not yet born. I grant that many who are the children of the faithful according to the flesh, are counted 'bastards' and 'illegitimate.' Romans 9:7. Because by their unbelief, they banish themselves from the family of the holy. But this in no way prevents God from calling and admitting the seed of the godly into the fellowship!"

By 'bastards' Calvin does not here mean professing unbelievers outside the covenant. He here means false members of the Visible Church herself. Indeed, even those spiritual 'bastards' -- conceived and born within the covenant of grace -- are to be regarded, initially, as partaking of the grace of God. Accordingly, they are to be baptized even in tenderest infancy.

They are priorly, and also then and there, to be regarded as holy before baptism -- and therefore to be baptized. They are then deemed to be members of the holy family of Christ's Church. Only if, subsequently, they clearly manifest their faithlessness -- should the initial estimate about them be revised. If and when that occurs, it is -- as Calvin has stated -- only "because by their unbelief, they banish themselves from the family of the holy."

Calvin observes further²¹¹ that Peter "calls them 'the children of the covenant'.... Not widely different from this is the other passage of the apostle [Romans 4:11f]...in which he regards and describes circumcision performed on infants as an attestation to the fellowship which they have with Christ.... The Lord, in the Second Commandment of His Law, engages to be gracious to the seed of His servants -- for a thousand generations!"

Acts 7: circumcision and the faith of Abraham

A little later Stephen, the first Christian deacon, witnessed to the Jews about their need to believe in Jesus. Stephen told them that God had enabled "our father Abraham" to obey Him (and had therefore given him faith).²¹² Thereafter, God further "gave him the covenant of circumcision.... Abraham begot Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day."²¹³

²⁰⁹ Acts 3:25.

²¹⁰ *Comm.* on Acts 3:25.

²¹¹ *Inst.* IV:16:15.

²¹² Acts 7:2-4.

²¹³ Acts 7:8.

Here Calvin comments²¹⁴ on how Stephen "acknowledges that circumcision is a divine covenant.... At the same time, he shows that the Jews are in the wrong if they place the origin of their salvation in the external symbol.... Abraham was called - and the land and redemption were promised to his seed -- before he was circumcised! It is plain enough that the glory of the whole race does not depend on circumcision....

"Paul uses the same argument in the fourth chapter of Romans (4:11). For since Abraham obtained righteousness and was pleasing to God when he was uncircumcised, he infers from this that circumcision is not the cause of righteousness....

"Circumcision was given by God to be a sign of His grace. Yet adoption preceded it, in order and in time.... God first of all promises to Abraham the things that He later confirms by circumcision here -- so that we may realize that unless signs are preceded by the Word, they are empty and worthless.... God makes a covenant with us in the sacraments, to make known His love towards us.... They are not only signs of outward profession before men, but they also have the effect of confirming inward faith in the sight of God."

Baptism did not justify Simon the sorcerer

Philip now preached the Gospel to the Samaritans. "When they believed" his preaching, many of them "were baptized, both men and women.... Also [the sorcerer] Simon himself" professed belief in Christ. "And when he had been baptized, he continued with Philip.... Then the apostles...laid their hands on them.... But when Simon saw..., he offered them money -- saying, 'Give me too this power, so that whosoever I lay hands on, may receive the Holy Ghost!'

"But Peter said to him, 'May your money perish with you -- because you considered that the gift of God may be purchased with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter! For your heart is not right -- in the sight of God! Therefore, repent of this wickedness of yours -- and pray to God that the cogitations of your heart may be forgiven you! For I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity!'

"Then Simon answered. And he said: 'You people must pray to the Lord for me -- that none of these things you have spoken about, may come upon me!'"²¹⁵

Calvinism on Simon the Samaritan's baptism

Calvin comments here:²¹⁶ "The fact that baptism came after faith, is in accordance with Christ's institution with regard to strangers. Mark 16:16. For they ought to have been ingrafted into the body of the Church by faith -- before receiving the sign.

"But the Anabaptists are being quite absurd, in trying to prove from these verses -- that infants must be kept back from baptism. Men and women could not have been baptized -- without making open confession of their faith. But they were admitted

²¹⁴ *Comm.* on Acts 7:8.

²¹⁵ Acts 8:12-24.

²¹⁶ *Comm.* Acts 8:12-16.

to baptism on this condition -- that their families were consecrated to God at the same time! For the covenant is in these terms, 'I will be your God, and the God of your seed.' Genesis 17:7....

"It is quite plain from [the ex-sorcerer] Simon's example, that the grace which is figured in baptism is not conferred on all men indiscriminately when they are baptized. That is a dogma of the Papists.... They attribute a magical potency to the sacraments -- as if they are beneficial [even] without faith.... Paul teaches that our washing is the work of the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5.

"The water of baptism is the sign of the blood of Christ. But Peter advises that it is the Spirit by Whom we are washed in the blood of Christ. First Peter 1:2. In baptism, our old man is crucified -- so that we may be raised up into newness of life. Romans 6:6. But what is the source of all this -- except the sanctification of the Spirit? In short, nothing will be left to baptism -- if it is separated from the Spirit!"

Significantly, also the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Westminster Larger Catechism* both cite this case of Simon the magician. Both cite that text which states "Simon himself" professed belief in Christ -- and was then "baptized." And both also cite the subsequent post-baptismal text which states that the deeply sinful "Simon...said: 'You people must pray to the Lord for me that none of these [fearful] things you have spoken about, may come upon me!'"

The *Confession*²¹⁷ does so -- precisely when denying "that all that are baptized, are undoubtedly regenerated." The *Larger Catechism* does so,²¹⁸ to prove that "the sacraments become effectual means [not of justification but] of salvation [alias preservation] -- not by any power in themselves...but only by the working of the Holy Ghost." Consequently, there is no *opus operatum* in baptism!

The Ethiopian eunuch was justified by God before he was baptized

On the road to Gaza, Philip next met "a man of Ethiopia who...had come to Jerusalem for to worship."²¹⁹ Soon Philip "preached Jesus to him."²²⁰ This already-believing Ethiopian -- although previously a eunuch (and therefore possibly uncircumcisable) -- then asked Philip: "'What hinders me to be baptized?'"

Then Philip said: 'If you believe with all your heart, you may!' And he answered and said: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God!" Then he commanded the chariot to stand still. So both went down toward the water, both Philip and the eunuch. Then he [Philip] baptized him."²²¹

Here, note that the 'baptismal regeneration' theory of Romanists and Romanizers -- contradicts the actions undertaken and the assurances given by the inspired Philip! For he told the faithful eunuch that the latter could be baptized -- "if you believe!" Thereupon the eunuch replied -- before his own baptism -- "I believe

²¹⁷ *W.C.F.* 28:5p (citing Acts 8:13,23).

²¹⁸ *W.L.C.* 161s (citing Acts 8:13,23).

²¹⁹ Acts 8:27. As a eunuch, he was possibly uncircumcisable, and certainly precluded from becoming a member of the house of Israel. Yet he was not precluded from public worship there, nor deprived of the expectation of being fully ingrafted into Christ. Dt. 23:1f cf. Isa. 56:1-7.

²²⁰ Acts 8:34.

²²¹ Acts 8:36-38.

that Jesus Christ is the Son of God!" Only thereafter -- only after the eunuch had professed to be a believer already -- did Philip then "baptize him."²²¹

Now "the eunuch to whom Philip was sent," observes Calvin,²²² had already "been endowed with some degree of faith" even before meeting Philip. Were that not the case -- the Ethiopian "would never have incurred the fatigue and expense of a long and difficult journey to obtain an opportunity of worship [in Jerusalem]! Acts 8:27....

"I admit," continues Calvin, "that in some respect the...faith was not explicit." Indeed, that previously unexplicit faith of the Ethiopian -- was akin to the unexplicit faith of Cornelius before the latter met Peter (as chronicled in Acts 10).

Calvin therefore compares the pre-baptismal faith of the Ethiopian and of Cornelius. For "it is certain that they [both] were imbued with...a slender foretaste of Christ. This should not be thought strange. For the eunuch would not have hastened from a distant country to Jerusalem -- to an unknown God!"

Calvin on the Ethiopian's pre-baptismal faith

Calvin comments at some length on the Ethiopian's long-standing pre-baptismal faith:²²³ "The Name of the true God was widely spread -- seeing that He had some worshippers in distant lands. This man must certainly have been practising openly a different way of worship from his own people" in Ethiopia. Yet "all over the East, there were some who were worshipping the true God....

"The eunuch's coming to Jerusalem in order to worship, must not be attributed to superstition.... This pious man did not wish to neglect the practices which were prescribed to the worshippers of God. And so, his intention was not only to nourish his faith privately in the secrecy of his own heart, but also to profess it openly among men....

"His reading of the prophet [Isaiah] shows that the eunuch did not lightly worship a [false] god whom he conceived for himself according to his own idea -- but the God Whom he had come to know from the teaching of the Law.... [Yet] he modestly acknowledges his ignorance of the more obscure verses.....

"The eunuch is remarkably modest.... However, let us remember that the eunuch was [not] so conscious of his ignorance that he was [not also] -- for all that -- one of God's pupils.... It is evident...how passionately eager the eunuch was to learn.... The baptism of the eunuch now follows.... For mature faith must have been, in some way, already in his heart -- since he proceeds ardently to outward profession....

"Just as he had gladly embraced what he has heard about Christ -- so he now breaks out into the outward profession of his faith with pious ardour.... It is not enough for him to believe inwardly before God -- without testifying among men that he is a Christian....

"The eunuch is not admitted to baptism without [first] professing his faith.... Those who have previously been outsiders [to the Visible Church], should not be

²²² *Inst.* III:2:32.

²²³ *Comm.* on Acts 8:27-37.

received into the Church before they have testified that they believe in Christ.... Baptism is...the appendix of faith, and therefore subsequent in order.... Fanatics stupidly and wrongly attack infant baptism on this pretext....

"Those who are to be baptized, must be ingrafted into the Church [Visible] -- since Christ distinguishes only the members of the family of the Church with this sign.... Adults are ingrafted by faith.... The children of the godly, are born sons of the Church and are from the womb numbered among the members of Christ. Because God adopts us on the principle that He is also the Father of our children....

"Christ initiates infants to Himself for this purpose that - as soon as their age and ability to understand will allow - they yield themselves to Him as disciples" alias pupils. This is done, so that having [previously] been baptized by His Spirit they may know by the discernment of faith -- His power which is represented in baptism!"

Antisacramentarianism too disproved by the Ethiopian's baptism

Calvin's above comments demolish Romanism's sacramentalistic and essentially magical '*ex opere operato*' view about baptism. Other remarks of his demolish also the 'purely symbolic' or *nuda signa* view of those espousing antisacramentarianism. That is the theory that baptism is just a 'mere empty sign.' In that view, the sacrament is nothing but 'an unimportant token' which no way actually seals or increases one's already-present pre-baptismal faith!

Here, Calvin now discusses²²⁴ the baptismal views of Antisacramentarians. "But Philip (they say), replied to the eunuch who asked to be baptized: 'If thou believest with all thine heart -- thou mayest!' Acts 8:37. What room [they say] is there for a confirmation of [such pre-baptismal faith by] baptism -- when faith [pre-baptismally] fills the whole heart [already]?"

Replies Calvin: "I in my turn ask them, Do they not feel that a good part of their heart is void of faith? Do they not perceive new additions to it, every day? There was one [sarcastic Antisacramentarian] who boasted that he grew old while learning! [Yet] thrice miserable...are we Christians, if we grow old without making progress -- we whose faith ought to advance through every period of life!"

Antisacramentarian objectors next add: 'If faith is increased by means of the sacraments, the Holy Spirit is given in vain!' To this Calvin responds: "I admit indeed that faith is the proper and entire work of the Holy Spirit.... But for the one [pre-baptismal] divine blessing which they [the Antisacramentarians] proclaim -- we [Calvinists] count three! For first, the Lord teaches and trains us by His Word [[???] baptism]. Next, He confirms us by His sacraments [[???] their administration]. Lastly, He illumines our mind by the light of His Holy Spirit [also [???] we have received them].

"Therefore, with regard to the increase and confirmation of faith -- I would remind the reader...that in assigning this office to the sacraments -- it is not as if I thought that there is a kind of secret efficacy perpetually inherent in them, by which they can of themselves promote or strengthen faith. But because our Lord has instituted them, for the express purpose of helping to establish and increase our faith!

²²⁴ *Ib.* IV:14:8-9.

"The sacraments duly perform their office only when accompanied by the Spirit.... A pious mind is confirmed in faith -- by means of the sacraments.... The sacraments do not avail one *iota*, without the energy of the Holy Spirit.... Yet, in hearts previously taught by that Preceptor, there is nothing to prevent the sacraments from strengthening and increasing faith!"

This passage Acts 8:36-38 is twice referred to in the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards*. It is quoted there to prove that those who actually profess faith in Christ, are to be baptized. It is also cited there to show that baptism is not to be administered to any who are outside of the Visible Church, till they so profess their Christian Faith.²²⁵

Paul believed and was justified before he was baptized

Paul the Pharisee had been serving God from his forefathers with a pure conscience.²²⁶ More particularly, however, the time came when he turned from unbelief -- toward Christ.²²⁷ That was when it pleased God to call Paul by His grace -- in order to reveal His Son in him.²²⁸

Paul now came to believe in Jesus. Recognizing His Lordship, Paul asked Him: "Lord, what do You want me to do?"²²⁹ In answer, Jesus then sent the new Christian Paul to the more established Christian Ananias. The latter then immediately called him: "Brother Saul" -- indicating that he recognized Saul already to be a believer, even before his baptism. Only after that, did the already believing Saul arise -- "and was baptized."²³⁰

It is therefore not at all the case that Paul's baptism now made him into a Christian! It is far rather than the new Christian Paul -- after trusting in Christ -- then went on to receive Christian baptism!

Comments Calvin:²³¹ "When he [Paul] asks what Christ wishes [Acts 9:6], he is acknowledging His authority and power.... Paul's heart suddenly turned from iron to flesh -- after a softness, which was not natural to it, was given to it by the Spirit."

Next, "Christ subjected Paul to the instruction of a...teacher...ordained by Christ...to be his minister.... Christ appoints Ananias to act for Him as far as the office of teaching is concerned.... He [Ananias] will be a faithful and sincere minister of the Gospel....

"It will be evident from what Paul says afterwards, that the task of teaching him was...committed to Ananias.... His baptism...is subsequent in order.... The extreme fervour of his desire to learn, is apparent.... He does not hurry to get food -- until he has been baptized!"

²²⁵ *W.C.F.* 28:41 and *W.L.C.* 166n.

²²⁶ II Tim. 1:3.

²²⁷ I Tim. 1:13f Cf. Phil. 3:4-7f.

²²⁸ Gal. 1:15f.

²²⁹ Acts 9:5-6.

²³⁰ Acts 9:17-18. See too esp. at n. 288 below.

²³¹ *Comm.* on Acts 9:6,17f.

Explains Calvin:²³² "It will perhaps be objected, 'Why did Ananias say to Paul that he washed away his sins by baptism (Acts 22:16) -- if sins are not washed away by the power of baptism?' I answer, we are said to receive, procure and obtain whatever according to the perception of our faith is exhibited to us by the Lord -- whether He then attests it for the first time, or gives additional confirmation to what He had previously attested. All then that Ananias meant to say, was -- 'Be baptized, Paul, so that you may be assured that your sins are forgiven you!'" Indeed, the words "are forgiven" -- here mean: "have been forgiven!"

Cornelius and family trusted God long before their baptisms!

Long before Peter arrived on the scene in Caesarea, the Gentile officer Cornelius²³³ was already "a devout man, and one who feared God with all his house.... He prayed to God always." Indeed, also his own soldiers called him "a just man and one that fears God."

Peter too perceived that Cornelius had for quite some time continually been "fearing Him and working righteousness" -- *phoboumenos...kai ergazomenous dikaiosuneen*. Hence, Peter finally concluded: "'Can anyone forbid water, that these [members of Cornelius's whole household] should not be baptized?' So he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord."

Commenting on this,²³⁴ Calvin states: "Since baptism is an appendage to the spiritual grace -- a man who receives the Spirit is at the same time fit to receive baptism.... The inference that ignorant men draw from this -- that infants must be debarred from baptism -- is absolutely groundless.

"I admit that those who are outside the Church must be instructed before the symbol of adoption is conferred on them. But I maintain that believers' children, who are born within the Church, are members of the family of the Kingdom of God -- from the womb....

"God has adopted the children of believers before they are born.... This testimony...powerfully refutes the superstition of the Papists, who bind the grace of the Spirit to the signs.... Luke narrates that men who had not yet been initiated in baptism -- were already endowed with the Holy Spirit [Acts 10:1f,22,35]. He is showing that the Spirit is not shut up in baptism!"

So, even before meeting Peter -- as Calvin explains further²³⁵ -- Cornelius already "embraced the Jewish religion" in Caesarea. He did so, apparently when then stationed in Palestine. "Nor could Cornelius...have lived so long in Judea, without becoming acquainted with the rudiments of sound doctrine." Consequently, even before Peter met Cornelius, the latter had already become a true believer. For "his alms and prayers were acceptable to God (Acts 10:31).... This must have been the result of faith" -- acquired even before his baptism!

Calvin continues:²³⁶ "Cornelius was accepted for his prayers and alms and so

²³² *Inst.* IV:15:15.

²³³ Acts 10:2,22,31,35,45,47,48.

²³⁴ *Comm.* on Acts 10:47.

²³⁵ *Inst.* III:2:32.

²³⁶ *Inst.* III:24:10.

forth.... Acts 10:2.... It appears that he was already enlightened and regenerated.... All that he lacked, was a clear revelation of the Gospel."

Cornelius -- and apparently his family too -- was already "regenerated" prior to Acts 10:2. This was long before they all received baptism at the command of Peter, in Acts 10:48. Consequently, it is obvious that Cornelius and the members of his household were not regenerated by baptism!

Calvin's baptismal discussion of Acts 10 & 11

Discussing Acts 10:2-4, Calvin explains²³⁷ that "Cornelius" had already then, pre-baptismally, been "endued with true wisdom -- in other words, with the fear of God." So "he must have been enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom." Indeed, he "must have been sanctified by the same Spirit -- righteousness being, as the apostle testifies, one of the most certain fruits of the Spirit! Galatians 5:5."

Then, "when He was pleased to shed the light of His truth in greater effulgence on Cornelius -- He sent an angel from heaven to despatch Peter to him. Acts 10:3f." Also thereafter, even Peter himself -- before he baptized Cornelius -- already regarded him as a fellow-believer. For Peter already saw Cornelius as one who had been reconciled with God. Indeed, Peter even then saw Cornelius as one of those "in every nation" who "keeps on fearing God"; who "keeps on working righteousness"; and who "had been accepted by Him." Acts 10:35.

Calvin concludes: "Baptism serves as our confession before men.... We have a proof of this, in Cornelius the centurion.... After he had previously been endued with the graces of the Holy Spirit, he was baptized." Here, Cornelius was "not seeking a fuller forgiveness from baptism -- but a surer exercise of faith; nay, an argument for assurance from a pledge."

So then, Calvin believed that Cornelius already had "faith" and was clearly demonstrating an "exercise of that faith" -- before he was baptized. That pre-baptismal faith was merely given "a surer exercise" during his baptism. The latter was a "pledge" which gave him "assurance" -- as to his own pre-baptismal faith in God!

Significantly, also the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession* cites this case of the previously unbaptized yet nevertheless righteous and faithful family of Cornelius. To Westminster, this case shows -- about baptism -- that "grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it."²³⁸

Peter soon gave a report to the other apostles -- about this pre-baptismal faith of Cornelius's household.²³⁹ Explained Peter:²⁴⁰ "John indeed baptized with water.... Inasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did to us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ -- who was I, that I could withstand God [by withholding baptism from them]?"

²³⁷ *Inst.* III:17:4; IV:3:3; & IV:15:13-14.

²³⁸ *W.C.F.* 28:50, citing Acts 10:2,4,22,31,45,47.

²³⁹ Acts 11:1f.

²⁴⁰ Acts 11:16-17.

Here, Calvin again castigates the Anabaptists:²⁴¹ "Those who are opposing infant baptism, are waging war on God.... Those men -- are cruelly rejecting from the Church those whom the promise of God adopts into the Church.... Those whom God honours with the name of sons -- they deprive of the external symbol" of infant baptism!

The actions of Paul in Antioch-Jerusalem-Lystra condemn the Anabaptists

Paul told the Jews in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch that God had fulfilled the promises made to the fathers. He had now fulfilled those same promises to their children. For God had raised up Jesus from the dead.²⁴²

Calvin here comments:²⁴³ "It is certain that Paul is here speaking about the natural children who derived their origin from the holy fathers.... Certain fanatics [the Anabaptists], who make allegories out of everything, imagine that no account is to be taken here of descendants -- but only of 'faith.' But with a fiction like that -- they are making meaningless the sacred covenant of God, which says: 'I will be your God, and the God of your seed!' Genesis 17:7....

"Those who are born children of Abraham according to the flesh, are also to be regarded as God's spiritual children - unless they cut themselves off by their own unfaithfulness. For the branches are holy by nature, because they have been produced from a holy root -- unless they are polluted by their own fault. Rom. 11:16.... It is by faith that God separates His own!"

Jerusalem General Assembly vindicates Church as "New Israel"

The Jerusalem General Assembly of the Christian Church refuted certain misguided and unestablished Christians. Formerly, the latter had come over from the sect of the Pharisees. Yet they were still saying it was necessary to circumcise Gentiles who proselytized -- even to Christianity!²⁴⁴ The General Assembly, however, decided that Gentile Christians did not need to be circumcised -- but indeed needed to keep God's Moral Law.²⁴⁵

Here, Calvin comments:²⁴⁶ "The Gentiles were ingrafted into the people of God, without circumcision.... The Jews had been prepared for faith, by circumcision.... Ceremonies were given to the people of old, only in order to help their faith.... Harm is being caused to the Gentiles, if more is demanded from them than God wishes....

"When He has made them equal to the holy people, and thought them worthy of the honour of adoption -- it is a shameful and absurd thing for them to be rejected.... Faith alone is enough for them -- lacking ceremonies though they may be!"

²⁴¹ *Comm.* on Acts 11:17.

²⁴² Acts 13:14,32f.

²⁴³ *Comm.* on Acts 13:32f.

²⁴⁴ Acts 15:1-5f.

²⁴⁵ Acts 15:23-29f.

²⁴⁶ *Comm.* on Acts 15:7f.

The tactical circumcising of the faithful Christian Timothy

At Lystra, Paul met the godly Timothy -- the Christian son of a Greek father (but also of a Jewish mother who had become a Christian). Paul wished Timothy to travel around with him, and to help him spread the Gospel especially among the Jews.

So Paul circumcised Timothy. This was simply to encourage the Jews to heed the Christian testimony of Paul and Timothy. For the Jews might otherwise despise Paul for fraternizing with one they might otherwise well regard as an uncircumcised syncretist. "Because the Jews which were in those quarters...all knew that his father was a Greek."²⁴⁷

Here Calvin comments:²⁴⁸ "Luke makes it quite clear that Timothy was not circumcised because it was necessary..., but so that Paul might avoid a scandal.... Certain learned men are confused and wandering, in this respect! For to them, circumcision seems still to have a place among the Jews" even after they became Christians. However, "Paul teaches that it is superfluous -- when we are buried with Christ through baptism, Colossians 2:11-12...."

"Eunice -- the mother of Timothy -- belonged to the tiny remnant" of godly Hebrews then living in Grecian cities. But, "being married" to a Hellenist if not even to a Non-Jewish Greek, "she did not dare to dedicate her children to God -- at any rate, to give them the external mark of grace [alias circumcision]. And yet, she did not cease on that account to be conscientious in bringing up her son from boyhood -- in the fear of God and in the true worship!"

Elsewhere, however -- continues Calvin -- "Paul did not wish to circumcise Titus." For the latter was a full-blooded Gentile Christian. Indeed, Paul himself "states that this course of action was correct. Galatians 2:3."

The baptisms at Philippi of the households of Lydia and the jailer

At Philippi, we read of Lydia²⁴⁹ that "the Lord opened" her heart. Consequently, "she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul.... Then she was baptized, and her household."

Calvin comments here²⁵⁰ that "God had been effectively at work in Lydia. For there is no doubt that she genuinely embraced the faith of Christ, and gave her allegiance to Him -- before Paul admitted her to baptism.... The Lord blessed her godly devotion -- so that she [also] had the members of her household [to be] obedient...."

In this matter, the important businesswoman Lydia -- apparently the manageress of her considerable household -- saw to it that all its members were baptized. For, explains Calvin, "thus Abraham -- the father of the faithful -- was commanded to circumcise all his servants, along with himself.... He is commended for the care with which he organized his house [Genesis 17:24f and 18:18f].... This duty is demanded of the head of a household."

²⁴⁷ Acts 16:1-3.

²⁴⁸ *Comm.* on Acts 16:3.

²⁴⁹ Acts 16:14-15.

²⁵⁰ *Comm.* on Acts 16:15.

While still in Philippi, Paul and Silas urged an anxious jailer:²⁵¹ "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved -- you and your household!" So the jailer "was baptized, he and all his, straightaway.... He rejoiced, believing in God with all his household."

Here, Calvin comments:²⁵² "Faith is not a trivial or arid opinion about unknown things, but a clear and distinct knowledge of Christ derived from the Gospel.... Instead of the fiction of 'implicit faith' (*implicitae fidei*) about which the Papists babble -- let us keep the faith that is united to the Word of God....

"Luke again commends the godly zeal of the keeper [of the jail], because he dedicated his whole household to God. The grace of God is also reflected in that -- because He suddenly brought a whole family to godly unanimity....

"The outward proclamation of faith on the part of the keeper, has already been praised. Now the inward result of faith is described.... His faith was not useless... The joy, of which Luke speaks here, is a singular blessing -- which individuals derive from their faith."

Baptized households suggest even infants' faith before baptism

Thus we are told that in Philippi, Lydia "was baptized and her household" -- and also that the jailer too "was baptized, he and all his..., believing in God with all his house."²⁵³ These household baptisms clearly imply infant baptism (and therefore a presumed pre-baptismal faith even in such infants).²⁵⁴

As Calvin explains:²⁵⁵ "Everyone must now see that paedobaptism...receives such strong support from Scripture.... They [infants] are not expressly excluded, when mention is made of any baptized family. Acts 16:15,32. What man of sense will argue from this, that they were not baptized?"

For "baptism...is not less applicable to children, than to those of more advanced years.... Benefit redounds from the observance -- both to believers who bring their children to the church to be baptized, and to the infants themselves.... The divine symbol communicated to the child -- as with the impress of a seal -- confirms the promise given."

It was similar in Corinth.²⁵⁶ "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord -- with his whole household. And many of the Corinthians -- hearing -- believed. And they were baptized" -- soon thereafter.

This information is very important. It relates to Crispus and his whole household (including all his infants). It also relates to many other Corinthian Christians

²⁵¹ Acts 16:27-34.

²⁵² *Comm.* on Acts 16:31-34.

²⁵³ Acts 16:14-15 & 16:32-34.

²⁵⁴ See Acts 16:14 ("Lydia...whose heart the Lord opened so that she gave attention to the things spoken by Paul..., was baptized -- and her household "). Also see Acts 16:32 ("he was baptized, he and all his..., believing in God with all his house ").

²⁵⁵ *Inst.* IV:16:8-9.

²⁵⁶ Acts 18:8. *Episteusen to~i~ Kurioo~i~ sun holoo~i~ too~i~ oikoo~i~ autou## Kai polloi toon Korinthioon akouontes episteuon kai ebaptizonto.*

such as all the members of the baptized household of Stephanas.²⁵⁷ However tiny some of them probably were -- they were all rebuttably regarded as believers already, even before any of them received baptism!

The baptism of John and the fiery believer Apollos

Not just Paul²⁵⁸ but also Apollos²⁵⁹ soon became an important leader in the Corinthian Church. Earlier, Apollos the eloquent Alexandrian²⁶⁰ had listened to Aquila and Priscilla privately explaining the way of God to him more perfectly²⁶¹ -- while he was in Ephesus.

Still earlier, before arriving there, Apollos was already "mighty in the Scriptures."²⁶² For previously, he "had been catechized in the way of the Lord"; was "fervent in the Spirit"; and clearly understood and acknowledged or "knew the baptism of John."²⁶³ All of this evidences that Apollos already had an adequate faith in Christ -- and thus was already a Christian -- even before receiving 'Johannine' baptism, and long before his arrival in Ephesus.²⁶⁴

[Even the Christian disciple Barnabas was never actually called a 'Christian' -- until he arrived in Antioch. Only there were the disciples first called 'Christians.' Yet surely, even before then, both Barnabas and all the other followers of Jesus (and many baptizees) really were Christians!]²⁶⁵

On Apollos, Calvin here comments:²⁶⁶ "He understood the teaching of the Gospel.... He knew that a Redeemer has been presented to the world.... He had been instructed properly and sincerely about the grace of reconciliation." For he knew about the baptism of John!

Explains Calvin: "John was, so to speak, an intermediary between Christ and the prophets.... He went before, lighting the way for Christ, and gave a wonderful explanation of His power. His [John's] disciples are justifiably said to have had knowledge of Christ." Thus, Andrew and others who had been baptized by John previously and who had then followed Jesus -- were never (re)baptized either by Christ Himself or by His apostles!²⁶⁷

Calvin continues²⁶⁸ concerning Apollos: "The statement that 'he knew the baptism

²⁵⁷ I Cor. 1:12-17f; 3:6f; 6:11; 12:13; 16:15.

²⁵⁸ Acts 18:1,11 *cf.* n. 257 above.

²⁵⁹ Acts 18:24,27f *cf.* n. 197 above.

²⁶⁰ Acts 18:24a *Apolloos...Alexandros too-i~ genei aner logos*).

²⁶¹ Acts 18:26b (*akribesteron autoo-i~ exethento teen hodon tou Theou*).

²⁶² Acts 18:24b (*dunatos oon en tais graphais*).

²⁶³ Acts 18:25a (*houtos een katecheemenos teen hodon tou Kuriou*); v. 25b (*zeon too-i~ Pneumati*); v. 25c (*epistamenos...to baptisma Iooannou*).

²⁶⁴ Acts 18:24-28.

²⁶⁵ Acts 11:26 *cf.* Mt. 16:18 & 18:17.

²⁶⁶ *Comm.* on Acts 18:25.

²⁶⁷ Jh. 1:31-42f & 3:22-30f & 4:1-2.

²⁶⁸ *Comm.* on Acts 18:25.

of John' deserves attention. For from this we gather what the true use of the sacraments is, viz. to initiate us into some particular kind of doctrine -- or to establish the faith which we once embraced....

"What is this baptism of John? Luke gathers up the whole of his ministry in this word. Not only because doctrine is bound to baptism. But also because it [doctrine] is its [baptism's] foundation and head -- without which it would be an empty and dead ceremony....

"Apollos is given the further commendation that he was inflamed with a holy zeal for teaching.... That man, who was not yet...completely instructed in the Gospel, preached Christ.... Luke attributes his fervour to the Spirit.... Apollos was urged on by...the Holy Spirit" -- long before he first met Aquila and Priscilla!

The unitarians in Ephesus were regenerated before their Christian baptism

The Alexandrian Hebrew Christian Apollos had long been mighty in the Scriptures, fervent in the Spirit, and knowledgeable about the baptism of John -- even before he arrived in Ephesus. The indications are that he had already been baptized before reaching Ephesus, but that it was there that he learned the way of God more perfectly. For only thereafter are we told he showed the Jews from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

Some take this as an indication that his own full conversion to Jesus Christ personally, was only post-baptismal. In that case, the Romish thesis that he was converted by baptism -- and the Lutheran thesis that he was converted during baptism -- is thereby rendered more doubtful yet.

After Apollos had departed from Ephesus for Corinth, some unitarians arrived in Ephesus who had never even heard as to whether there is a Holy Spirit. Surprisingly, they later told Paul they had previously been baptized "into John's baptism."

The Romish Church and others wrongly take this "John's baptism" to mean the baptism administered by John the baptizer himself. They also wrongly claim that the latter Johannine baptism was not Christian baptism, and that all those baptized with Johannine baptism still needed Christic baptism.

If these claim were correct, they would establish quite clearly that nobody was regenerated during Johannine baptism. The claims would then also imply the unlikelihood of anyone being regenerated during the somewhat similar Christic baptism (even if a different rite). In point of fact, however, Johannine baptism is essentially the same as Christic baptism. Consequently, nobody was regenerated -- during either Johannine nor Christic baptism.

The unitarians in Ephesus were not regenerated by "John's baptism"

Now when Paul later returned to Ephesus, he found those unitarians there -- with their claim to have received "John's baptism." It is obvious that these men -- ignorant of the Holy Spirit, and hence also of the Christ alias the One anointed by that Spirit -- had been altogether uninfluenced by the Scripture-quoting and Spirit-filled Christian preaching of the instructed Apollos. Indeed, those non-trinitarians only seem to have arrived in Ephesus -- after the trinitarian

Apollos departed thence, for Corinth.²⁶⁹

It had been some twenty-five years since the death of that great trinitarian, John the Baptizer. The non-trinitarians in Ephesus made the claim to Paul that they had been initiated "into John's baptism." Yet they were apparently quite ignorant even about the very existence of the Holy Spirit (and perhaps even of the Lord Jesus Himself)!

That seemed very surprising. For John the Baptizer himself, while baptizing people with water, had always pointed his baptizees (and prospective baptizees) away from himself - and toward the coming Messiah (Jesus Christ). John had always told them how that Spirit-anointed One would soon Himself baptize them -- not (once or again) with water, but indeed with His Holy Spirit.²⁷⁰

The unitarians in Ephesus, however, not even alleged they had received their 'baptism' by or from John himself. They only claimed -- and that claim itself is suspect! -- to have been initiated "into John's baptism."²⁷¹ Indeed, they frankly admitted to Paul they had 'never even heard whether there be a holy spirit' (*sic*)!²⁷²

Clearly, this Spirit-less "John's baptism" these Unitarians alleged to Paul they had received -- even if it had indeed been administered to them -- had not been administered by John himself. For John had been a Spirit-filled person (even from his mother's womb). Indeed, also after growing up, John still testified about the Holy Spirit during his Spirit-filled preaching -- and also while baptizing! Hence, this 'Spirit-less' rite referred to in Acts 19:3b, was not Johannine! Indeed, it had started to be administered probably only after John's own death.

For it seems that certain unitarians had then started initiating people "into John's baptism." By this, they probably meant they were initiating 'in the name of John' or perhaps even 'into the name of John' -- neither of which John himself would ever have done! Very clearly, this 'Spirit-less' rite was certainly not the Christian baptism John himself had administered -- to those who soon thereafter became the disciples of Jesus Himself (without then ever being 'rebaptized' by Jesus or by anyone else).

Yet this 'Spirit-less' water-rite which the unitarians in Ephesus claimed to have received before they met Paul -- the rite they called "John's baptism" -- had clearly not regenerated them! For, even long thereafter, they had 'never even heard whether there be a holy spirit' (*sic*)!

However, John himself had spoken quite clearly about the Holy Spirit -- both before and while baptizing. Indeed, before administering that water-rite, he had urged his candidates to repent (or to turn to God) and to believe in the coming Christ. Consequently, the baptisms administered by John did not themselves regenerate.

Even more interesting. Although the unitarians at Ephesus indeed claimed to have been baptized "into John's baptism," they never claimed that the Holy Spirit had regenerated them through that water-rite. To the contrary. They readily admitted they had never even heard 'whether there is a holy spirit.' Consequently, they were then admitting that, in spite of their allegedly having received "John's

²⁶⁹ Acts 18:24 - 19:3.

²⁷⁰ Mt. 3:3-11f & Jh. 1:25f *cf.* Isa. 11:1-10f & 61:1f and perhaps also Acts 19:4-6.

²⁷¹ Acts 19:3 (*eis to Iooannou baptisma*).

²⁷² Acts 19:2b (*oud' ei Pneuma Hagion estin eekousamen*).

baptism," they had still not yet been regenerated.

Paul explained baptism to the unregenerate unitarians

Paul now explained,²⁷³ to those ignorant unitarians at Ephesus, the nature of the true Christian baptism which John himself had indeed administered. According to Luke in the book of Acts, "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." This could mean Paul was here simply saying that John himself²⁷⁴ had indeed baptized people into the Name of the then-coming Messiah -- that is, the One Whom Paul here identifies as the Lord Jesus. Or it could mean Paul himself now baptized the unitarians at Ephesus -- into the Name of the Lord Jesus. Either way, there is no re-baptism at Acts 19:5. For that verse says "they were baptized" -- not: 'they were re-baptized.'

The fact is, 'Johannine baptism' is Christian baptism! Thus, specifically on this passage, nearly all Calvinist scholars. So Calvin, Beza, the 1637 *Dordt Dutch Bible*, Lightfoot, Cocceius, Marckius, De Moor, J.H. Heidegger, J.H. van der Palm, H. Heppel, Gravemeijer, A. Kuyper Sr., etc.²⁷⁴

The text could mean that Paul was here informing the unitarians at Ephesus about what John himself²⁷⁵ had really taught. This would then show that those who had

²⁷³ Acts 19:4 (Eipen de Paulos#. # Iooannes ^m^e^n ebaptisen baptisma metanoias too~i~ laoo~i~ legoon eis Ton Erchomenon met' auton hina pisteusoosin, tout' estin Ton Christon Ieesoun . It is the *Textus Receptus* which here has *men*. See nn. 274 & 275 below. Note that *Christon* is omitted in P#38#, 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*.

²⁷⁴ Thus: Calvin, Beza, Calixtus, Lightfoot, Budde, Rambach, and others. See at nn. 275f. Acts 19:5 (*akousantes ^d^e 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 *hорchen* [hearken] and its cognate *gehорchen* [obey], usually means not merely to *listen* but to *hear well* and hence also to *heed*. See too n. 273 above.

²⁷⁵ Gravemeijer (*Reformed Doctrine of Faith*, Wiarda, Sneek, 1888, III:175) argues that the verses Acts 19:4-6 do not at all teach that the heretics were then baptized by Paul with water. Argues Gravemeijer: 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" (namely 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 ^m^e^n is noted as omitted in AlephABD, Vulg., Sah., Arm., Tisch., W.H., RV, Weiss & Wendt).

Gravemeijer thus reads Acts 19:4-6 as follows: "Then Paul said, 'John truly (^m^e^n) 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 (^d^e) 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. 273-74 above.

These 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

heeded John's preaching -- John's preaching that they should believe in Jesus -- were there and then baptized by John into the Name of the Lord Jesus. In that case, after explaining this to the confused men in Ephesus, all that Paul then further did -- after they heeded him -- was 'waterlessly' to lay his hands upon those ex-heretics.

Alternatively, the above words -- "when they heeded this, they were baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus" -- 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, it seems perhaps more likely that he did.²⁷⁵ 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 then indeed baptized them with water, that would have been the first and the only Christian baptism those previously ignorant unitarians ever received!

For Paul explained to the unitarians at Ephesus that "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." Whichever way the passage is understood, it cannot properly be taken to imply baptismal regeneration. Indeed, at whatever point in time that never-repeated water-baptism took place or was to take place in respect of the approximately twelve men mentioned in Acts 19:1-7 -- it was not the same time at which their Christian faith commenced!

For any Christian water-baptism ever received by those ex-unitarians, would only have occurred after they had been regenerated by grace and through faith -- and apparently as a result of Paul's preaching the Gospel to them. Previously, it seems they had never truly been baptized by anybody. If they then ever received Christian baptism at all -- which indeed seems very likely -- that could have occurred only when they heeded and obeyed the Gospel then preached to them by Paul.

That would then have been the first and the only Christian baptism those previously ignorant ex-unitarians had ever received. More importantly, they had already been regenerated -- before they would then have received that baptism. Indeed, they were regenerated apparently while hearing the Gospel preached to them by Paul. Acts 19:4. They were therefore not regenerated by the Christian baptism itself, which would only be administrable to them at a somewhat different moment. Acts

preaching. Yet further, Paul then applied no water whatsoever to those ex-heretics, but simply laid his hands on them.

If Gravemeijer is right in this, Calvin too would be right in suggesting that Paul did not at all apply water to those heretics. Consequently, there is no possibility of them having been rebaptized (with water) by Paul! See too at n. 283 below.

Against Gravemeijer's hypothesis, observe that the plural form *ebaptistheesan* here in Acts 19:5b, as well as the plural form *akousantes* in 19:5a at n. 274 above, both seem to refer to Paul's plural listeners. Compare their corresponding plurals (*tinas matheetas* and *autous* and *hoi...eekousamen* and *ebaptistheete* and *hoi...eipan*) in the immediately preceding Acts 19:1-3, and their corresponding plurals (*autois* and *autous* and *elaloun* and *epropheeteuon*) and *eesan* and *hoi pantes andres hoosei doodeka* in the immediately succeeding Acts 19:6-7.

To us, it seems to be of some significance that in Acts 19:4a, Paul refers in the singular (*too-i~ laoo-i~*) to the people that *John himself* had addressed. This in turn strengthens Kuyper's thesis (which we endorse) against Gravemeijer's. See n. 284 below. On the other hand, even Acts 19:4b goes on to use the plural *pisteusosin* (apparently still in respect even of the singular *too-i~ laoo-i~* in 19:4a). This, together with the *men...de* factor discussed above, lends some credence to Gravemeijer's hypothesis.

19:5.

Calvin's explanation of the baptismal passage Acts 19:1-6

The men concerned were about twelve in number.²⁷⁶ In commenting,²⁷⁷ 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.... 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 that the [Ephesian] 'brethren' whom Luke mentioned previously [Acts 18:27]...were different from these particular men" in Acts 19:1f.

Paul said: "John indeed baptized with the baptism of *repentance!*"²⁷⁸ Here Calvin comments²⁷⁹ "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." And I, the sinless One, was certainly not regenerated thereby!

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 explains²⁸⁰ 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 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 [add the Anabaptists], we ought to be baptized anew into the true religion with which we [Protestants] are now for the first time imbued."

²⁷⁶ Acts 19:1-7.

²⁷⁷ *Comm.* on Acts 19:2.

²⁷⁸ Acts 19:4a *cf.* 18:25 & 19:1-3.

²⁷⁹ *Comm.* on Acts 19:4-5.

²⁸⁰ *Inst.* IV:15:18.

Thus said the Anabaptists. For they maintained that those born and baptized and raised in the heretical Church of Rome - were never truly baptized there, at all!

Acts 19:1-5 to Calvin teaches faith before baptism

This is not the place to consider the erroneous claim that Paul re-baptized some ex-heretics in Ephesus. Nor is this the place to review Calvin's impressive analyses concerning the ineradicable validity of Christian baptisms performed even in and by the Church of Rome. Elsewhere, this present writer has addressed these topics abundantly.²⁸¹ His present concern is to deal with the relevant portion of Calvin's comment on 19:1-5 (but solely as regards the impossibility of baptismal regeneration).

Here, we shall merely show that to Calvin this whole passage clearly teaches faith before baptism. In passing, however, we shall also see that -- to Calvin -- the passage clearly denies any possibility of re-baptism.

Declares Calvin:²⁸² "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."²⁸³

²⁸¹ See my 1990 manuscript: *Rebaptism Impossible! The Biblical Unrepeatability of Baptism in Presbyterian Church History with particular reference to the validity of 'Roman Catholic Baptisms'*.

²⁸² *Inst.* IV:15:18.

²⁸³ Calvin himself here (in *Inst.* IV:15:18) takes the view that Acts 19:1-3 actually refers to true disciples of John. Calvin does not here regard the other view as "probable"; the view that it refers instead only to foolish imitators of John. That view was later elaborated by the great Abraham Kuyper Sr. Yet Calvin does present this view very fairly, and he forthrightly acknowledges that "some" indeed hold it. We ourselves agree with those "some."

For it certainly seems to us that at an earlier time, "some" of the followers of John had become confused, after John himself had temporarily questioned Jesus' Messiahship, and especially after John's own violent death. Mt. 11:2f, 11f & 14:10-12. Instead of then following Jesus, these confused followers of John had then started believing and ever teaching erroneous doctrines. Either they or their even more confused pupils had then themselves unauthorisedly and erroneously started baptizing "in the name of John." It was some of their heretical pupils and 'baptizees' in turn, that Paul later encountered at Ephesus. Acts 19:1-3.

When discussing Acts 19:1-7, that great Calvinist Rev. Prof. Dr. Abraham Kuyper (Sr.) rightly explains in his *Sacraments* pp. 134f (in his *Dogmatic Dictations*, Kok, Kampen, 2nd ed., IV): "The twelve men [Acts 19:1-7] had not been baptized by John. They themselves say: 'We have not heard whether there is a Holy Spirit!' So Paul explains to them 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. 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 *^t^h^e* revelation of God.... The preaching about Jesus and about the Holy Spirit fell away. Hence Paul did *^n^o^t* here *^r^e-* baptize, but administered *^b^a^p^t^i^s^m* : in the Name of Jesus!" Acts 19:5 or 19:6f.

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 could probably apply to Gentile heretics just as much as it certainly could to Jewish heretics. Cf. Mk. 2:18; Jh. 9:28; Mt. 23:15; Acts 5:36f cf. 17:18; Tit. 1:12f.

Moreover, even some Jewish heretics may very well have been ignorant about the Holy Spirit. Cf. Rom.

Calvin goes on:²⁸⁴ "I grant 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 ex-heretics] were re-baptized [in Acts 19]!"

Calvin thus strongly opposes the repetition or repetitions of water-baptism. Especially does he oppose this practice, as if intervening ignorance or ignorances might ever justify such a repetition or series of repetitions of the water-rite. For, he concludes, "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!"

Yet further, Calvin indicates²⁸⁵ 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."

Yet some misguided late-patristic "ancient writers...say that the one baptism [by John] was only preparative to the other [namely the truly Christian baptism].... Because, [the way] they read..., 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!"

The plain facts are thus as follows. Firstly: John the baptizer, before baptizing anybody, always preached the necessity of repentance (or turning toward God) -- and the necessity of faith in the Messiah Who baptizes with His Spirit. Secondly: our Christian baptism is the same which Christ received from John, without His ever being regenerated (either thereby or whenever). Thirdly: our own Christian baptism too, therefore, does not regenerate us. Fourthly: like John's baptisms of sinners such as us, our own baptism too likewise presupposes our own prior turning to God, and our own prior faith in Jesus Christ -- prebaptismally!

In a sense, the repeated Romish sprinklings of holy water upon those already duly baptized -- come perilously close to the heresy of constantly 'rebaptizing' baptizees. As Calvin explains:²⁸⁶ "Should any one ask them [the Romanists] where

2:28f; 8:2-9; Jude 4,11-19; Rev. 2:9; 3:9. Calvin does not seem to have weighed sufficiently the clear difference between John 7:39's statement "The Holy Ghost $\wedge w^a s$ not yet $\wedge g^i v^e n$ " (*ou poo gar $\wedge e^e n$ Pneuma Hagion $\wedge d^e d^o^m^e n^o n$*) -- and the different statement "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" (*all' oud' ei Pneuma Hagion $\wedge e^s t^i n$ eekousamen*) here at Acts 19:2. For, quite apart from the disputed word *dedomenon*, it is obvious that John 7:39's undisputed word '*een*' alias "was" is quite different from the undisputed word '*estin*' alias "is" (which the Holy Spirit Himself infallibly inscripturated at Acts 19:2).

Calvin has perhaps gratuitously assumed that Paul in Acts 19:5 administered only a 'non-watery' and a purely 'spiritual' baptism. We say Calvin '*perhaps*' gratuitously assumed this, in light of Gravemeijer's comment at n. 275 above (q.v.)! Unlike Gravemeijer, 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" Calvin here assumes the implicit existence of the explicitly non-existent words: *with the Spirit!*

For the rest, however, we heartily concur with Calvin that Acts 19:1-5 teaches *faith before baptism*. We also concur with him that the passage certainly *precludes any repetition of water baptism*, either in the Name of the Lord Jesus or in the Name of the Triune God (*cf.* Mt. 28:19 & Acts 8:16).

²⁸⁴ *Inst.* IV:15:18. See too Calvin's *Treatise Against the Anabaptists*, Baker, Grand Rapids, ed. 1982.

²⁸⁵ *Inst.* IV:15:7-8.

²⁸⁶ *Inst.* IV:10:20.

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 concludes: "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 had any resemblance to baptism. Be that as it may -- I will never admit that the apostolic Spirit gave rise to that daily sign by which baptism, while brought back to remembrance, is in a manner repeated!"

Were Paul's sins washed away previously at his baptism?

Later arraigned before a Non-Christian Hebrew audience,²⁸⁷ Paul told of his former conversion to Christ -- on the road to Damascus, and before his baptism. "Then one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews..., came to me and stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul..., why do you now keep on delaying? Having arisen, be baptized; and wash away your sins while you were calling upon the Name of the Lord!'"

The above certainly seems to evidence the washing away of Paul's sins while he was calling upon the Name of the Lord - before Ananias called him 'Brother'; and before Ananias yet subsequently baptized Paul. For Paul's "calling upon the Name of the Lord" surely implies his utilizing a God-given ability obviously received before his "calling" upon the Lord's Name thus.

That ability is one the exercising of which obviously manifests a faith in Christ already present previously. Indeed, it was only after calling Paul 'Brother' -- that Ananias further declared: "Why do you now keep on delaying? Having arisen, be baptized; and wash away your sins while you were calling upon the Name of the Lord!"²⁸⁸

Calvin: Paul here claimed pre-baptismal regeneration

Here -- in addition to his previous²⁸⁹ (anti-sacramentalistic) remarks about Paul's

²⁸⁷ Acts 22:1,10,12f,16.

²⁸⁸ Acts 22:16. *Kai nun ti melleis? Anastas, baptisai; kai apolousai tas hamartias sou epikalesamenos to Onoma tou Kuriou!* Rightly does the *Expositor's Bible* point out at Acts 22:16 that "*epikalesamenos* [or 'having called upon' (the Name of the Lord)]...necessarily involved belief in Him [Christ]." Acts 2:21,36f; Rom. 10:12-14; I Cor. 1:2. Observe in the original Greek of Acts 22:16 that it is only after the clause "when you have arisen" (*anastas*) -- that Paul was told: *baptisai* or "be baptized!" Too, the grammatically subsequent aorist middle participle *epikalesamenos* -- "you having called upon" (the Name of the Lord) -- is very probably referring to an event temporally prior to the "be baptized!" Indeed, the *epikalesamenos* -- "you having called upon" (the Name of the Lord) -- seems to be more connected to its immediate grammatical antecedent *apolousai tas hamartias sou* (or "wash away your sins"), than to its more remote grammatical antecedent "be baptized!" The meaning would then be: 'your sins were washed away when you called upon the Name of the Lord prior to your baptism.' Consequently, "be baptized!" would seem to be temporally subsequent to and therefore no way causative of 'the washing away of your sins' -- alias the *apolousai tas hamartias sou epikalesamenos to Onoma tou Kuriou*.

²⁸⁹ See our text at nn. 226 to 232 above.

pre-baptismal conversion -- Calvin comments:²⁹⁰ "'What shall I do, Lord?'...is the cry of a tamed man.... It is genuine conversion to the Lord.... He was [only physically] blind -- until, presenting himself as a learner [to Ananias], he might prove the humility of his faith....

"Paul met Ananias.... Ananias warns that it was due to the gracious election of God that the truth of the Gospel is now shining in Paul.... There is no doubt that Ananias faithfully instructed Paul in the rudiments of the faith. For he would not have baptized him -- if he lacked true faith!"

Now, continues Calvin, "the question is asked -- whether baptism is the cause of our cleansing.... The blood of Christ is the one and only expiation for sins.... It was shed once [and for all] for this purpose.... The Holy Spirit is cleansing us continually, by the sprinkling of it -- through faith! The honour for this, cannot be transferred to the symbol of water -- without doing injury to Christ and the Holy Spirit.... Experience shows how prone men are to this superstition....

"It is God alone Who washes us from our sins by the blood of His Son.... We must imagine no other material cause than the blood of Christ. But...baptism helps our faith to receive remission of sins -- from the blood of Christ, and that alone.... On the other hand, we must be on our guard that the grace of God is not tied to the sacraments! For the external administration of baptism is of no value -- except when it pleases God that it should be so.

"Since Paul [already before his baptism] had proof of the grace of God -- his sins had already been forgiven! Therefore, he was not...washed by baptism, but obtained fresh confirmation of the grace which he had received [previously].... The sacraments do not have any power of salvation shut up in themselves, or any effectiveness by themselves....

"Ananias clearly directs Paul away from trust in the outward element -- to[ward] Christ." Acts 9:17f. "It is well known how much the Papists differ from this example! They tie the cause of grace to their own exorcisms.... Far from being concerned to direct the wretched mass of the people to Christ -- they rather drown Christ in baptism, and defile His sacred Name!"

Yet, as Calvin anticipates,²⁹¹ by some it might "perhaps be objected: 'Why did Ananias say to Paul that he washed away his sins by baptism?' Acts 22:16." Yet that is not what Ananias actually said -- as chronicled there in Acts 22:16!

As infallibly reported there, Ananias actually stated: "Brother Saul..., why do you now keep on delaying? Having arisen, be baptized! And wash away your sins while you were calling upon the Name of the Lord!"²⁹²

As Calvin himself observes:²⁹³ "All then that Ananias meant to say, was -- 'Be baptized, Paul, so that you may be assured that your sins are forgiven you!'" Indeed, by "are forgiven" Calvin here does not mean 'are being forgiven' but: have been forgiven!

²⁹⁰ *Comm.* On Acts 22:10-16.

²⁹¹ *Inst.* IV:15:15. See too n. 289 above.

²⁹² Acts 22:13-16, *cf.* our text at n. 288 above (and especially that note itself).

²⁹³ *Inst.* IV:15:15.

He is a 'Jew' who has been circumcised in his heart!

It is significant that Paul anti-sacramentalistically informed especially the Jews in Rome that their breaking the Law of God had "made your circumcision [into] uncircumcision. Therefore, if the uncircumcision [alias the Gentile] guards the righteousness of the Law -- shall not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? And shall not that which is by nature uncircumcision -- if it continues to complete the Law -- keep on judging you who by the letter and by circumcision are a transgressor of the Law?

"For not he is a Jew, who is one outwardly. Neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly. And circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit -- and not in the letter!" Thus too, twice, the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards*.²⁹⁴

Here, Calvin comments:²⁹⁵ "The Jews thought that circumcision was of itself sufficient for the purpose of obtaining righteousness. Arguing therefore in their own terms, Paul gives this reply that if this benefit is expected from circumcision -- the condition is that the person who is circumcised, must prove himself to be wholly and perfectly a worshipper of God. Circumcision, therefore, requires perfection.

"The same may also be said of our baptism. If anyone puts his trust in the water of baptism alone, and thinks that he is justified -- as though he had obtained holiness from that ordinance itself -- we must adduce the end of baptism in objection to this. Which is, that the Lord thereby calls us to holiness of life....

"It follows from this that the uncircumcised, provided he keeps the Law, far excels the Jew with his barren and unprofitable circumcision -- if he [the Jew] is a transgressor of the Law.... The 'circumcision' which constitutes a Jew, does not consist in an external sign.... People everywhere are commanded to circumcise their hearts!"²⁹⁶

Even the Jew, circumcised in flesh, much more needed circumcision in heart. Obviously, the two things -- though related -- were not the same. Mere circumcision of the flesh saved nobody. Neither does the mere water-baptism which replaces it!

Paul soon asked the question: "What is the profit of circumcision?" He then answered: "Much, every way! First of all, that they [the circumcised Hebrews] were entrusted with the Oracles of God." But then, Paul immediately adds anent the Jews that "some were without faith."²⁹⁷ Indeed, this clearly shows that -- certainly in their case -- there had been no circumcisonal regeneration!

Circumcision was not righteousness but it sealed the righteousness of faith

This is next made yet clearer -- even as regards Abraham and his descendants. Says Paul:²⁹⁸ "Faith was reckoned unto Abraham as righteousness. How, then, was it

²⁹⁴ Rom. 2:25-29 (*W.C.F.* 27:3g & *W.L.C.* 163c).

²⁹⁵ *Comm.* Rom. 2:25-29. See too the text at our nn. 72f above.

²⁹⁶ See: Dt. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26; Ezk. 11:19; 36:25f; 39:39; 44:7.

²⁹⁷ Rom. 3:1-3.

²⁹⁸ Rom. 4:9-11.

reckoned? When he was in circumcision -- or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision....

"Abraham [later] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised." Abraham then received this seal of circumcision, "so that he might become the father of all those that believe (though not circumcised) -- in order that righteousness might be imputed to them too!"

In Romans 8:9, Paul soon went on to claim that "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not one of His." This clearly means that even unborn children who belong to Christ, must already have His Spirit within them! Hence this very passage is rightly cited in the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession*. There, it is quoted -- to prove that "elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit."²⁹⁹

For also infants need to be regenerated by God's Spirit. Such of God's elect as die in fetushood are obviously regenerated before it is possible for them to be baptized. Consequently, it is clear that at least such early-dying babies are regenerated -- without being baptized! In their case at least, baptismal regeneration is obviously impossible -- and thoroughly false.

Abraham the 'father of believers' trusted before being circumcised

It has been seen that Abraham was justified already -- **before** he was circumcised. Presumably, so too were his elect descendants -- very many of whom were circumcised in infancy. Yet some of his descendants -- such as probably Ishmael and certainly Esau -- were never regenerated.³⁰⁰ *A fortiori*, it thus seems clear that neither Abraham himself nor any of his descendants -- whether elect or not -- was ever regenerated **during circumcision** !

Here, Calvin comments:³⁰¹ "Abraham possessed righteousness before he had circumcision.... It did not justify.... It had another very excellent use, *viz.* the office of sealing and as it were ratifying the righteousness of faith.... From the very purpose of circumcision...it was not the cause of righteousness -- although it tends to confirm the righteousness of faith already obtained in uncircumcision....

"As now in baptism there are two parts, so formerly in circumcision there were two parts -- which testified both to newness of life, and to the forgiveness of sins.... In the case of Abraham, righteousness preceded circumcision.... There is now no necessity for circumcision, where baptism exists... Circumcision does not justify.... Because Abraham was justified by faith [before circumcision], the same argument also holds good for us. We deny, therefore, that men are justified by baptism -- since they are justified by the same faith as that of Abraham!"

Calvin further explains³⁰² that "a sacrament consists of the Word and the external sign. By 'the Word' we ought to understand...one which, preached, makes us

²⁹⁹ *W.C.F.* 10:3m, citing Rom. 8:9 (*ei de tis Pneuma Christou ouk echei, houtos ouk estin ^A^u^t^o^u*).

³⁰⁰ Rom. 9:4-13 *cf.* Gal. 4:22-30 & Heb. 11:8-9.

³⁰¹ *Comm.* on Rom. 4:9-11.

³⁰² *Inst.* IV:14:4-6.

understand what the visible sign means.... Whence can there be so much virtue in water, as to touch the body and cleanse the heart -- unless by the agency of the Word, and this not because it is said but because it is believed?"

Continues Calvin: "The seals which are affixed to diplomas and other public deeds are nothing, considered in themselves.... Yet this does not prevent them from sealing and confirming, when they are appended to writings. It cannot be alleged that this comparison is a recent fiction of our own -- since Paul himself used it, terming circumcision a seal (Romans 4:11). There he expressly maintains that the circumcision of Abraham was not for justification, but was an attestation of the covenant -- by the faith of which he had previously been justified.... Sacraments, therefore, are exercises which confirm our faith in the Word of God."

Calvin goes on:³⁰³ "Circumcision was enjoined on Abraham and his posterity.... [Circumcision] abrogated, the two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper...were instituted.... Circumcision was a sign by which the Jews were reminded..., to confirm them in the promise made to Abraham of a Seed in Whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed.... That saving Seed -- as we are taught by Paul, Galatians 5:6 [compare 3:16] -- was Christ, in Whom alone they trusted to recover what they had lost in Adam.

"Therefore circumcision was to them what Paul says it was to Abraham -- viz. a sign of the righteousness of faith (Romans 4:11); viz. a seal by which they were more certainly assured that their faith, in waiting for the Lord, would be accepted by God for righteousness.... We shall have a better opportunity elsewhere of following out the comparison between circumcision and baptism."

Calvin further observes³⁰⁴ that God "appointed circumcision, by which symbol the Jews were taught.... They were thereby raised to the hope of eternal life. Therefore the apostle, to prove that the Gentiles as well as the Jews were the children of Abraham, speaks in this way: 'Faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness...so that he might be the father of all them that believe..., who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had while yet uncircumcised.' Romans 4:9-12....

"To the time appointed by the divine decree, he [Abraham] was the father of circumcision. But when, as the apostle elsewhere writes (Ephesians 2:14), the wall of partition which separated the Gentiles from the Jews was broken down -- also to them access was given to the Kingdom of God..... He [Abraham] became their father, and that without the sign of circumcision -- its place being supplied by baptism."

Romans 4:11 demolishes the arguments of the Anabaptists

The Anabaptists, concludes Calvin,³⁰⁵ rightly "add that baptism is a sacrament of penitence and faith." But then they wrongly state that "as neither of these is applicable to tender infancy, we must beware of rendering its meaning empty and vain by admitting infants to the communion of baptism.

"But these darts are directed more against God than against us! Since the fact

³⁰³ *Inst.* IV:14:20,21.

³⁰⁴ *Inst.* IV:16:13.

³⁰⁵ *Inst.* IV:16:20.

that circumcision was a sign of repentance - is completely established by many passages of Scripture. Jeremiah 4:4. Thus, Paul terms it a seal of the righteousness of faith. Romans 4:11.... Children are baptized for future repentance and faith.... The seed of both lies in them -- by the secret operation of the Spirit!"

The Calvinistic *Westminster Standards* repeatedly cite Romans 4:11f. The *Westminster Confession* does so, to prove: that sacraments are signs and seals of the covenant of grace;³⁰⁶ that infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized;³⁰⁷ and that it is not so that nobody can be saved without baptism.³⁰⁸

The same passage Romans 4:11 is also quoted by the *Westminster Larger Catechism*. There, it shows: that sacraments are instituted by Christ, and that they seal all other graces;³⁰⁹ that children of professing parents should themselves be baptized;³¹⁰ that all other blessings are sealed to us in baptism;³¹¹ and that baptism seals the covenant.³¹²

Even babies, stained by original sin, need regenerating

In the next chapter -- Romans five -- Paul deals with the wretched status before God of the fallen Adam and his unregenerate descendants. Yet there, the apostle also deals with the blessed status before God -- of Christ the unfallen Second Adam, together with that of all His adopted children after their regeneration. Thus, at Romans 5:17, Paul indicates that those "who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness -- shall keep on reigning in life, through the One, Jesus Christ!"

Here, Calvin rightly comments:³¹³ "It is necessary...to be a believer, in order to enjoy the righteousness of Christ. For we attain to fellowship with Him, by faith. Fellowship with Christ is communicated to infants [of believers] in a peculiar way. They have the right of adoption in the covenant, by which they come into communion with Christ. I am referring to the children of the godly, to whom the promise of grace is directed. (*De piorum liberis loquor, ad quos promissio gratiae dirigitur*)."

Consequently, "it is necessary to be a believer -- in order to enjoy the righteousness of Christ." Further, "we attain to fellowship with Him -- by faith." Consequently, even infants must have faith -- in order to be able to fellowship with Christ!

Clearly, the infants of the godly are themselves among the faithful. By "adoption...they come into communion with Christ." For even "fellowship with Christ is communicated to infants" -- of believers. Hence, also while yet infants

³⁰⁶ *W.C.F.* 27:1a & 28:1c.

³⁰⁷ *W.C.F.* 28:4m.

³⁰⁸ *W.C.F.* 28:5o.

³⁰⁹ *W.L.C.* 162t & 162y.

³¹⁰ *W.L.C.* 166o.

³¹¹ *W.L.C.* 167s.

³¹² *W.L.C.* 176o.

³¹³ *Comm.* on Rom. 5:17.

-- they are immediately entitled to receive baptism as the sign of belonging to that fellowship of those who trust in the Saviour!

After baptism we may no longer continue in sin!

Paul next encourages the Christians in Rome -- who had already trusted in Christ before their baptisms -- to keep on believing in Him even thereafter, and indeed for the rest of their lives. Rhetorically, the apostle asks them:³¹⁴ "Shall we continue remaining in sin, so that grace may abound? May that never be! How shall we, who have died to sin, keep on living in it any longer?"

"Don't you know that as many of us as have been baptized into Christ, have been baptized into His death? We have therefore been 'funeralized' together with Him, by baptism, into death -- so that just as Christ has been raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too shall likewise keep on walking in newness of life! For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death -- we shall be too, in the likeness of His resurrection!"

The 'seed of faith' was already in the seed-bed of the unbaptized Christian -- before he was planted together with Christ, through his own baptism. Thus 'watered' -- that pre-baptismal seedlike faith then grows further. Thereafter too, it keeps on increasing yet more -- in the strong sunshine of God's ongoing grace!

In his comment,³¹⁵ Calvin here connects a Christian's own baptism to his fellowship with Christ. "This fellowship of His death, is the focal centre of baptism.... The efficacy of Christ's death appears from the moment when we are received into His grace.... This power is not apparent in all the baptized! For Paul, because he is speaking to believers, connects the reality [grace] and the effect [faith] with the outward sign [baptism]....

"Whatever the Lord offers by the visible symbol [baptism], is confirmed and ratified by their faith. In short, he teaches us what the truth of baptism is, when rightly received.... For we never [anabaptistically] have naked and empty symbols (*nuda et inania symbola*) -- except when our ingratitude and wickedness hinder the working of the divine beneficence!" Nor does or could baptism itself possibly create **pre**-baptismal incipient faith already present!

Time and again do the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards* refer to this passage Romans 6:1-5f! They cite it to prove that baptism solemnly engages its recipients to serve God.³¹⁶ It seals Christians and ingrafts them³¹⁷ into Christ's body, and gives them an incentive to keep on walking in newness of life.³¹⁸ It obliges them to keep on obeying Christ;³¹⁹ and it seals their adoption and resurrection unto everlasting life.³²⁰

³¹⁴ Rom. 6:1-5.

³¹⁵ *Comm.* on Rom. 6:3-4.

³¹⁶ *West. Conf.* 27:1e and *West. Larg. Cat.* 165m & 167r.

³¹⁷ *West. Conf.* 28:1d.

³¹⁸ *West. Conf.* 28:1g.

³¹⁹ *West. Larg. Cat.* 162z.

³²⁰ *West. Larg. Cat.* 165k.

The *Westminster Standards* also cite this passage yet further. They do so, to prove that we have a post-baptismal and a life-long duty of "improving our baptism"³²¹ -- especially in times of temptation and when we witness baptism being administered to others.³²² They also quote it to urge baptized Christians to draw strength from Christ's death and resurrection. This is for the mortification of their own sin, and for the quickening of the grace they have previously received. It is also designed to encourage them to keep on walking in holiness and righteousness.³²³

Esau obviously not regenerated during his circumcision

To the "Israelites" -- Paul went on to declare³²⁴ -- pertain "the adoption...and the promises." Yet not all those are 'Israel' [alias 'princes of the Triune God'] -- who are from Israel! Neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children [of God]. But 'In Isaac shall your seed be called!' Thus God told Abraham. Genesis 21:12.

Paul continued: "Rebecca also conceived, by...our father Isaac.... The [twin] children not yet having been born..., so that the purpose of God according to election might stand..., it was said to her: 'The elder shall serve the younger!'" Genesis 25:23. "Thus it has been written: 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated!'" Malachi 1:2-3.

"It is," Calvin here comments,³²⁵ "of some importance to be descended from saints and men loved by God -- since God has promised the godly fathers mercy towards their children, even to a thousand generations [Exodus 20:6] -- particularly in the words addressed to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.... The promise was given to Abraham and to his seed [Genesis 17:4-7f], but in such a way that his inheritance does not relate to all of his descendants.... [However,] the defection of some does not prevent the covenant from remaining firm....

"It was the will of the Lord that His covenant should be sealed as much in Ishmael and Esau as in Isaac and Jacob.... They were not altogether estranged from Him -- unless...one disregards the circumcision which was communicated to them.... The covenants belonged to them -- even though they did not believe [Romans 3:3].... Not all the children of Abraham are the children of God.... [Yet] the promise of salvation has been offered to them -- and confirmed by the symbol of circumcision.... However, many of them reject this adoption -- by their ingratitude....

"God's blessing therefore had no reference to Ishmael.... There is also a much clearer example in Jacob and Esau.... One is rejected, and the other chosen by the Lord.... By saying 'the children being not yet born neither having done anything'..., he [Paul] shows that God, in making the difference between them, could not have paid any regard to [their] works which did not yet exist....

"They were both the children of Adam, sinners by nature.... Esau deserved to be

³²¹ *West. Larg. Cat.* 167p.

³²² *West. Larg. Cat.* 167q.

³²³ *West. Larg. Cat.* 167tw.

³²⁴ Rom. 9:4-13.

³²⁵ *Comm.* on Rom. 9:5-12.

rejected. For he was by nature [or from conception] a child of wrath.... The Lord distinguishes between the sons of Isaac while they are still in their mother's womb.... God's will was to show to the younger son a peculiar favour" -- and indeed even before his circumcision!

Calvin concludes:³²⁶ "Granted that Jacob was elected for a worth to be obtained by future virtues -- to what end did Paul say that he was not yet born? ... So Esau, while as yet unpolluted by any [personally committed] crime, is hated.... Ishmael also was circumcised..., and yet we see that he was rejected. If the reason is asked, Paul assigns it. Romans 9:6.... Those only are accounted sons, who are born of the pure and legitimate seed of doctrine" -- before their circumcision!

Holy parental roots produce holy offshoots for holy baptism

Of course, those truly regenerate from conception onward, will inevitably later produce fruit to evidence this. Later lack of fruit indeed rebuts the presumption of regeneration before birth and baptism. Yet, until such later fruitlessness might result -- prenatal sanctification is certainly to be presumed. For a root-like faithful parent certainly sanctifies his or her branch-like offspring!

As Paul has insisted:³²⁷ "If the root be holy, so are the branches.... The branches...do not bear the root, but the root [the branches].... The branches...stand by faith.... [Yet] some of the branches [may later] be broken off...because of unbelief."

Comments Calvin:³²⁸ "Paul bids us look back upon Abraham and the patriarchs.... He concludes, therefore, that a hereditary holiness had passed from them to all their posterity.... Because a father is just, he does not immediately transfer his integrity to his son. But because the Lord sanctified Abraham to Himself on condition that his seed also be holy, and therefore bestowed holiness not only upon the person of Abraham but also upon his whole race -- Paul rightly argues from this that all the Jews have been sanctified in their father Abraham....

"Descendants have the same relationship to their parents from whom they spring, as the lump has to the first fruits, or the branches to the tree. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Jews are sanctified in their father.... We should never think of the rejection of the Jews -- without being struck with dread and terror. The one thing which caused their ruin, was their despising of the divine judgment.... They were not spared, though they were natural branches. What then will become of us, who are wild and alien branches -- if we become excessively insolent?"

Nevertheless, among the Old Testament Israelites, their uncircumcised baby girls were rightly regarded as children of God -- until such time as they might later prove to be unfruitful. So too were their uncircumcised baby boys (before their circumcision when eight days old). Indeed, because baptism has now replaced circumcision, each tiny child of a Christian parent should similarly be regarded as a child of God even before baptism -- until such time as he or she might later prove to be unfruitful.³²⁹

³²⁶ *Inst.* III:22:4,11 & IV:2:3.

³²⁷ Rom. 11:16-20.

³²⁸ *Comm.* on Rom. 11:16-21.

³²⁹ Rom. 11:16-22 *cf.* I Cor. 7:14 & Col. 2:11-13.

Explains Calvin:³³⁰ "Those who are born children of Abraham according to the flesh, are also to be regarded as God's spiritual children -- unless they cut themselves off by their own unfaithfulness. For the branches are holy by nature because they have been produced from a holy root -- until they are polluted by their own fault. Romans 11:16."

Calvin concludes³³¹ that even "the ungodliness of one of the parents, does not prevent the children from being born holy [First Corinthians 7:14].... So Paul argues in Romans 11:16 that all Abraham's descendants are holy -- because God had concluded a covenant of life with him. 'If the root is holy, so are the branches' -- he says.... The same covenant of salvation which had its beginning with the seed of Abraham, is extended to us. The children of believers are exempt from the common condition of mankind.... The Lord admits them to His Church, by His Word."

Thus too the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards* thrice quote Romans 11:16f. They do so, to show: that the Visible Church includes those who profess the true religion, together with their children³³²; that the children of believers are to be baptized;³³³ and that visible churches are made up of visible saints and their children.³³⁴

Paul also stated³³⁵ that "Jesus Christ became a minister of the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God -- unto the confirmation of the promises made to the fathers." The Calvinistic *Westminster Standards* cite this passage to prove that God instituted the sacraments to put a visible difference between church members and the rest of the world.³³⁶ They also quote it to show that the benefits of Christ's mediation are sealed to those who are within the covenant of grace.³³⁷

Christ sent Paul not to baptize but to preach the Gospel!

In Corinth, the Christians had become contentious -- and had formed factions claiming to follow, respectively: Paul, Apollos, and Peter *etc.* So Paul asks³³⁸ these squabblers: "Were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius -- lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name! I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Beside that, I don't know whether I baptized anyone else [in Corinth]. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel!"

Very clearly, these inspired words are not those of a baptismal regenerationist. Were baptismal regeneration true, Paul would have said precisely the opposite of what he did. He would then have said: Christ sent me precisely to baptize, for

³³⁰ *Comm.* on Acts 13:32-33.

³³¹ *Comm.* on I Cor. 7:14.

³³² *W.C.F.* 25:2c.

³³³ *W.L.C.* 166o.

³³⁴ *WFPCG* d.

³³⁵ Rom. 15:8.

³³⁶ *W.C.F.* 27:1d.

³³⁷ *W.L.C.* 162w.

³³⁸ I Cor. 1:11-17.

that alone regenerates! But then, Paul could never have said (as he indeed did): "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel!"

Calvin comments:³³⁹ "We enlist into the service -- of Him in Whose Name we are baptized. In this way, we are bound to Christ -- in Whose Name our baptism is consecrated.... The nature of baptism is like a bond of mutual contract. For as the Lord by that symbol receives us into His household and adds us to His people, so we put ourselves under the obligation of faithfulness to Him.... In dealing with baptism, God the Father...receives us by adoption into the fellowship of His sons."

Paul continues: "I thank God that I baptized none of you." Here Calvin comments: "Paul would have acted within his rights...if he had baptized a great many people. But he rejoices that it fell out differently.... A servant of the Lord has to rejoice that he has to refrain from a work otherwise good and valuable - to prevent it becoming a means of causing harm to them."

Paul continues: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." Here Calvin comments: "The gift of teaching [and preaching] belonged to a few; while many were allowed to baptize.... Many could be taught at one time; while baptism could only be administered to individuals one at a time. Paul, who excelled in the ability to teach, was pursuing the work which it seemed more necessary for him to do."

The Calvinistic *Westminster Standards* also cite this passage. According to the *Westminster Larger Catechism*,³⁴⁰ these words of Paul imply that we should improve our baptism. This is to be done especially by being humbled because of our sinful defilement and our walking contrary to the grace of our baptism and our engagement to serve the Lord alone.

Paul planted, Apollos watered, but only God gave the increase

Paul next went on to tell the faction-ridden Corinthian Christians:³⁴¹ "Who then is Paul, and who Apollos - but ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I [Paul] have planted; Apollos watered; but God gave the increase!"

Here Paul seems to be saying that it was by and large only after he himself had planted faith in their hearts, that Apollos came along and watered them -- by baptizing them! However, this could only mean that the Corinthian Christians already had the seed of faith implanted into them -- through the prior work of preachers like Paul -- before that germinating seed was later watered, when Apollos subsequently baptized them!³⁴²

Calvin here explains³⁴³ that "doctrine and exhortation...is indicated by Paul, when he says: 'Neither is he who plants, anything; neither he who waters; but God Who keeps on giving the increase' [is everything]! First Corinthians 3:7. In like

³³⁹ *Comm.* on I Cor. 1:12-17.

³⁴⁰ *W.L.C.* 167r, citing I Cor. 1:11-13.

³⁴¹ I Cor. 3:5-6.

³⁴² See too I Cor. 1:12-17 above, and compare I Cor. 4:1-6 (later below).

³⁴³ *Inst.* II:5:4.

manner..., it is the proper work of God to circumcise the heart..., to renew souls so as to give efficacy to doctrine."

The above text is cited also by the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards*.³⁴⁴ There, it is regarded as authority for the proposition that "the sacraments become effectual means [not of justification but] of salvation [alias preservation], not by any power in themselves...but only by the working of the Holy Ghost."

Justified and sanctified and washed in the Name of Jesus

Some of the Corinthian Christians had formerly committed very serious sins. Yet now they had been redeemed. As Paul remarked:³⁴⁵ "But you got washed; but you were sanctified; but you were justified -- in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God!"

Here, it should be noted that the verbs "washed" and "sanctified" and "justified" are all co-ordinated -- by the thrice-repeated word "but." All these verbs are aorists -- and thus refer to the same contemporaneous and completed experience (albeit with ongoing consequences). All the verbs are either middle or passive -- implying that it is not "you" but "God" Who was the active One.

Indeed, it is precisely the saintly "Spirit of our God" Who here "sanctified" and contemporaneously "justified" and "washed" these Christians. Consequently, it is "by the **Spirit**" that they were truly "washed" -- and not by baptismal water (which is not even mentioned in this verse). Only obliquely -- as the altogether unstated sign and seal and symbol of all these benefits -- could baptism possibly be connected to these words "washed" and "sanctified" and "justified."

Calvin comments:³⁴⁶ "Paul uses three expressions to convey the one idea.... These three phrases all refer therefore to the same thing.... His point is, that once they have been justified, they must not bring themselves into a new state.... Having been sanctified, they must not make themselves unclean again. Having been washed, they must not sully themselves with fresh filth...."

"The metaphor is washing, for the blood of Christ is thought of as water.... Sanctification has to do with regeneration.... The blood of Christ is the cause of our cleansing.... But Christ Himself, with all His blessings, is communicated to us by the Spirit. For we receive Christ by faith; and it is by faith that His benefits are applied to us. The Author of faith, is the Spirit!"

Calvin explains further:³⁴⁷ "So long as we are without Christ..., nothing which He suffered...is of the least benefit to us.... He must become ours.... We obtain this, by faith.... The testimony of the Spirit...is engraven on our hearts by way of seal -- and thus seals the cleansing and sacrifice of Christ.... Paul, speaking of cleansing and purification, says, 'But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.' First Corinthians 6:11.... The Holy Spirit is the Bond by Which Christ effectually binds us to Himself."

³⁴⁴ *W.L.C.* 161s, comp. *W.S.C.* 91v.

³⁴⁵ I Cor. 6:11 (*Alla apelousasthe, alla heegiastheete, alla edikaiootheete en too-i- Onomati tou Kuriou Ieesou Christou kai en too-i- Pneumati tou Theou heemoon*).

³⁴⁶ *Comm.* on I Cor. 6:11.

³⁴⁷ *Inst.* III:1:1.

Calvin concludes:³⁴⁸ "Paul declares that we are not purged and washed from our impurities by the blood of Christ until the Spirit accomplishes that cleansing in us. First Corinthians 6:11. Peter, intending to say the same thing, declares that the sanctification of the Spirit avails 'unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' First Peter 1:2."

Believing parents generate children that are holy

Paul goes on to discuss holy matrimony with the Corinthian Christians. He tells them that, to avoid fornication alias illicit sexual activity, every man should have his own wife -- and *vice-versa*. He calls sexual intercourse within marriage a *charisma* alias a charismatic gift, and he urges married persons not to withdraw themselves sexually from one another for long -- without mutual consent.

Paul insists that a Christian brother (e.g. one who came to faith only after his marriage to an unbeliever) should not withdraw himself even from such a wife -- nor *vice-versa*. For, even within even such a marriage, the God-given faith of the believing marriage partner 'sanctifies' the other partner in respect of the sex act and its possible consequences. Thus, the believing parent is God's means of making holy any child that may be conceived as a result of that intercourse. For that potential parent's faith so sanctifies or overshadows the lack of faith in his or her unbelieving spouse -- that the resultant children are not unclean, but holy!

At the singular and miraculous conception of the sinless Jesus, the Holy Spirit uniquely overshadowed Mary. This rendered her blessed, specifically as regards her immaculate conceiving of our sinless Saviour. Consequently, her first-born child - her Saviour, the holy Jesus -- was altogether sinless. Luke 1:34-38 and 1:46-50. *Mutatis mutandis*, at the normal conception of an ordinary covenant child, the God-given faith of an imperfect yet sanctified husband overshadows even an unbelieving wife -- and *vice-versa*.

To be sure, all descendants of the fallen Adam and Eve (with the sole exception of the God-man Jesus) -- because of the transmission to them of Adam's original sin at their very conception -- were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. Job 14:1-4f and Psalm 51:5. This is why even Christian children are sinners, and tend to commit sin and to keep on committing it. Yet, in spite of that, Christian children of Christian parents are also to be regarded as washed in the blood of Jesus and hence cleansed and holy -- even from their conception onward. Romans 11:16 and First Corinthians 7:14.

For the God-given faith of an imperfect yet sanctified parent certainly overshadows even the faithlessness of an unbelieving spouse -- especially during the marital sexual intercourse which sometimes results in the conception of children. Such children are therefore covenant children. For children of at least one faithful parent -- though certainly not sinless! -- are not faithless and unclean, but holy like the faithful parent. Such children not merely have a potential to become clean or holy at a later stage. They are already cleansed and therefore holy -- even from their very conception onward!

As Paul explains:³⁴⁹ "The woman who has a husband who does not believe, yet who is

³⁴⁸ *Inst.* III:14:6.

³⁴⁹ I Cor. 7:14,19.

pleased to go on dwelling with her - let her not leave him! For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the [believing] wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the [believing] husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean. But now, they are holy.... Circumcision is nothing; and uncircumcision is nothing -- but the keeping of the Commandments of God" [such as the Seventh Commandment here] is everything!

No way should such children of a believing parent ever be regarded as unholy children who -- long after their infant baptisms -- will hopefully some day become holy. No! These children are holy already -- from conception onward. This implies, of course, that such children qualify for holy baptism -- as soon as they have been born. Yet they are already holy before baptism. For "circumcision is nothing." Likewise, also baptism is nothing -- as regards making anyone holy!

Covenant children, already holy -- are entitled to receive holy baptism -- as soon after their birth as is convenient. Genesis 17:12f and Colossians 2:11f. Because holy before baptism - it is clear that it cannot be baptism itself which makes them holy! Yet it is not just before their infant baptism that these children are already holy. For they are holy also before their birth. Indeed, they are holy even from their very conception onward. Their later baptism simply confirms that they were -- and are -- already holy!

Calvin: a holy parent produces holy infants

Paul, Calvin comments,³⁵⁰ "is speaking here not about the contracting of marriage -- but about maintaining those which have already been entered into." Naturally, believers are not to get intimately involved with unbelievers -- nor to marry them. Yet if after two unbelievers marry one another, one of them becomes a Christian -- that believer is then to maintain the marriage, for as long as the unbelieving spouse is willing to do so.

Continues Calvin: "A believer can [then] live with an unbeliever, with a clear conscience. For, as far as sexual intercourse and ordinary everyday relations [within marriage] are concerned, the unbeliever is sanctified -- so that he or she does not contaminate the believer with his or her [the unbeliever's] uncleanness.

"In the meantime, this sanctification is of no personal benefit to the unbelieving partner..... The believer is not contaminated by intercourse with him or her, and the marriage itself is not profaned." Neither are the resultant children profane -- but holy!

"A question arises from that. If the faith of a Christian husband or wife sanctifies a marriage, it follows that all the marriages of unbelievers are unclean.... [Yet] it would be naïve to infer from this, that marriage in their case is in the same class as fornication! Because, no matter how unclean it is to them, it [marriage as such] is nevertheless pure in itself -- seeing that it has been ordained by God....

"'Else were your children unclean.' This is an argument based on the effect. 'If your marriage was unclean -- then the children born of it would be unclean. But they are holy! Therefore, your marriage also is holy' [even when a believer's own spouse is not a believer]. Therefore, just as the ungodliness of one of the

³⁵⁰ *Comm.* on I Cor. 7:14-19.

parents does not prevent the children from being born holy -- so, it does not stand in the way of the marriage itself being undefiled....

"The children of believers are set apart from others, by a certain privilege -- so that they [the former] are regarded as holy in the Church.... The fact that the apostle ascribes a special privilege to the children of believers here, has its source in the blessing of the covenant -- by the intervention of which the curse of nature is destroyed.... Those who were by nature unclean -- are consecrated to God by His grace....

"So Paul argues in Romans 11:16 that all Abraham's descendants are holy, because God had concluded a covenant of life with him. 'If the root is holy, so are the branches' -- he says. And God calls all who are descended from Israel -- His sons....

"The same covenant of salvation which had its beginning with the seed of Abraham, is extended to us.... The children of believers are made exempt from the common condition of mankind -- in order to be set apart for the Lord.... Why should we keep them back from the sign [of the covenant]? If the Lord admits them [the infant children of believers] to His Church by His Word -- why should we deny them the sign? ... 'Circumcision is nothing'.... Baptism has taken the place of the legal symbol, so that [now] it is sufficient if we are circumcised by the Spirit of Christ!"

The Calvinistic *Westminster Standards* repeatedly cite this important passage First Corinthians 7:14. The *Westminster Confession* quotes it to prove that "the Visible Church...consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children."³⁵¹ It also refers to it, to demonstrate that "the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized."³⁵²

The passage is also cited in the *Westminster Larger Catechism* -- to prove that "infants descending from parents, either both or but one of them professing faith in Christ and obedience to him, are...within the covenant and to be baptized."³⁵³ Indeed, it again refers to the passage -- in order to show that "baptism is to be administered but once, with water, to be a sign and seal of our regeneration and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants."³⁵⁴

All the Israelitic fathers were baptized by the cloud

Paul soon goes on to remind those same Corinthian Christians -- together with their tiny infants! -- "that all our fathers were under the cloud.... They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud."³⁵⁵ That is to say, the faithful Israelites -- including their covenant children and even their babes-in-arms -- were all baptized, by the cloud, during their exodus from Egypt.

Calvin comments here:³⁵⁶ "Paul says, first of all, that there is no point of

³⁵¹ *W.C.F.* 25:2c.

³⁵² *W.C.F.* 28:4m.

³⁵³ *W.L.C.* 166o.

³⁵⁴ *W.L.C.* 177s.

³⁵⁵ I Cor. 10:1-2.

³⁵⁶ *Comm.* on I Cor. 10:1-2.

difference between the Israelites and us... The Church of God was in their midst, as in ours today. They had the same sacraments [in substance], to be testimonies to them of the grace of God.... 'They were all under the cloud'.... They had [in substance] been furnished with the same signs of the grace of God. For the sacraments are tokens by which the Church of God is discerned.

"Paul deals...with baptism, and he teaches that the cloud which protected the Israelites...was indeed like baptism... Anyone who will give proper attention to these things, will find nothing absurd in what Paul says. More than that, he will see both in spiritual substance and visible form -- the closest agreement between the baptism of the Jews and ours."

Significantly, the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession* quotes this very passage First Corinthians 10:1-2f. It does so, to prove that the sacraments of the Old were "for substance the same" as those of the New Testament.³⁵⁷

All the Christians had been baptized and drenched

Shortly thereafter, Paul further tells those same Corinthian Christians -- together with their tiny infants! -- that "by one Spirit we have all been baptized into one body.... We have all been drenched into one Spirit."³⁵⁸

Calvin³⁵⁹ here comments:³⁶⁰ "Proof of this, is provided by the effect of baptism. Paul says: 'By baptism we are ingrafted into the body of Christ -- so that we are bound together, joined each to the other as members, and live the one life. Therefore he who wants to remain in the Church of Christ, must necessarily devote himself to this fellowship'.... The baptism of believers...is efficacious through the grace of the Spirit....

"Baptism is...a symbol.... Believers actually do receive the reality with the sacrament.... Baptism is an ingrafting [of one already deemed to be a believer] into the body of Christ [alias the Visible Church]. However, so that no one might suppose that this is effected by the outward symbol -- Paul adds that it is the work of the Holy Spirit."

Calvin further explains³⁶¹ what Paul means when "he says...'by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body.' First Corinthians 12:13." Paul, maintains Calvin, linked it to "communion with Christ in the sacraments.... As when he says 'As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.' Galatians 3:27....

³⁵⁷ *W.C.F.* 27:51.

³⁵⁸ I Cor. 12:13 (yKai gar en heni Pneumati heemeis pantes eis hen sooma ^e^b^a^p^t^i^s^t^h^e^m^e^n^... , kai ^p^a^n^t^e^s [eis] hen Pneuma ^e^p^o^s^t^i^s^t^h^e^m^e^n). To us, and to many others, it certainly seems that *epostitheemen* is here clearly *co-ordinate* to its antecedent *ebaptitheemen*. Consequently, the having "been baptized" would then be identical to the having "been drenched" or "watered." See the same word *epotisen* or "watered" in I Cor. 3:6, as cited with obvious reference to water baptism in the Calvinistic *W.L.C.* 161s. See too our own article *What Does First Corinthians 12:13 Really Teach?* (Brisbane, 1989). Also see our next n. 359 below.

³⁵⁹ See our n. 358 above. Calvin himself is "not certain"; but "rather" inclines to a different "opinion" about this. He has nevertheless very fairly drawn attention also to the other view (our own), that "here he [Paul] is speaking about baptism" rather than about the Lord's Supper. See Calvin's

Comm. on I Cor. 12:13.

³⁶⁰ *Comm.* on I Cor. 12:13.

³⁶¹ *Inst.* IV:14:7; 15:15 & 16:22.

"Baptism...is a sign of our confession.... We have entered into the [Visible] Church of God, so that with one consent of faith and love -- we may live in concord with all believers. This last was Paul's meaning.... First Corinthians 12:13....

"Paul comprehends the whole Church...when he says that...by baptism we are ingrafted into the body of Christ. First Corinthians 12:13. We infer that infants, whom He enumerates among His members, are to be baptized -- in order that they may not be dissevered from His body!"

This important text -- First Corinthians 12:13 -- is cited no less than ten times in the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards*! In the *Westminster Confession*, it is quoted to show: that the true religion is professed by baptism; that the efficacy of the sacrament depends upon the work of the Spirit; and that it is intended for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the Visible Church.³⁶²

In the *Westminster Larger Catechism* the same text is cited to prove that the Visible Church is made up of those who profess the true religion, and of their children. It further demonstrates that Christ's Spirit alone gives power to the sacrament. It is also cited: to spur Christians unto love and communion one with another; to show that the parties baptized are thereby solemnly admitted into the Visible Church; and to remind them that they have all been baptized by the same Spirit into one body.³⁶³

In the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, the same text is cited to refer to the working of the Spirit in those who by faith receive the sacraments.³⁶⁴ Indeed, in the *Westminster Form of Presbyterial Church Government* -- it is further quoted to prove that "there is one general Church Visible held forth in the New Testament."³⁶⁵

Even 'baptism for the dead' undermines baptismal regeneration

A little later, Paul assures the doubters among the Corinthian Christians that the dead shall yet be resurrected. After all, their own baptism still kept on testifying to them that the man Jesus Christ had indeed been resurrected -- and that the same thing would one day happen to them too.³⁶⁶ In fact, even the Mormon-like 'baptism for the dead' then being practised by certain heretics -- heterodox as it indeed was! -- nevertheless rightly testified that the dead will indeed be raised.

Consequently, Paul assures³⁶⁷ the weak Christians in Corinth: "If the dead do not rise, neither was Christ raised up.... But now, Christ has risen from the dead.... In Christ, all shall be made alive.... Otherwise -- what should those do, who

³⁶² *W.C.F.* 25:2b & 27:3h & 28:1b.

³⁶³ *W.L.C.* 62w, 161s, 162a, 165l, 167pqy.

³⁶⁴ *W.S.C.* 91w.

³⁶⁵ *WFPCG* a.

³⁶⁶ 6:3-5 and Col. 2:12f & 3:1-4f.

³⁶⁷ I Cor. 15:16,20,22,29,30. The last two verses should be read together. Thus: *Epei, ti poieesousin hoi baptizomenoi huper toon nekroon; ei holoos nekroi ouk egeirontai? Ti kai ^b^a^p^t^i^z^o^n^t^a^i huper toon nekroon? Ti kai heemeis kinduneuomen pasan hooran?* Here, Paul clearly distinguishes the constantly rebaptizing heretics ("they") from the once-and-for-all baptized orthodox ("we").

keep on getting themselves baptized for the dead: if the dead are not raised at all? Then, why do they keep on being baptized -- for the dead? Indeed, why do we keep on running risks -- every hour?"

This passage is cited by the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards*³⁶⁸ -- to prove that baptism guarantees man's future resurrection. Calvin himself here comments:³⁶⁹ "Is it likely that the apostle would adduce as an argument -- a sacrilege by which baptism was corrupted and turned into a completely magical abuse?"

Be that as it may, there was also another quite different yet very important situation even within the Christian Church herself. That abuse appeared especially as she degenerated, in the Late Patristic Age.

Explains Calvin: "In the early days of the Church, when people who were still unbaptized beginners in the faith had fallen ill and if they were clearly in imminent danger of death -- they were [sometimes] in the habit of asking for baptism." Sadly, continues Calvin, "superstitions afterwards infiltrated into this practice also!"

This is why, adds Calvin, the Later Church Fathers rightly "inveigh against those who were postponing their baptism until death -- so that once they had been 'purified' of all their sins, they might 'come' to the judgment of God! This is indeed a stupid error -- which sprang partly from great ignorance, and partly from hypocrisy."

No circumcisonal nor baptismal regeneration in Galatians

Paul also writes to the Galatian Christians. Among other things, he told them he had rightly felt no compulsion to circumcise the Gentile Christian Titus.³⁷⁰

As Calvin comments,³⁷¹ Paul here brought to the Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem "a man who had not been circumcised. Yet they did not hesitate to acknowledge him as a brother.... Circumcision, being an indifferent thing, could be omitted."

Mutatis mutandis, so too could baptism -- as far as being in Christ is concerned. Hence, neither Paul nor the Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem ever equated circumcision (or baptism) with regeneration. Consequently, neither did Calvin!

Calvin hence concludes:³⁷² "Nothing can induce him [Paul] to circumcise Titus.... Galatians 2:3.... What he had in view in firmly resisting the circumcision of Titus, he himself testifies.... 'Because of false brethren brought in unawares, who came in secretly to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus -- in order that they might bring us into bondage. To them, we did not for one hour subject ourselves -- so that the truth of the Gospel might continue'.... Galatians 2:2-5."

Paul next explains to the Galatian Christians that even Abraham had been justified

³⁶⁸ *W.L.C.* 165k.

³⁶⁹ *Comm.* on I Cor. 15:29.

³⁷⁰ Gal. 2:3.

³⁷¹ *Comm.* on Gal. 2:3.

³⁷² *Inst.* III:19:12.

through faith.³⁷³ This had occurred before his circumcision³⁷⁴ -- just as Abraham's Christian descendants had themselves been justified through faith before receiving their baptism which replaced circumcision.

As Paul reminds those Galatian Christians (both infant adult):³⁷⁵ "You are all the children of God -- by faith in Christ Jesus.... Many of you were baptized into Christ. You have put on Christ.... And if you are Christ's -- then you are indeed Abraham's seed!"

Clearly, the faith in Christ of "all" Christians -- is here said to precede the baptism of "many" of them. Such infants as have faith in Christ before their baptism, are already in Christ. Consequently, baptism itself does not regenerate them. Instead, it seals their prebaptismal status.

Calvin here comments:³⁷⁶ "They are the children of God. It would not be enough to say that we have passed out of our childhood -- unless it were added that we are freemen. For age does not change the state.... The fact of their being the children of God, proves their freedom. How? By faith in Christ! For to all who believe in Him, is given the privilege of being the sons of God. Therefore, it is at the same time brought to pass that we are set free by faith -- when we are adopted by means of it...."

"The argument that they have put on Christ because they have been baptized, seems weak. For baptism is far from being efficacious in all.... To be a child of Abraham is...being a member of Christ.... Faith is always joined, in relation to the promise."

Calvin concludes:³⁷⁷ "Our faith receives from baptism...its assuring us not only that we are ingrafted into...Christ, but so united to Christ Himself as to be partakers of all His blessings.... Hence, Paul proves us to be the sons of God from the fact that we put on Christ in baptism. Galatians 3:27.... Moses and the prophets reminded the people of the thing meant by circumcision -- which, however, [also] infants received. To the same effect, Paul says to the Galatians 'As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.' Galatians 3:27."

This verse is also repeatedly cited by the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards*. They do so to prove that baptism: is a seal of one's ingrafting into Christ and all other graces; solemnly admits into the Visible Church; encourages one to live by faith; and is a sign and seal of regeneration even to infants.³⁷⁸

Galatians warned against false 'circumcisional regeneration'

Paul goes on to warn the Galatian Christians against the *ex opere operato* heresy of the judaizing Hebrew Christian sectarians. They wanted to circumcise already-baptized Gentile Christians. However, to the latter, Paul writes: "If

³⁷³ Gal. 3:6.

³⁷⁴ Gen. 15:6 *cf.* 17:7-27.

³⁷⁵ Gal. 3:26-29.

³⁷⁶ *Comm.* on Gal. 3:26-29.

³⁷⁷ *Inst.* IV:15:6 & 16:21.

³⁷⁸ Gal. 3:27 (*W.C.F.* 28:1d and *W.L.C.* 162y, 165fj, 167v, & 177rs which states that "baptism is...a sign and seal of our regeneration...even to infants").

you get circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing!"³⁷⁹

Calvin here comments:³⁸⁰ "Do not our modern Papists thrust on us their own inventions, in the place of circumcision? ... Circumcision was only a temporary ordinance of God. After the coming of Christ, this sacrament ceased to be a divine institution -- because baptism had succeeded to its place.... To show more clearly how close are the doctrine of the Papists and that which Paul opposes, it must be noted that the sacraments -- received sincerely -- are not strictly the works of men but of God. In Baptism or the Lord's Supper, we do nothing. We simply come before God to receive His grace.

"Baptism, from our side, is a passive work (*respectu nostril est opus passivum*). We bring nothing to it, but faith - which has all things laid up in Christ. But what say the Papists? They invent the *opus operatum*, by which men merit the grace of God. What is this, but to extinguish utterly the truth of the sacrament? We retain Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because Christ wished them to be used perpetually. But we bitterly detest those ungodly absurdities [of the Papists] -- as we should do!"

So, "to" baptism -- Calvin insists -- "we bring...faith, which has all things laid up in Christ." Here, "all things" obviously include even regeneration. Consequently, after this pre-baptismal trust in the Saviour -- a pre-baptismal trust which is itself the fruit of a preceding regeneration -- later baptism itself can clearly not convey the regeneration already obtained!

Paul to the Ephesians: 'one faith' before 'one baptism'

Paul reminds also the Ephesian Christians -- that the Spirit Himself had called them unto baptism. He explained: "There is...one Spirit -- even as you have been called...; one Lord, one faith, one baptism."³⁸¹

Here, the very order seems significant. There is firstly, The Spirit Who had called them to become Christians. There is secondly, the faith which was then given to those who had been called. Then there is, thirdly, the baptism subsequently received by those already in receipt of the faith previously given.

In a sermon on Ephesians 4:1-5, Calvin writes:³⁸² "St Paul's intention here is not to separate baptism from the gospel, but he has rather added it as a visible mark.... If we (at the first acquaintance) do not understand the unity of faith..., by baptism...it is just as if God had printed the mark of adoption in our hearts -- to show that we are His!"

The Calvinistic *Westminster Larger Catechism* quotes this passage. First, it shows that Christ's sacrament of baptism signifies and seals to those "that are within the covenant of grace" -- the benefits of His mediation. Then, it states that the sacraments "oblige them...to testify -- and cherish their love and communion one with another. Ephesians 4:2-5."³⁸³

³⁷⁹ Gal. 5:2f.

³⁸⁰ *Comm.* on Gal. 5:2f.

³⁸¹ Eph. 4:4-5.

³⁸² *22nd Sermon on Ephesians*, in *John Calvin's Sermons on Ephesians*, finished being delivered 1559, ed. 1562, Banner of Truth, London, 1979 rep., p. 331.

³⁸³ *W.L.C.* 162a.

Soon after making his above-mentioned statement on baptism, Paul goes on to enjoin:³⁸⁴ "Husbands, keep on loving your wives even as Christ too loved the church and gave Himself on her behalf -- so that He might keep on sanctifying her, after having cleansed her with the washing of the water by the Word!"

Here, Paul reminds the Ephesians that Christ had loved His church first -- before she ever began to reciprocate. For at the outset, He gave Himself for her. Only later did the Church respond, and start loving Christ in return. Indeed, she does so precisely as a result of Christ's having cleansed her once and for all -- and also because, thereafter, Christ keeps on sanctifying her -- with the washing of the water, by the Word.

Romanists (and Lutherans) maintain that the Holy Spirit works pre-eminently through this water -- and that the water is precisely that of baptism. For they believe that justifying grace has been enclosed in the baptismal water -- right after the ministerial enunciation of the words of that institution.

Paul, however, here declares that Christ has cleansed us not by the water but by the Word. For instrumentally, it is "[^]b[^]y" the "[^]W[^]o[^]r[^]d" that Christ has cleansed us. Christ did so, Paul adds, not by -- but only "[^]w[^]i[^]t[^]h" -- the washing of the water. Indeed, even this "washing of [^]t[^]h[^]e water" is also quite distinct from baptismal water -- which is not even mentioned here.³⁸⁵

Calvin himself comments³⁸⁶ that the 'washing of the water' is "the outward symbol" which Paul now adds "to the inward and secret sanctification" which begins at the cleansing. Indeed, this 'washing of the water' is but "a visible confirmation of it [the cleansing]. As if he had said that a pledge of that sanctification is presented to us....

"Men in their perverted superstition make an idol out of the sacrament.... When

³⁸⁴ Eph. 5:25-26 (cf. too Eph. 4:4f); see too n. 385.

³⁸⁵ Eph. 5:25-26: "*Hoi andres, agapate tas gunaikas [heautoon], kathoos kai ho Christos eegapeesen teen ekkleesian kai Heauton paredooken huper autees, hina auteen hagiasee-i~ katharisas too-i~ loutroo-i~ tou hudatos en Rheemati.*" The temporally prior "having cleansed" (*katharisas*), as well as the chronologically subsequent "keep on sanctifying" (*hagiasee-i~*), here both occur specifically "[^]b[^]y the Word" ([^]e[^]n Rheemati).

The passage states that Christ, initially, "cleansed...by the Word"; and indeed did so only "through the washing of the water." It does *not* say He cleansed 'by the washing of the water which is the Word' (which would require something like '[^]e[^]n too-i~ loutroo-i~ tou hudatos too-i~ Rheemati '). Nor does it say that He cleansed 'by the washing of the water of the Word' (which would require something like '[^]e[^]n too-i~ loutroo-i~ tou hudatos tou Rheematos').

Still less does the passage speak of 'the washing of the water of baptism.' The "washing of the water" (*hudatos*), here seems to be but a material genitive. Significantly, "[^]e[^]n Rheemati" here means "[^]b[^]y the Word." As an instrumental dative, it is connected to the antecedent *hagiasee-i~*. It thus means: "sanctified by the Word." See Ps. 119:9; Jh. 15:3; 17:17.

The expression "by the Word" (*en Rheemati* without the definite article) is *not* connected to the arthrous phrase "of the water" (*hudatos*); because *en Rheemati* is anarthrous. Here as elsewhere, this *Rheema* means not a silent sacramentalism, but specifically "the spoken Word." See Mt. 26:75; Mk.9:32; Lk. 1:38; 2:15,29,50; 5:5; Acts 10:37; Rom. 1:8; 10:8,17; II Cor. 12:4; 13:1; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 1:3; 6:5; 11:3; 12:19.

In his *Reformed Dogmatics* (Kok, Kampen, 1930, IV:495), Bavinck thus quite rightly says that in Eph. 5:26 the words *en Rheemati* are not a closer determination of *loutroo-i~* or *hudatos*. For that would have required the definite article *too-i~* or *tou* before *en Rheemati*. Instead, the words *en Rheemati* belong with *hagiasee-i~*. Christ cleansed His congregation through the washing of the water, but *not* through the baptismal water. Indeed, He did so precisely when He cleansed her by the Word of the Gospel!

³⁸⁶ *Commentary on Ephesians* (5:26), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948.

Paul says that we are washed..., we must beware of transferring to the sign or to the minister what belongs to God alone -- that is, to imagine that the minister is the author of the washing, or that water cleanses the pollutions of the soul which only the blood of Christ can accomplish. In short, we must beware of giving any portion of our trust to the element" of water!

"The apostle does not say that it is the sign that cleanses, but declares that this is the work of God alone. It is God Who cleanses.... The praise for this must not be transferred to the sign, or even shared with the sign!"

Cleansing with the washing of the water, yet only by the Word

Elsewhere too³⁸⁷ Calvin emphasizes "the statement of Paul that 'Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, so that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word.' Ephesians 5:25-26.... He did not mean to intimate that our ablution and salvation are perfected by water, or that water possesses in itself the virtue of purifying.... Nor does he mean that it is the cause of salvation.... Paul connects together the Word of life and baptism of water. As if he had said: 'By the Gospel [alias the Good Word], the message of our ablution and sanctification is announced; by baptism, this message is sealed!"

Calvin now once again³⁸⁸ repudiates the doctrine of baptismal regeneration propounded by the Romanists. "They object that baptism is given for the remission of sins.... This strongly supports our view! For, seeing we are born sinners, we stand in need of forgiveness and pardon from the very womb." The latter means prenatally -- and hence prior to baptism! "Infants receive forgiveness of sins. Therefore [after being born], they are not to be deprived of the sign" of baptism!

Yet, continues Calvin, in a vain attempt to establish their error of baptismal regeneration -- the Romanists "adduce the passage from the Ephesians that Christ gave Himself for the Church 'so that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word.' Ephesians 5:26. Nothing could be quoted more appropriate than this -- to overthrow their error! It furnishes us with an easy proof. If, by baptism, Christ intends to attest the ablution by which He cleanses His Church -- it would not seem equitable to deny this attestation to infants who are justly deemed part of the Church, seeing they are called heirs of the heavenly kingdom!"

Calvin's Ephesian sermons insist baptism does not justify us

In a sermon on Ephesians 5:25-27, Calvin writes:³⁸⁹ "It is not without reason that St Paul here puts down baptism for us. Not that we are made clean by that.... When our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to be baptized in His Name -- did He mean to turn away our faith from His shed blood? Did He mean that baptism should take the place of His death and passion, to accomplish the work of our salvation? It is most certain that it was not so! For baptism is but an accessory and an appendage to the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. And if it [baptism] did not direct us there [to Christ] -- it would certainly be but a trifling ceremony....

³⁸⁷ *Inst.* IV:15:2.

³⁸⁸ *Ib.* IV:16:22.

³⁸⁹ *40th Serm. on Eph.* , in Calvin's *Serm. on Eph.* , pp. 578f.

"To use baptism well, and according to the institution of the Son of God -- we must not set our minds on the corruptible and transitory element. For what is the water? If it stands only one day -- it will become foul! And how then can it cleanse our souls for ever, and convey to us a purity that will continue after death? ... This power cannot be in the water. We must of necessity come to the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ! And indeed, the water also is the sign of His blood and of His Holy Spirit. Let us note, then, that our Lord Jesus washed us -- when He shed His blood by which we are cleansed....

"From this exposition, we may receive a very profitable general lesson -- namely, that the true and lawful use of the sacraments is to lead us directly to our Lord Jesus Christ. Otherwise, we simply make idols of them. In popery, baptism is like a charm -- because they think there is no salvation, except by the water.... It is a diabolical opinion that baptism is able of itself to save us....

"In baptism, we see the water -- but thereby we must be lifted up higher to the blood of the Son of God, assuring ourselves that it is not the water that makes us clean.... It is only a pledge of the washing that was obtained for us -- when our Lord Jesus was crucified for us.... Why are we not taught simply that in having recourse to our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall find in Him our washing and cleansing? It seems that this ought indeed to suffice us....

"If we had the minds of angels, we should no more need this outward baptism than the angels do. But since we are earthly and it is hard for us to approach to God and the secrets of His heavenly Kingdom, it is necessary for us to be helped in this way.... What we have to learn from this passage, is that the sacraments do not turn us away from the trust which we ought to put wholly in our Lord Jesus Christ....

"St Paul's speaking of baptism...is in order that we, considering the limits of our understanding, should apply to the confirming of our faith those means which are profitable for us... It is not without cause that St Paul joins together the Word and the washing of water.... Yet...he shows that it is too gross a folly for men to entwine themselves in that way in signs and ceremonies and visible sacraments and to rest in them -- whereas they should be led to God....

"St Paul...says particularly that we have our washing testified in baptism, under the figure of water. Yes -- but yet we must have an eye to the Word, he says. For if there were no teaching to show us that we find in our Lord Jesus Christ the things which are represented to us in baptism -- and that it is in His Person that we have the accomplishment and assurance of them -- baptism would certainly turn us away from God, and it would be better that it were abolished.... Therefore let us be very careful that we do not separate the sacraments from the Word, at any time....

"What use is a seal, when it is set to a mere piece of leather -- or to a bare parchment, paper, or cloth? It would surely be to no purpose -- for it ought to confirm and ratify some written document pertaining to a gift or something else. Thus it is with the sacraments, when they are not joined with the Word.... St Paul speaks of the Word that is full of instruction, and that edifies our faith.... We see how the papists are destitute of the power of the sacraments -- through their unbelief....

"The 'Word' that St Paul refers to here, is not a bare sound -- but a teaching that edifies our faith.... We receive the promise that is made to us in it and apply it to our use -- in order that in baptism the water may serve as a pledge of our spiritual washing."

Citing this statement in Ephesians 5:25f, the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession* insists that "the efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered. Yet notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered but really exhibited, and conferred by the Holy Ghost to such...as that grace belongeth unto...in His appointed time."³⁹⁰ Indeed, the *Westminster Larger Catechism* cites this same statement precisely to prove that baptism is a sign and seal of regeneration by Christ's Spirit.³⁹¹

Also the offspring of the Ephesian Christians were themselves "saints"

In the first chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul addresses the Ephesian Christians as "the saints" and "the faithful."³⁹² In the last chapter, he includes even their offspring as being among those faithful saints. For there, he states that also their "children" were already "in the Lord."³⁹³

There, Paul quotes³⁹⁴ the Fifth Commandment of God's Law of the Covenant. Then he immediately further enjoins:³⁹⁵ "You fathers, do not keep on irritating your children; but do keep on rearing them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!"

Here, there is no injunction for Christian fathers to transfer -- nor to 'transubstantiate' -- their own 'pagan' children into Christians, by baptizing them! Instead, Paul here enjoins 'Christian fathers to keep on rearing their own Christian children in -- yes, with-in -- the Lord's nurture!³⁹⁶

For such children are ^{^n^o^t} pagans who need to be brought ^{^i^t^o} the covenant. Instead, such children are themselves Christians -- needing only to be brought up ^{^i^t^o} the covenant ^w^i^t^h-^i^t^o which they were born; nay more, within which they were conceived.

What is needed, is the baptismal affirmation that these covenant infants were -- and are -- themselves Christians. What is not needed is the myth of baptismal transubstantiability of tiny pagans into little Romanists.

Still less do covenant infants deserve the baptismal deprivation to which antipaidobaptistic Anabaptists subject Christ's little lambs -- as if the latter were still unclean (and uncleanable). That is, as if they could not get cleansed at all -- until they begin to grow up and themselves develop an assumed ability to sin only when they reach the apocryphal 'age of accountability' (alleged to be around seven years old)!

³⁹⁰ *W.C.F.* 28:6r.

³⁹¹ *W.L.C.* 165h.

³⁹² Eph. 1:1 (*hagiois...kai pistois*).

³⁹³ Eph. 6:1 (*tekna...[en Kurioo~i~]* , om. **BD##G**, defg, it Mcion., Cl., Tert., Cyp.; ins. KAD#2#EKLP, all cursives <appy.>, most Versions, Orig., Bas., Chr., Euth., Thdrt., Dam., Ambrst., Jer.).

³⁹⁴ Eph. 6:1-3.

³⁹⁵ Eph. 6:4 (*mee parorgizete...alla ektrephete auta en paideia~i~...tou Kuriou*).

³⁹⁶ *Ib.*: "rear them ^{^i^t^o} the nurture...of the Lord" (*ektrephete auta ^e^t^o paideia~i~...Kupiou*). ^{^N^o^t} 'transport them ^{^i^t^o} the Lord's nurture' (which would require something like '*pherete auta ^e^i^s paideian Kupiou*')! Note this usage of the imperative *phere* in II Tim. 4:13.

Conversely, yet others might argue -- as did the Pelagians -- that infants are essentially clean without regeneration, even from their very conception onward. In that case, infants would not need the blood of Christ -- nor the baptism which depicts it -- until they themselves personally sin when tiny children. Yet the latter still implies the relevance of baptism for such tiny children -- if not even the baptism of babies!

Still others might agree (with Calvinism) that infants, though stained at their conception with the guilt and taint of Adam's original sin, need cleansing even in infancy. But then -- to withhold infant baptism from them, denies this great truth!

However, the children of believers in fact remain ⁱn or within the covenant -- from their conception till their birth, and beyond. Such children -- in the memorable words of the *Westminster Directory for the Publick Worship of God* -- "by baptism are solemnly received into the bosom of the Visible Church, distinguished from the world and them that are without." For "they are Christians and federally holy before baptism, and therefore are they baptized." Consequently, it is as "Christians" that such covenant infants are to be baptized. And it is still as Christians that, after baptism, those same covenant infants are to be raised and admonished!

Calvin himself here comments³⁹⁷ that "kind and liberal treatment -- keeps children in reverence for their parents, and increases the readiness and cheerfulness of their obedience.... Paul goes on to say 'let them be cherished kindly!' For the word *ektrephein* ['to rear'] unquestionably conveys the idea of gentleness and friendliness.... [He] adds 'in the discipline and correction of the Lord'.... Keep them ⁱn the discipline of the Lord, and correct them also when they go astray!"

Philippian Christians told: "We are the circumcision!"

Paul also writes to the Philippian Christians. He assures them:³⁹⁸ "We are the circumcision, we who keep on worshipping God in the Spirit.... I was circumcised the eighth day" *etc.*

Here Calvin comments:³⁹⁹ "We are the true seed of Abraham, and heirs of the testament which was confirmed by the sign of circumcision.... Here someone will ask whether truth excludes the sacraments. For the same thing might be said of baptism and the Lord's supper. I answer, that...circumcision gave way to baptism.... Believers have the true circumcision."

It is true that God alone knows the hearts of men, and especially of unborn covenant children. Yet, until the latter might later evidence gross waywardness -- they too should be treated as regenerate. For it is "believers" that "have the true circumcision" (thus Calvin). And such covenant infants -- previously entitled to receive circumcision -- were therefore to be regarded as tiny believers even before receiving that circumcision (and/or the baptism which has now replaced it).

³⁹⁷ *Comm.* on Eph. 6:4.

³⁹⁸ Phil. 3:3-5.

³⁹⁹ *Comm.* on Phil. 3:3-5.

Colossian Christians "circumcised" because baptized

Writing to the Colossians,⁴⁰⁰ Paul addresses them similarly to the way in which he writes to the Ephesians. For he calls also the Colossian Christians "saints and faithful brethren in Christ." Indeed, among that number, he included even "children."

Paul further declares⁴⁰¹ to the Colossians that also baptized Gentile Christians "had been circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, with the stripping off of the body of flesh, with the circumcision of Christ." For, he explains: "You have been funeralized together with Him in baptism -- in which you have also been raised up through the faith of the operation of God Who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He enlivened together with Him -- having forgiven you all trespasses."⁴⁰²

Clearly, this passage teaches that baptism has now replaced circumcision. Accordingly, it surely implies that infant baptism has therefore come in the place of infant circumcision. And it certainly presupposes the same Christian faith in tiny infants before their baptism -- as it does in their adult parents!

Calvin comments here⁴⁰³ as regards "spiritual circumcision...that we obtain this through baptism, so that it may be more clear that there is no practice of circumcision under the reign of Christ. For someone might otherwise object: 'Why do you abolish circumcision [in the flesh], on the pretext that its effect is in Christ? Was not Abraham also circumcised spiritually? And yet, this did not prevent the sign [of circumcision in the flesh] being added to the reality!'"

Calvin answers the above, by showing that "Paul anticipates such an objection -- by mentioning baptism. Christ, he says, accomplishes in us 'spiritual circumcision' -- not through means of that ancient sign [of circumcision in the flesh] which was in force under Moses, but by baptism. Baptism therefore is a sign of the thing exhibited which...was figured [or represented] by circumcision.... 'You were,' he says, 'dead in uncircumcision'.... But God has called you to Himself - from circumcision."

The Calvinistic *Westminster Confession*⁴⁰⁴ cites this passage Colossians 2:11-13 to prove that baptism is a seal of regeneration. It also quotes this passage to show that grace really is exhibited therein -- and conferred by the Holy Ghost to His elect in God's appointed time. The *Westminster Larger Catechism* quotes it to establish that children of believers are to be baptized. It also cites it to show that baptism is a seal of God's covenant -- and that we are to improve our own baptism life-long!⁴⁰⁵

Women should rear and keep covenant children in the faith

⁴⁰⁰ Col. 1:2 & 3:20; compare Eph. 1:1 & 6:1 and nn. 352-3.

⁴⁰¹ Col. 2:11-12.

⁴⁰² Col. 2:13.

⁴⁰³ Calvin's *Commentary on Colossians* (2:11-13), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948.

⁴⁰⁴ *W.C.F.* 28:1e & 6r.

⁴⁰⁵ *W.L.C.* 166o, 167p & 176o.

Writing to Timothy, Paul insists⁴⁰⁶ that woman shall continue to be happy⁴⁰⁷ or "keep on being 'saved' in child-rearing."⁴⁰⁸ Christian women are happy when educating or rearing children in the Christian faith. They *continue* to be happy thus -- provided the children⁴⁰⁹ themselves "remain⁴¹⁰ in faith...and holiness."⁴¹¹

Of course, it is not rearing children -- whether her own or those of other people -- which justifies a woman. Merely giving infants a Christian education -- very commendable though this undoubtedly is -- does not in itself remove an educator's own sins from before the face of a just and sin-hating God. Yet it certainly does 'save' the educator from a life of meaninglessness. Indeed, it makes the educator happy.

Thus, rearing and educating children indeed keeps a godly woman eminently contented -- provided she rears or educates those [Christian] children well. Reared in that way, they themselves are then to remain in the Christian nurture imparted to them by that godly woman. See again, Ephesians 6:1-4 above!⁴¹²

Calvin comments here⁴¹³ that "this passage is twisted to support justification by works, as the Papists do.... [However,] the Apostle is not dealing here with the cause of salvation. His words cannot and should not be used to infer the merit of works...."

"The apostle is dealing here not merely with bearing children, but with...bringing them up.... The Vulgate translates: 'in bearing children, if they continue in faith'.... This clause was usually taken to refer to the children."

Now Timothy's own mother had long been a "believing" (alias a 'faithful') Hebrew woman. Consequently, young Timothy had himself been reared from fetushood⁴¹⁴ as a long-time "disciple" of the Lord Jesus Christ -- even before his birth and his

⁴⁰⁶ I Tim. 1:12 & 2:15.

⁴⁰⁷ In I Tim. 2:15a, "continue to be happy" translates *sootheesetai*. Obviously, both in the context (2:15bcd & 3:11 *etc.*) as well as according to common sense, *sootheesetai* could not possibly here mean that childless ladies (and all young girls) cannot have their sins forgiven until and unless they themselves actually (re)produce children!

⁴⁰⁸ In I Tim. 2:15b, *teknogonia* must (in principle) mean not the (re)production of children but rather the rearing and the *training* of them. For compare 2:15cd's "if they" (namely the children taught by the woman) "remain in faith...and holiness." Compare too the young widow in 5:14, who is to "guide the house" alias to 'rule her home' -- teachingly! Also see Tit. 2:3-5.

⁴⁰⁹ In I Tim. 2:15c, *meinoosin* (plural) refers to the children implicit in 2:15b's *tekno-gonia*. It cannot mean the (singular) "woman" referred to in 2:14b and the "she" implicitly referred to in the (singular) *sootheesetai* at 2:14a. See too our text and notes at nn. 392-96 & 408 above.

⁴¹⁰ In I Tim. 2:15c, *meinoosin* means that the children *keep on remaining* "in faith and...holiness" (as stated in 2:15d).

⁴¹¹ In I Tim. 2:15d, the children being reared (in 2:15b) must even *previously* have been "*in faith...and holiness*" (as stated in 2:15d). Compare I Cor. 7:14 & Eph. 6:4b. These children being reared must *previously* have been "*in faith...and holiness*" (I Tim. 2:15bd), precisely in order to be able to "remain" in it (2:15c) through the 'saving' teaching of them by the godly child-rearing woman mentioned in 2:15a & 2:15b!

⁴¹² See our text at nn. 392-97 above.

⁴¹³ Calvin's *Commentary on First Timothy* (2:15), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948. Although Calvin himself then goes on questionably to apply "if they continue in faith" to the (singular) 'woman' rather than to the (plural) children implied in *teknologia* - his comment here is otherwise excellent.

⁴¹⁴ II Tim. 3:15's "from a child" (*apo brephous*) here seems to mean "from a fetus onward" (*cf.* Lk. 1:41-44). Compare I Tim. 2:15's "childbearing" (*teknogonia*). See too our text regarding II Tim. 3:14-15 at nn. 433f below.

yet later baptism/circumcision.⁴¹⁵

However, since then, the youthful Timothy had been ordained as a Minister of the Word -- and indeed also as Presbytery's Evangelist. So Paul strongly reminded Timothy: "Keep on being nourished up in the words of the faith...which you have kept on attaining [or following].... Don't let anybody keep on despising your youth!"⁴¹⁶

Now this implies that Timothy had already "been nourished" in "the faith" -- from a very early age. Indeed, this process of nourishing -- ever since then -- had continued without ceasing. Consequently, not only was the youthful Timothy still in the faith. He had also been nourished in that faith -- ever since he, when yet an infant, first imbibed his faithful mother's milk even before his baptism!

In his comment,⁴¹⁶ Calvin compellingly argues we need to "take the participle [*entrephomenos* alias 'keep on being nourished'] as a passive -- as confirming what he [Paul] has just said about Timothy's education. It is as if he [Paul] had said [to Timothy], 'Having rightly been instructed in the faith from your infancy, and having (so to speak) sucked in sound doctrine with your mother's milk, and having made till now continual progress in it -- take pains by a faithful ministry to prove that you are still the same!'

"This interpretation also brings out the root meaning of the verb [*entrephesthai* alias 'to be nourished up']. Faith means here the sum of Christian teaching.... The phrase 'which you have followed' indicates his perseverance."

The faith of Timothy and his mother and grandmother

Indeed, Paul knows that the Christian disciple Timothy had been reared not only by a believing mother -- but, almost simultaneously, also by a believing grandmother! This is why the apostle later encourages Timothy, when the latter had become a youth,⁴¹⁶ to keep on standing in the Christian faith in which he had been reared.

Writes Paul to the youthful Timothy:⁴¹⁷ "I thank God...when I keep on remembering⁴¹⁸ the unfeigned faith⁴¹⁹ in you.⁴²⁰ It has kept on dwelling⁴²¹ first⁴²² in your

⁴¹⁵ Acts 16:1-3. "Then came he [Paul] to Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple [*matheetees*] was there, named Timothy: the son of a certain woman who was a believing Jewess [*huios gunaikos Ioudaias pistees*].... Him [Timothy] would Paul have to go forth with him [Paul]; so he [Paul] took and circumcised him [Timothy], because of the Jews which were in those quarters. For they all knew that his [Timothy's] father was a Greek."

⁴¹⁶ I Tim. 1:3,18; 4:6,12-14; 6:11. The translation of I Tim. 4:6 in our own text above, thus renders the Greek "*entrephomenos tois logois tees pisteos kai tees kalees didaskalias hee-i~pareekoloutheekas*." I Tim. 4:12 has: "Let no man despise your youth"; *meedeis sou tees neoteetos kataphroneitoo*. See Calvin's *Comm.* on I Tim. 4:6 (and also his *Commentary on Second Timothy* (1:5), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948, as given below).

⁴¹⁷ II Tim. 1:3-5.

⁴¹⁸ II Tim. 1:5a. The *TR*, *P* & *D* all have *lambanoon*, "I keep on remembering."

⁴¹⁹ II Tim. 1:5b; "unfeigned faith," *anupokritou pisteos* (lit.: 'non-hypocritical trust').

⁴²⁰ II Tim. 1:5c; "in you" (*en soi*). Compare the same expression in II Tim. 1:5g. See n. 424 below.

⁴²¹ II Tim. 1:5d; "dwelt" (*enoo-i~keesen*, aorist with still continuing consequences).

⁴²² II Tim. 1:5e; "first" (*prooton*).

grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice; and, I have been persuaded,⁴²³ in you too."⁴²⁴

The apostle knows that the "faith" he sees in Timothy, had "first" dwelt in that youth's grandmother and mother too. Indeed, that faith had kept on dwelling in both of the latter.⁴²⁵ Now, Paul was persuaded that this same kind of faith had kept on dwelling in Timothy too.⁴²⁶ For the faith which Paul was now seeing in Timothy, had also previously been dwelling in the latter -- even before he had become a youth.

Indeed, Paul here seems to be saying he is sure⁴²⁷ that a continuing faith in Christ keeps on dwelling in Timothy too -- precisely because it first did so in his grandmother, and in his mother who had reared him from fetushood onward.⁴²⁸ For Paul had become 'surely' and perfectly "persuaded" that an ongoing unfeigned faith in Christ had long been dwelling even in Timothy.⁴²⁹ Therefore Paul now tells that youth: "I keep on remembering the unfeigned faith which has kept on dwelling...in you."⁴³⁰

Calvin comments⁴³¹ that Paul here "commends both Timothy's faith, and that of his grandmother and mother.... When anyone has made a good and brave beginning, his progress should give him courage to advance further.... Examples from his own family circle are stronger enticements to him to press on.

"Thus, he [Paul] sets before him [Timothy] -- his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, by whom he was reared in his infancy in such a way that he could suck in godliness along with his mother's milk.... Timothy from his boyhood...was so imbued with reverence and faith in God -- that it was a living seed which later increased and grew!"

In a sermon,⁴³² Calvin explains what it means "when Saint Paul says to Timothy that 'he knows the faith [of his mother and grandmother] also dwells in him.' He is not speaking of that faith which he then had presently; nor of that faith which he had after he was called to the Gospel; but of the faith which he had even from his childhood..., wherein he had been instructed even from the beginning."

Timothy knew the Sacred Scriptures from his own fetushood onward

Paul soon goes on⁴³³ to urge Timothy: "You must continue [or 'keep on remaining']"⁴³⁴

⁴²³ II Tim. 1:5f; "I am persuaded" (perfectly "persuaded" or *pepeismai*, perfect passive).

⁴²⁴ II Tim. 1:5g; "in you too" (*kai en soi*). Compare n. 420.

⁴²⁵ II Tim. 1:5cd; compare nn. 420 & 421 above.

⁴²⁶ II Tim. 1:5g; compare n. 424 above.

⁴²⁷ Compare n. 423 above.

⁴²⁸ II Tim. 1:5 & 3:14f, and see n. 414 above.

⁴²⁹ II Tim. 1:5cg; compare nn. 420 & 424 above.

⁴³⁰ II Tim. 1:5a-g (*lambanoon teen en soi anupokritou pisteos...eno~i-keesen...en soi*)!

⁴³¹ *Comm.* on II Tim. 1:5.

⁴³² *2nd Sermon on Second Timothy (1:5)*, in *John Calvin's Sermons on Timothy and Titus*, 1579 ed., Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1983 rep., p. 684.

⁴³³ II Tim. 3:14-15.

in the things you have learned⁴³⁵ and you have been assured of,⁴³⁶ knowing from whom⁴³⁷ you have learned⁴³⁸ them. Even from fetushood,⁴³⁹ you have known the Holy Scriptures⁴⁴⁰ which are able to keep on giving you wisdom⁴⁴¹ unto salvation through faith in Christ⁴⁴² [Jesus]...so that the man of God may keep on remaining equipped,⁴⁴³ having been furnished thoroughly⁴⁴⁴ unto every good work."

Here it seems that the youth Timothy had long ago learned and been assured about certain things. He received that learning and assurance especially through his mother, and probably even prenatally from his own fetushood onward. These things seem to have focussed on the salvation in Christ revealed in the Holy Scriptures. This, Timothy seems to have become acquainted with -- especially from his Bible-believing mother -- even before his birth.

Indeed, it further seems that Timothy already knew and was assured of that salvation in Christ -- through his own God-given faith even when still a fetus. Paul now urges the youth Timothy -- to keep on remaining in those things which he had been taught even when a tiny infant and thereafter.

Timothy was now a mature "man of God." Yet, in order to be able to perform every good work, he still needed to keep on remaining perfectly equipped. This perfect equipping followed - precisely after Timothy had already thoroughly been furnished especially by His Bible-believing mother even from his own covenantal fetushood onward.

We have previously noted some of Calvin's comments on Timothy, applicable to the time when the latter was still a baby. Calvin had already commented⁴⁴⁵ on the "faith

⁴³⁴ II Tim. 3:14a. To be able to "keep on remaining" or *mene* (present continuous imperative) in things about which one has already learned and been assured of, implies not only long-standing knowledge but also conscious 'assurance' or *fiducia* about those things!

⁴³⁵ II Tim. 3:14b; "you have learned" (*emathes*, strong aorist, with continuing consequences).

⁴³⁶ II Tim. 3:14c; "you have been assured" (*epistothees*, aorist passive, with continuing consequences).

⁴³⁷ II Tim. 3:14d; "from whom." In *TR & D* and other manuscripts, "whom" is singular (*tinou*) and implies Timothy's mother. See II Tim. 1:5's "your mother"; and especially 3:15a's "from a fetus" in n. 439 below.

⁴³⁸ II Tim. 3:14e; "you have learned" (*emathes*, strong aorist, with continuing consequences). See too at n. 435 above.

⁴³⁹ II Tim. 3:15a. "From a child" (*apo brephous*) here seems to mean "from a fetus onward" (*cf.* Lk. 1:41-44). See too at II Tim. 1:5 above. Also compare I Tim. 2:15's "childbearing" (*teknogonia*). Elsewhere, *brephos* is further used to refer to a tiny child from between less than a week to about three months old (Lk. 2:12-21; 18:15; Acts 7:19-20; I Pet. 2:2).

⁴⁴⁰ II Tim. 3:15b; "you have known the Holy Scriptures" (*[ta] hiera grammata oidas*, where *oidas* is a strong aorist with continuing consequences. See too at nn. 435 & 436 above.

⁴⁴¹ II Tim. 3:15c; "able to keep on giving you wisdom" (*ta dunamena se sophisai*, where *sophisai* is an aorist infinitive with continuing consequences).

⁴⁴² II Tim. 3:15d; "salvation through faith in Christ" (*sooteerian dia pisteos teen en Christoo-i-*), implying that Timothy already had such "faith in Christ" even when still a fetus. See II Tim. 3:15a in n. 439 *etc.* above.

⁴⁴³ II Tim. 3:17a; "so that the man of God may keep on remaining equipped" (*hina artios ee-i- ho tou Theou anthropos*, where *artios* denotes an already completed action).

⁴⁴⁴ II Tim. 3:17b; "having been furnished thoroughly" (*exeertismenos*, perfect passive, again denoting an already completed action).

⁴⁴⁵ Calvin's *Theme on Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy* (in his *Comm. on 2nd Tim.*).

in which he [Timothy] had been reared from childhood." Calvin now further comments⁴⁴⁶ that Timothy had also "been accustomed from his boyhood to read the Scriptures." This "was a powerful urge to fidelity. For this long-established habit can make a man much better prepared to meet any kind of deception.

"It was a wise care that in ancient times was taken, to make sure that those who were intended for the Ministry of the Word should from their boyhood be instructed in the solid doctrine of godliness.... Thus, if anyone has acquired from his youth [alias his infancy] a knowledge of the Scriptures, he should count it a special blessing of God."

Does Paul in Titus 3:5 teach baptismal regeneration?

Paul writes not only to Timothy, but also to his other helper Titus. The Apostle reminds the latter that "God our Saviour...saved us not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy." This God did, "through a washing of regeneration and a renewing of the Holy Spirit Whom He poured out upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ."⁴⁴⁷

Paul here uses not the word 'justified' -- but the word "saved." Yet even the latter word "saved" -- being past tense -- still refers to a completed act (with ongoing consequences).⁴⁴⁸ Only subsequently,⁴⁴⁹ however, does Paul go on to say that Christians had been "justified" by the Saviour -- namely "justified by His grace."⁴⁵⁰ Significantly, Paul does not say: 'justified by baptism.'

Furthermore, Paul does not state that even this being "saved" -- was accomplished by a work of righteousness which we had done (such as by getting ourselves baptized). Instead, he clearly specifies that God "saved us not by works of righteousness which we have done -- but according to His mercy."⁴⁵¹

Christians have been saved not 'by' but only "through a washing of regeneration -- and a renewing of the Holy Spirit." Furthermore, they have been saved not through "a washing" alone -- but through "a washing" and "a renewing."⁴⁵² Indeed, the latter "renewing" can be accomplished even in the unborn. This proves it is accomplishable even in those incapable of receiving baptism!⁴⁵³

The passage does not speak of baptism. Yet it does speak of "a washing of regeneration and a renewing of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁵⁴ The question now arises: What does this mean?

⁴⁴⁶ *Comm.* on II Tim. 3:14-15.

⁴⁴⁷ Tit. 3:4-6.

⁴⁴⁸ Tit. 3:5, *esoosen*, aorist with continuing consequences.

⁴⁴⁹ Tit. 3:7, *dikaioothentes*, aorist passive participle with continuing consequences.

⁴⁵⁰ Tit. 3:7, *dikaioothentes tee-i~ Ekeinou chariti*.

⁴⁵¹ Tit. 3:5, *ouk ex ergoon toon en dikaiosunee~i~ hoon [or ha] epoiesamen heemeis, alla kata to Autou heleos*.

⁴⁵² Note that the word "and" here *co-ordinates* "regeneration" and "renewing." Consequently, no one is "saved" by "a washing" alone: unless also receiving "a renewing of the Spirit."

⁴⁵³ See: Jer. 1:5; Lk. 1:15f; 1:41-44; I Tim. 2:15; II Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15.

⁴⁵⁴ Tit. 3:5 (*dia loutrou palingenesias kai anakainooseos Pneumatos Hagiou*). Note that *loutrou* and *palingenesias* and *anakainooseos* are all anarthrous here.

What Titus 3:5 means (and what it does not mean)

Firstly, because these expressions are co-ordinate, there can be no "washing" without "renewing" -- nor *vice-versa*. Accordingly, even if this "washing" were to be taken to refer to baptism -- which is not stated! -- it still could not imply baptismal regeneration *ex opere operato*. For that "washing" latter would still need, in addition, the corresponding "renewing" of the Spirit.

Secondly, the passage does *not* speak of '*the washing*' -- but only of "*a washing*."⁴⁵⁵ Moreover, it speaks merely of "*a washing*" as such -- and *not* of '*a washing*' [with which] to wash.⁴⁵⁶ Yet the latter is what the *ex opere operato* theory of baptismal regeneration would seem to require.⁴⁵⁷

Thirdly, the passage states that God "saved us *through* a washing of regeneration" *etc.* It does *not* state that God 'saved us *by* the washing [or even *by a washing*] of regeneration' *etc.* Hence, '*through* a washing' -- and not '*by a washing*' nor '*by the washing*' nor even '*by washing*.' Yet the theory of baptismal regenerationism would surely seem to require one of the latter phrases.

Fourthly, the phrase does not mean we were saved either by or through '*the regeneration of washing*.' For here, the word "*palingenesias*" alias "regeneration" is not a possessive genitive. It may well be an objective genitive -- the regeneration having washing as its result. But it can hardly be a subjective genitive -- the regeneration consisting of washing.⁴⁶⁰

Fifthly, The whole context of Titus 3:5 is one of faith.⁴⁶¹ The very word "baptism" does not occur there. Nor is there here any *ex opere operato*, and still less any losable justification. To the contrary, Paul here immediately goes on to make an important declaration. For he next says that, as a result of the washing of

⁴⁵⁵ Tit. 3:5; not '*the washing*' but only "*a washing*".

⁴⁵⁶ Tit. 3:5; "*a washing*" but not '*the washing*.'

⁴⁵⁷ Thus Hendriksen in his *Commentary on the Epistles to Timothy and Titus*, Banner of Truth, London, 1964 (on Tit. 3:5).

⁴⁵⁸ Tit. 3:5; "*through*" (*dia*).

⁴⁵⁹ Tit. 3:5; not '*by*' (*hupo*).

⁴⁶⁰ Abraham Kuyper, in his *Sacraments* p. 135, asks the following questions and makes the following comment about *palingenesia* (or "regeneration") in Tit. 3:5. "Is the *palingenesia* here an objective or a subjective genitive? Does regeneration have "washing" as its result, or the other way round? Even assuming the washing does refer to baptism -- is that baptism then administered because we have been regenerated, or is the baptism that which has brought about the regeneration? Rome teaches the latter. Now if under the word *palingenesias* the personal regenerating deed of God is to be understood, the meaning is: God saved you through baptism, which was the sealing of the regeneration which had taken place in you previously. But if *palingenesia* is not just the first act of regeneration yet instead identical with *anakainosis tou Pneumatos Hagiou*, so that the latter is the actual *epexegetis* of *palingenesias*, then the *palingenesia* follows baptism. In neither case is this what Romanism teaches!"

To the above, Charles Hodge adds in his *Systematic Theology* (Nelson, London, 1874, III, pp. 596f) that *palingenesias* is the simple genitive of apposition -- '*the washing which is regeneration*.' The '*renewing of the Holy Ghost*' which immediately follows must be exegetical and not accessory. It cannot express something new not already expressed by the *palingenesia*. For it could hardly mean '*we are saved by the washing of regeneration and also by the renewing of the Holy Ghost*.' Yet even if it did, it would only mean -- against John 3:5! -- that regeneration is an unfinished process.

⁴⁶¹ Thus G.C. Berkouwer: *The Sacraments*, Kok, Kampen, 1954, pp. 161f.

regeneration and the renewing of the Spirit, "we have been justified through His grace -- so as to become heirs according to the confidence of everlasting life." Titus 3:7.

Sixthly, even if the "regeneration" be equated with the "renewing of the Holy Spirit" -- it could no way establish baptismal regenerationism. For then, it could only mean that the "regeneration" would then follow -- and therefore could not occur during -- that washing.⁴⁶²

Seventhly, the passage does not say *^b^a^p^t^i^s^m* justified us totally; nor that solely baptism *^j^u^s^t^i^f^i^e^d* us; nor even that God justified us *^t^h^r^o^u^g^h* baptism. Instead, it says that "*H^e* saved us" - and that it is "He" Who saved us, and not baptism which "saved" us. It says He saved us *kata* or 'according to' His mercy - and only *dia* or 'through' a washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" *etc.* Consequently, baptism is not administered in order to regenerate people. It is dispensed because they are presumed to have been regenerated already - and indeed regenerated specifically by God's pre-baptismal mercy!

Eighthly, the passage does not mention baptism. Yet even if it did, it would still not teach that regeneration is inseparably connected with baptism.⁴⁶³ Even that, indeed, would still not imply baptismal regeneration. For even if the passage were to refer to baptism, it would then imply -- as indeed claimed by Calvinism -- that the sign of baptism is precisely the seal of regeneration.

Lastly, we should note that the following verse -- Titus 3:6 -- declares we have been saved "through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (*dia Ieesou Christou tou Sooteeros heemoon*). The word "through" or *dia* is here no isolated causality! It points to the one and only cause of salvation -- faith in Christ's blood. Hence, the very next verse (Titus 3:7) does not go on to suggest that we have been justified through baptism. Instead, it catagorically insists that we have been justified "by His grace."

Calvin's comment on this "washing of regeneration"

Calvin here comments⁴⁶⁴ that Christians have been justified indeed. However, this is 'not by works' which they performed, but by what God did. For 'He saved us.' Here, Paul "speaks of faith -- and teaches that we have already received salvation.... We are engrafted into Christ by faith....

"Salvation is not obtained in the external symbol of water.... Baptism seals to us the salvation obtained[!] by Christ.... Ungodly men are neither washed nor renewed by baptism.... Here, Paul is addressing believers.... If we do not wish to make holy baptism null and void, we must prove its power by newness of life.... We are not washed by water, but by His power.

"As Ezekiel says, 'And I will sprinkle clean water upon you -- even My Spirit.' Ezekiel 36:25-27.... It is God's Spirit Who regenerates us and makes us new creatures. But -- since His grace is invisible and hidden -- a visible symbol

⁴⁶² Significantly, Gravemeijer, Honig, Kuyper and others all tend to see the "regeneration" in Tit. 3:5 as life-long. Further, they see it as secured not so much by the "washing" but rather by the "renewing of the Spirit" mentioned thereafter.

⁴⁶³ Thus Hodge's *op. cit.*, III, pp. 596f.

⁴⁶⁴ *Comm.* on Tit. 3:5-6.

of it is given to us in baptism."

Paul here refers to the cleansing and the washing by God's regenerating and renewing Spirit "which He poured out upon us." Titus 3:5-6. Calvin here comments: "In the Greek, the relative 'which' agrees with both 'washing' and 'Spirit'.... When he [Paul] speaks of the washing poured out upon us, he refers less to the sign than to the thing signified in which the reality of the sign consists.... The Spirit of regeneration is given only to those who are members of Christ."

Calvin further explains⁴⁶⁵ "the statement of Paul" about God our Saviour. Paul, according to Calvin, here means that it is "'not by works of righteousness which we have done - but according to His mercy [that] He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.'" Titus 3:5.... For Paul connects together the Word of life, and baptism of water. As if he had said: 'by the Gospel the message of our ablution and sanctification is announced; by baptism, this message is sealed.'

In a sermon, Calvin further states⁴⁶⁶ that Paul, "after the word 'washing' -- here adds that it is 'of regeneration' [or new birth] 'and the renewment of the Holy Ghost.'" No doubt but that in this place Saint Paul had an eye to baptism.... God is not contented only to witness to us by His gospel that we be washed and made clean in the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. But He has also given us a figure thereof, so that when we be baptized - it is as much as if God shewed to the eye that we of ourselves bring nothing to Him but utter filthiness, and that it is His office to make us clean. That, then, is the thing which baptism shows us....

"Howbeit, He shows us with all this, that the said washing does not consist in that visible water.... The water, then, does not have that power. Yet notwithstanding, because of our infirmity we must begin at the water, so that we may be lifted up higher. Yes, I say, we must begin at the water -- but we must not tarry at it. For the sign that is offered to our eyes, serves to lead us to the Holy Ghost. To the end we may know -- how it is from Him that the power of baptism proceeds. And therefore, although He use such a similitude..., yet He shows that our trust must not be tied to that [baptism]. But we must father the whole effect and perfection of baptism -- upon the Holy Ghost!"

The Calvinistic *Westminster Standards*⁴⁶⁷ repeatedly refer to this passage Titus 3:5-7. The *Westminster Confession* quotes it, to show that baptism really exhibits grace to God's elect. Indeed, it further argues from this passage that baptism is but once to be administered to any person. Yet it also cites it to prove that baptism is but a sign and seal of regeneration.

Indeed, the *Westminster Larger Catechism* quotes this same statement precisely to proof that baptism is a sign and seal of regeneration by Christ's Spirit. It also cites the passage to prove that baptism is a sign and seal of our regeneration and our ingrafting into Christ.

God sprinkled our hearts before baptism washed our bodies

The inspired writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, after referring to "repentance

⁴⁶⁵ Inst. IV:15:2.

⁴⁶⁶ 16th Sermon on Titus (3:5f), in Calvin's Serm. on Tim. & Titus, p. 1226.

⁴⁶⁷ W.C.F. 28:6r,7g,1e; W.L.C. 165h & 177r.

from dead works," went on to refer also to the "doctrine of baptisms."⁴⁶⁸ Here Calvin comments:⁴⁶⁹ "The children of believers were baptized as infants, since they were adopted from the womb."

Not just baptism but also subsequent 'confirmation' cannot and does not regenerate. Explains Calvin of the latter: "This single passage is abundant evidence that the origin of this rite came from the apostles. Afterwards, it was turned into a superstition" by the Romanists. "They have invented the fiction that it is a sacrament by which the spirit of regeneration is conferred. By this invention, they have mutilated baptism" -- which itself seals faith and regeneration deemed present prebaptismally.

The writer of this Epistle to the Hebrews does not then go on to suggest that the water has cleansed us. Instead, he soon goes on to declare that it is the sprinkling with the blood of Christ which has cleansed us.⁴⁷⁰ Thus, our heart has been cleansed internally -- by that sprinkling. Only thereafter was our body externally washed -- with pure water, symbolically.⁴⁷¹

For the holy writer declares: "Let us keep on drawing near, with a true heart!" Indeed, let us do so "in full assurance of faith -- having had the hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and having had the body washed with pure water."⁴⁷¹

It should not be thought the above in any way excludes infant faith, prior to infant baptism! For the holy writer never suggests: 'without baptism it is impossible to please the Lord,' Yet he indeed goes on to declare that "without faith it is impossible to please...[the Triune] God"⁴⁷² -- in Whose Name we are then to be baptized.

Here, Calvin explains⁴⁷³ that the mediaeval baptismal regenerationists alias "the Schoolmen..., under cover of the Spirit and grace..., hide the divine mercy.... They quote from an apostle: 'he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.'" Hebrews 11:6b.

"But," adds Calvin, "they observe not what the method of seeking is" -- namely by faith alone! Indeed, this is a faith which should precede baptism. It also precedes any human act which might merit a reward. "For without faith it is impossible to please God. For he who comes to God, must believe that He is -- and that He is the Rewarder of those who diligently keep on seeking Him." Hebrews 11:6a and 11:6b.

Calvin then further explains:⁴⁷⁴ "There is no sanctification without union with Christ.... Everything which man thinks, designs and performs -- before he is reconciled to God by faith -- is cursed. It is not only of no avail for justification, but it merits damnation! And why do we talk of this, as if it were doubtful -- when it has already been proved by the testimony of an apostle that 'without faith it is impossible to please God?'" Hebrews 11:6!

⁴⁶⁸ Heb. 6:1-2.

⁴⁶⁹ J. Calvin's *Commentary on Hebrews* (6:2), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948.

⁴⁷⁰ Heb. 9:14.

⁴⁷¹ Heb. 10:22.

⁴⁷² Heb. 11:6.

⁴⁷³ *Inst.* III:11:15.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ib.* III:14:4.

Noah was justified by faith before being baptized in the flood

The holy writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews then immediately goes on to add: "By faith Noah, having been warned by God about things not yet seen..., prepared an ark to save his household. By which [ark] he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." This, of course, was long before the waters of the flood -- of which latter, New Testament baptism is the antitype or fulfilment.⁴⁷⁵

Here, the Bible itself states that even before the waters of the flood -- 'Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.' Genesis 6:8. Calvin comments⁴⁷⁶ that "here Noah is declared to have been acceptable to God.... Whence, however, did he attain this integrity -- but from the pre-venting [or pre-ceding] grace of God? The commencement, therefore, of this favour -- was gratuitous mercy! Afterwards the Lord -- having once embraced him -- retained him..., lest he should perish with the rest of the world."

Further:⁴⁷⁷ "The Lord assigns as His reason for preserving Noah, that He knew him to be righteous" -- **before** the waters of the flood! "Only one man was left, who then cultivated righteousness -- for whose sake He [God] was propitious to his whole family.... He adopts them to Himself in Christ, and justifies them by His mere mercy.... He also regenerates them by His Spirit to new life and righteousness.... The waters, after they had covered the earth for a time, would again cease." Yet Noah was justified by God alone -- and before he encountered the waters of the flood!

The Bible declares: "By faith Noah...prepared an ark...and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." Here Calvin comments:⁴⁷⁸ "It was a wonderful example of virtue that, when the whole world was indulging its pleasures without care or restraint and promising itself impunity, Noah alone had regard to the vengeance of God.... In the midst of the ruin of the whole world, he had no doubt that he would be saved.... The apostle [Hebrews 11:7] gives the credit for this outstanding virtue, to faith.... In all ages, men were never approved by God...except by faith....

"Noah...was warned of things to come but not yet visible.... He built the ark.... By building it, he condemned the world.... He was the heir of righteousness which is by faith.... Noah paid...respect to the Word of God.... Therefore the faith which he had in the Word of God, pre-pared him for obedience to God -- proof of which he afterwards gave by building the ark....

"The work of building the ark was long and laborious, [and] was hindered by the daily scoffings of unbelievers... They insulted the holy man on every side.... The world was condemned by the ark.... Why was the ark the custodian of the safety of a single family -- except in virtue of the fact that the wrath of God spared a righteous man from perishing with the ungodly? If he had not survived, the condemnation of the world would not have been so clear....

⁴⁷⁵ Heb. 11:7 (and Gen. 6:8-9 & 7:1-4 *cf.* I Pet. 3:20-21 & II Pet. 2:5).

⁴⁷⁶ *Comm. on Gen.* (6:8f) *cf.* I Pet. 3:20-21.

⁴⁷⁷ *Comm. on Gen.* (7:1-4) *cf.* n. 476 above.

⁴⁷⁸ *Comm. on Heb.* (11:7) *cf.* n. 477 above.

"The last thing which the apostle says [Hebrews 11:7], we must notice in the person of Noah. Moses [Genesis 6:9] says that he was a just man.... Faith was the cause and root of this justice.... The apostle says [Hebrews 11:7] that this is shown by the facts.... No one ever really gives himself in obedience to God, unless he relies on the promises of His paternal loving-kindness -- and has faith that his life will be accepted by Him.... The life of no man, however holy -- when it is measured by the standard of God -- can please Him without pardon. Justice must therefore of necessity rest on faith." This means faith before the flood as a picture of baptism -- and thus, faith before baptism too!

The holy writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews soon thereafter states: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents." It then gives the reason for this action: "because they saw he was a proper child."⁴⁷⁹ By faith!

James & Peter: regeneration by God's will and not by baptism

James⁴⁸⁰ reminds his Christian brethren that it was not by baptism but by God's own will that "He has begotten us by the Word of truth, so that we become a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. Therefore my beloved brethren," James goes on, "keep on laying aside all filthiness, and...keep on receiving the [already] engrafted Word -- which continues being able to keep on saving [or preserving] your souls!"

Calvin here comments:⁴⁸¹ "The Scripture shows that we have been adopted by God gratuitously, before we were born.... James expresses here...that we obtain the right of adoption, because God also calls us gratuitously. Ephesians 1:4-5. Farther, we hence learn that it is the peculiar office of God spiritually to regenerate us.... The word 'begotten' means that we become new men.... God begets us even by the 'Word of truth' -- so that we may know that we cannot enter the Kingdom of God by any other door" (such as by baptism)!

Peter the apostle describes believers as "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus."⁴⁸² This expression might just possibly contain an allusion to water-baptism, as the sign and seal which points to sprinkling with Christ's blood. But in that case, the text could only mean that people are first elected by the Father and then sanctified or made holy by the Spirit -- before being moved to obey the command to be sprinkled in water-baptism!

Calvin explains:⁴⁸³ "Peter says that believers are 'elect...through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' First Peter 1:2. By these words, he reminds us that if the shedding of His sacred blood is not to be in vain, our souls must be washed in it by the secret cleansing of the Holy Spirit.... The Holy Spirit is the bond by Whom Christ effectually binds us to Himself."

⁴⁷⁹ Heb. 11:23.

⁴⁸⁰ Jas. 1:1-2,18-21 cf. 2:1. Jas. 1:18-21 has "bouleetheis [^]a[^]p[^]e[^]k[^]u[^]e[^]s[^]e[^]n heemas Logoo-i-aleetheias, eis to einai heemas aparcheen tina toon Autou ktismatoon. Iste, adelphoi mou agapeetoi..., [^]a[^]p[^]o[^]t[^]h[^]e[^]m[^]e[^]n[^]o[^]i pasan rhuparian, kai...dexasthe ton [^]e[^]m[^]p[^]h[^]u[^]t[^]o[^]n Logon ton [^]d[^]u[^]n[^]a[^]m[^]e[^]n[^]o[^]n [^]s[^]o[^]o[^]s[^]a[^]i tas psuchas humoon!"

⁴⁸¹ J. Calvin's *Commentary on James* (1:18), ed. of the Calvin Translation Society.

⁴⁸² I Pet. 1:2.

⁴⁸³ *Inst.* III:1:1.

Calvin continues:⁴⁸⁴ "The sanctification of the Spirit avails 'unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' First Peter 1:2.... The sprinkling of the blood of Christ by the Spirit gives us purification..., regenerated by the Spirit of God.... Not being regenerated, proves...want of faith.... It is only by faith that these blessings are obtained."

Calvin concludes:⁴⁸⁵ "Peter, in saying that the believers to whom he writes are elect 'according to the foreknowledge of God' (First Peter 1:2), properly expresses that secret predestination by which God has sealed those whom He has been pleased to adopt as sons." Hence: first we are adopted as God's sons. Only thereafter are we sealed -- by the sacraments [first] of baptism and [later] the Lord's supper!

Born again of incorruptible seed as newborn babies

Peter next continues⁴⁸⁶ to assure Christians of their eternal security -- by faith in Christ. It is by Him, Peter assures them, that "you keep on believing in God..., so that your faith and hope might continue being in God.... [For you] have been born again, not by corruptible seed but by incorruptible, by the Word of God which keeps on living and remaining [in you], for ever.... This is the Word which by the Gospel has been preached to you. Therefore while you continue putting off all malice..., as newborn babies you are to keep on desiring the sincere milk of the Word so that you may keep on growing in Him" -- or: thereby!

Here Calvin comments⁴⁸⁷ that Peter is speaking of those "who believe. For the manifestation of Christ does not refer to all indiscriminately, but belongs only to those whom He illumines by the Gospel. We must notice the words 'who through Him [Christ] are believers in God' -- by which he [Peter] expresses concisely what faith is.... Faith is our victory against the world. First John 5:4....

"Since they are new men and 'born again' of God, it behoves them to shape their lives worthily of God and of their spiritual rebirth. This seems to be connected with a verse in the next chapter [First Peter 2:2] about seeking the milk of the Word -- so that their way of living might correspond with their birth [alias their generation].... Peter's object is to teach us that we cannot be Christians without regeneration.... Man is...nothing but an earthly...and empty creature -- unless [and until] he is born again....

"The Word is not to be sought anywhere else [such as in baptism], but in the Gospel preached to us.... We do not know the power of eternal life, except by faith.... It is God alone Who regenerates us.... For that purpose, He employs the ministry of men. On this account, Paul glories that the Corinthians had been spiritually begotten by him. First Corinthians 4:15.... Those who water [or baptize], are

⁴⁸⁴ *Inst.* III:14:6-7.

⁴⁸⁵ *Inst.* III:22:6.

⁴⁸⁶ I Pet. 1:21 to 2:2. Here the TR (and various ancient manuscripts) reads: "di' ^p^i^s^t^e^u^o^n^t^a^s ^h^u^m^a^s tous di' Autou ^p^i^s^t^o^u^s eis Theon..., hooste ^t^e^e^n ^p^i^s^t^i^n ^h^u^m^o^o^n ^k^a^i ^e^l^p^i^d^a ^e^i^n^a^i ^e^i^s ^T^h^e^o^n... [Humas gar] ^a^n^a^g^e^g^e^n^e^m^e^n^o^i ouk ek sporas phthartees alla apthartou, ^d^i^a ^L^o^g^o^u ^Z^o^o^n^t^o^s ^T^h^e^o^u ^m^e^n^o^n^t^o^s [en humin], eis ton aioona... Touto de estin to Rheema ^t^o ^e^v^a^n^g^e^l^i^s^t^h^e^n eis humas. Apothemenoi oun pasan kakian..., hoos ^a^r^t^i^g^e^n^e^e^t^a ^b^r^e^p^h^e^e ^t^o ^l^o^g^i^k^o^n ^a^d^o^l^o^n ^g^a^l^a ^e^p^i^p^o^t^h^e^e^s^a^t^e, hina en Autoo-i~ ^a^u^x^e^e^t^h^e^e^t^e!"

⁴⁸⁷ J. Calvin's *Commentary on First Peter* (1:20-25), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948.

nothing!"⁴⁸⁸

Calvin continues:⁴⁸⁹ "As we have been born again - he [Peter] requires from us a life like that of infants.... He enumerates...the sincere milk of the Word.... What pertains to infancy, is honest simplicity.... Milk is called that 'way of living' which is suitable to innocent nature and simple infancy....

"In case anyone thinks that he [Peter] is commending an infancy that is void of understanding but full of fatuity, he meets this objection.... Milk here is...but a mode of living which has the savour of the new birth.... Peter recommends milk.... For he wishes those nourished by it, to grow."

Calvin explains further⁴⁹⁰ "that none of the elect is called away from the present life, without being previously sanctified and regenerated by the Spirit of God.... The Spirit acknowledges no sanctification save that from incorruptible seed -- that is, the Word of God.... Peter's words...comprehend...believers who had been taught by the preaching of the Gospel. First Peter 1:23.

"We confess, indeed, that the Word of the Lord in the only seed of spiritual regeneration. But we deny the inference that therefore the power of God cannot regenerate infants. This is as possible and easy for Him, as it is wondrous and incomprehensible to us. It were dangerous to deny that the Lord is able to furnish them with the knowledge of Himself -- in any way He pleases!"

Baptism does not save by washing away carnal filth

Peter goes on to say⁴⁹¹ that Christ, Who had suffered and died, had been quickened [or resurrected] "by the Spirit, in Whom He had gone and preached to the imprisoned spirits who previously disobeyed when once the patience of God had waited in the days of Noah during the preparation of the ark, into which few (that is eight) persons were safely brought -- safely brought **through** -- through **water**! And baptism the fulfilment of this, now keeps on saving us -- not [as] the laying off of the filth of the flesh, but [as] an answer of a good conscience toward God - by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

Here, it should be noted that Noah was justified not by the floodwater but by God alone -- and indeed quite before the advent of that water!⁴⁹² Through the waters of the flood itself, Noah was not justified (or 'edikaioothee '). Through those waters, he and his family were merely saved or preserved (*di-esootheesan*).⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁸ I Cor. 1:14-17; 3:5-8; 4:1-6; 10:2; 12:13.

⁴⁸⁹ *Comm.* on I Pet. 2:1-2.

⁴⁹⁰ *Inst.* IV:16:18.

⁴⁹¹ I Pet. 3:18-21. "*Christos hapax peri hamartioon heemoon epathen... , thanatootheis men sarki zooopoeitheis de too-i~ Pneumati#. en Hoo-i~ kai tois en phulakee-i~ pneumasin poreutheis ekeeruxen apeitheesasin pote hote apexedecheto hee tou Theou makrothumia en heemeraiis Nooe kataskeuazomenees kibootou [keibootou], eis heen oligai [oligoil] (tout' estin oktoo) psuchai ^d^i^e^s^o^o^t^h^e^s^a^n, di' ^h^u^d^a^t^o^s. Ho kai heemas [humas] ^a^n^t^i^t^u^p^o^n nun ^s^o^o^z^e^i ^b^a^p^t^i^s^m^a, ^o^u ^s^a^r^k^o^s ^a^p^o^t^h^e^s^i^s ^r^h^u^p^o^u alla ^s^u^n^e^i^d^e^s^e^o^o^s ^a^g^a^t^h^e^n ^e^p^e^r^o^o^t^e^m^a ^e^i^s ^T^h^e^o^n, di' anastaseoos Ieesou Christou."*

⁴⁹² Gen. 6:8f & 7:1f; *cf.* Heb. 11:6-7 (above) & II Pet. 2:5 (below).

⁴⁹³ I Pet. 3:20 *cf.* Gen. 7:7 (*cf.* 7:14), LXX *dia to hudoor*. Compare too F. Josephus, who tells us in his *Antiquities* I:3:2 (ed. Whiston, Routledge, London, 1890) that "this ark had firm walls and a roof, and was braced with cross-beams so that it could not any way be drowned or overborne by the violence of the water; and thus was Noah, with his family, preserved (*diasoozetai*)."

Indeed, they were saved precisely *^f^r^o^m* those waters! Furthermore, Noah and his family were not even preserved or 'saved' *^b^y* the water. They were saved *^t^h^r^o^u^g^h*, or preserved -- only *^t^h^r^o^u^g^h* the water: *^d^i-esootheesan ^d^i' hudatos*.

Moreover, the eight members of Noah's family were not saved or preserved by water -- but only by God. It is true that God saved them through water. But He thereby also saved them from that water! For God saved or preserved them not by means of the water. He saved them *^b^y* means of -- and indeed *^w^i^t^h^i^n* -- the *^a^r^k*. Indeed, He did so -- after He had brought them "into" it (or "*eis heen [kibootou]*"). In fact, He then kept on saving or preserving them there. This was while they, inside that ark, first started to pass through -- and then kept on passing *^t^h^r^o^u^g^h* -- the water." *^D^i' hudatos!*

Baptism -- the corresponding fulfilment of that floodwater -- now keeps on saving us (*humas...soozei baptisma*). Here, Peter's passage does not say that baptism -- the fulfilment of the water of the flood -- *^h^a^s* saved us. That would require something like *esoose heemas*). Instead, it says that baptism now keeps on saving us -- "*heemas...nun soozei*."

Peter's passage tells us both how, and how not, we are saved. It clearly declares: not because baptism itself washed off our carnal filth -- whether outwardly, or inwardly. Instead, it says that baptism saves us -- precisely as an 'answer' (alias a 'profession of faith' or a 'pledge') of a good conscience toward God. Thus Oecumenius, Cocceius, Vossius, Grotius and Witsius.⁴⁹⁴

Notice that this baptismal answer is given with a *^g^o^o^d* conscience. This means a conscience which, though defiled at conception, was nevertheless subsequently cleansed -- and, indeed, cleansed *^b^e^f^o^r^e* baptism. The baptismal answer is not completed at the termination of the administration of the baptism itself (*ex opere operato*). For the baptismal answer is to continue, life-long. See Romans 6:1-5f. Indeed, the baptismal answer itself receives its efficacy solely "by the resurrection of Christ" -- Who alone has justified us, already!

So our baptism keeps on saving us. It does so not by washing away filth. But it does so as our own ongoing answer to God. It is a post-catechetical answer to the questions of an enquiry. For baptism is not just a re-quest (for virtue). It is, moreover, a con-quest (over sin). It is a triumphant declaration; a

⁴⁹⁴ Oecumenius explains this word "answer" (*eperooteema*) in I Pet. 3:21, as an 'earnest' or a 'pledge'; as in Byzantine Greek law. "Its use for the questions put to the candidate in the baptismal service ('Dost thou renounce...?') is probably due to St Peter here." Thus *Exp. Gr. Test.* V:69 at I Pet. 3:21. See too Isa. 65:1 & Rom. 10:20, where the cognate verb *eperootoosi* means a seeking after God or a request addressed to God.

Commenting on its usage in I Pet. 3:20, Witsius (*Economy of the Covenants*, Tegg, London, 1837, I pp. 429f) declares the following of this word *eperooteema* (meaning 'answer' or 'demand'): "Oecumenius explains it by *arrhaboon*, *enechuron* and *apodeixis*; earnest, pledge and demonstration.

"This the celebrated Cocceius has adopted, who generally insists that *eperooteema* denotes an argument, a ground of asking God as a Father, and a sign and seal which we may use with boldness, and when we draw near to God may beg His saving graces without fear."

Vossius even better observes "that *eperooteema* does not simply signify an interrogation, but that which is answered to another interrogation. For the persons to be baptized ask of God whether He will be their God; and God, on the other hand, asks and restipulates whether they themselves will maintain a good conscience toward Him.

"Grotius's annotations here are very learned. He observes that *eperooteema* is a law term...generally used...for a stipulation.... By a metonymy..., an answer or promise is comprehended under the name stipulation. Hence..., *eperootomai*, I promise, I engage.... Translate *eperootan*: 'to answer'; as Erasmus has done."

glorious profession of faith; an answer of a good conscience toward God -- because of the justifying resurrection of Christ for all of us Christians as a whole (and for each one of us personally)!

Peter's passage does not here say that baptism regenerates. It says neither that baptism has regenerated us, nor that it keeps on regenerating us. It says that "baptism, now, keeps on saving" us. It does not say that baptism justifies. It says neither that baptism has justified us, nor that it keeps on justifying us. Instead, it 'saves' us: that is, it keeps on bringing us health and happiness. And it does so because, regardless of baptism, the resurrected Christ justified us once and for all by grace and through faith -- when He regenerated us by His Spirit.

Baptism saves as an answer to God of a cleansed conscience

So Peter's passage here does not say that baptism washes away our filthy sins. To the contrary, it says that baptism does ⁿo^t wash away our filth -- but is instead the prayerful answer to God of our [already cleansed] "good conscience" etc.

This "answer" is anything but magical! Indeed, the very fact that our baptism is a subjective "answer" or *eperooteema* to God⁴⁹⁵ -- precludes every magical possibility of any objective baptismal regeneration *ex opere operato* whatsoever!

Yet this baptismal answer to God "of a good conscience" (or *suneideeseos agathees*), must itself be an objective genitive. It cannot be a subjective genitive. For firstly, this "answer to God" (or *eperooteema eis Theon*) itself ⁿe^ed^s an object -- because a question without content is meaningless! And secondly, only the subject, namely the baptizee -- but not the object (his good conscience) -- can be supplemented from this context.⁴⁹⁶

For how can a mere conscience (or even a mere answer) - devoid of the person so possessing and/or so professing either -- "ask" for anything? Indeed, even if that were possible -- what would a good conscience itself be asking for?

These words "of a good conscience" (or *suneideeseos agathees*) stand in contradistinction to the words "of the filth of the flesh" (or *sarkos apothesis rhupon*). One who is outwardly dirty, often asks to be cleansed. So too here, one who inwardly has a good conscience which used to be dirty - is asking to receive an even better conscience, through declaring his willingness to submit to Christ by getting himself baptized!

Thus, having been justified before baptism -- a Christian's baptism itself subsequently 'saves' or preserves. It thus blissfully 'keeps on guaranteeing' that the faith in Christ which a believer had before baptism, keeps on strengthening that believer. For that pre-baptismal faith continues - even through, and beyond, our baptism!

Indeed, also during and after baptism, our pre-baptismal faith keeps on giving God the answer of a good conscience. For our baptism is our faithful and therefore

⁴⁹⁵ *Exp. Gr. Test.* V:69f at I Pet. 3:21 ("The believer who comes to baptism *has believed* in Christ and *repented* of his past sins...and appeals to God for strength to carry out this renunciation in his daily life").

⁴⁹⁶ Thus Kuyper's *Sacraments* p. 135 (at I Pet. 3:21).

our ongoing answer to God. That answer is made from a conscience already cleansed in principle even before baptism. It is cleansed by God's grace, and through our God-given faith and hope in Christ because of His resurrection and ascension into heaven -- on our behalf.⁴⁹⁷ Indeed, Peter then immediately goes on to declare that Christ had suffered -- "for us!"⁴⁹⁸

Causally -- our regeneration is not grounded in our baptism, but in the resurrection of Jesus.⁴⁹⁹ First Peter 1:3 and 3:21. Instrumentally -- we were regenerated from the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, which has germinated within us and which now keeps on remaining in us forever. First Peter 1:23. Sacramentally, this matter is subsequently sealed in baptism -- as our answer thereto. First Peter 3:21. All this, is a very different proposition to Rome's losable baptismal regenerationism!

Calvin's understanding of baptism in First Peter 3:20f

Calvin comments here⁵⁰⁰ that "Peter ascribes salvation only to the family of Noah, and gives over to ruin all who were not within the ark.... In the common ruin of mankind, the family of Noah alone escaped.... Our baptism is an antitype (*antitupon*) of the 'baptism' of Noah.... Noah obtained life through death, when...he was preserved -- together with his small family....

"[Today,] almost all are introduced into the fellowship of the Church by baptism.... The external symbol is not sufficient, unless baptism be received really and effectually.... The sign often appears inefficacious and fruitless..., through the abuse of men. But it does not take away the nature of the sacrament.

"Let us learn, then, not to divorce the thing signified from the sign [as the Anabaptists do]. At the same time, we must beware of another evil -- such as prevails among the Papists.... In not distinguishing as they ought between the thing and the sign, they stop at the outward element and fix on that their hope of salvation....

"What then ought we to do?" Not to separate the sign and the thing signified. "Not put asunder -- what has been joined together by the Lord! We ought to embrace therein the testimony [or sign] of the remission of sin and the pledge [or seal] of our renewal. Yet we should leave to Christ and also to the Holy Spirit Each His own honour -- so that no part of our salvation should be transferred to the sign.... Baptism to some is only the literal act.... We cannot otherwise derive benefit from baptism -- except by having all our thoughts fixed on the death and resurrection of Christ!"

Calvin further explains⁵⁰¹ the meaning of Peter's statement "that 'baptism also doth now save us.' First Peter 3:21. For he did not mean to intimate that our ablution and salvation are perfected by water. Or that water possesses in itself the virtue of purifying, regenerating and renewing. Nor does he mean that it is the cause

⁴⁹⁷ I Pet. 3:15-22.

⁴⁹⁸ I Pet. 4:1.

⁴⁹⁹ *Exp. Gr. Test.* V:70 at I Pet. 3:21 ("*di' anast.* with *soozei* ; compare I Cor. 15:13-17).

⁵⁰⁰ *Comm.* on I Pet. 3:21.

⁵⁰¹ *Inst.* IV:15:2.

of salvation. But only that knowledge and certainty of such gifts [of salvation] are perceived in [or by] this sacrament....

"Peter immediately subjoins that baptism is 'not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God' -- which is of faith! Nay, the only purification which baptism promises, is by means of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, Who is figured by water, from the resemblance to cleansing and washing. Who, then, can say that we are cleansed by that water -- which [however] certainly attests that the blood of Christ is our true and only laver?"

"So...we cannot have a better argument to refute the hallucination of those [the Romanists] who ascribe the whole [cleansing] to the virtue of water -- than we derive from the very meaning of baptism. It leads us away as well from the visible element [of water] which is presented to our eye..., so that it may fix our minds on Christ alone!"

Continues Calvin:⁵⁰² "By calling baptism an 'answer of a good conscience' Peter here means "tranquillity of mind. When, persuaded of the grace of Christ, we with boldness present ourselves before God -- as believers, we request baptism." With approval, Calvin here⁵⁰³ cites even Augustine:⁵⁰⁴ "This is the Word of faith which we preach -- by which Word doubtless baptism also is consecrated!"

In conclusion, from this very Petrine passage, Calvin refutes both Anabaptists and Romanists -- in one fell swoop. Argues the Reformer:⁵⁰⁵ "Moses and the prophets reminded the people of the thing meant by circumcision which, however, infants received.... In adults, the receiving of the sign ought to follow the understanding of its meaning. Yet, as will shortly be explained, a different rule must be followed with children.

"No other conclusion can be drawn from a passage in Peter, on which they [the Anabaptists] strongly found [or founder]! He says that baptism is 'not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' First Peter 3:21. From this, they [the Anabaptists] contend that nothing is left for paedobaptism" -- alias the baptism of infants.

"But the delusion which misleads them, is that they would **always** have the thing [signified] to precede the sign in the order of time.... The truth of circumcision consisted in the same answer of a good conscience. But if the truth [alias the thing signified] must necessarily [always] have preceded -- infants would never have been circumcised by the command of God!" Hence the circumcision of the heart -- which may either precede or succeed the circumcision of the flesh -- is clearly not congruent therewith.

"But He Himself," concludes Calvin of the Holy Spirit, "showing that the answer of a good conscience forms the truth of circumcision -- and at the same time commanding infants to be circumcised -- plainly intimates that in their case, circumcision had reference [also] to the future. Therefore, nothing more of present effect is to be required in paedobaptism, than to confirm and sanction the covenant which the Lord has [already] made with them" -- before baptism!

⁵⁰² *Inst.* IV:10:3 *cf.* III:19:15.

⁵⁰³ Citing this same passage I Pet. 3:20 (in *Inst.* IV:14:4).

⁵⁰⁴ *Inst.* IV:14:4, citing Aug. *Hom. in Joann.* 13.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ib.* IV:16:21.

First Peter 3:20f in the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards*

The Calvinistic *Westminster Confession* cites⁵⁰⁶ this passage First Peter 3:21 to prove that the efficacy of a sacrament does not depend upon the piety or intention of him that administers it. And the Calvinistic *Westminster Larger Catechism* quotes it⁵⁰⁷ to establish: that the sacrament was instituted by Christ's Spirit; that inward and spiritual grace is thereby signified; and that blessings are sealed to us in that sacrament.

The same text, First Peter 3:21, is also cited by the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards*⁵⁰⁸ to show that "the sacraments become effectual means [not of justification but] of salvation" alias preservation. Indeed, even this is there said to occur -- "not by any power in [the sacraments] themselves...but only by the working of the Holy Ghost!"

Noah preached God's righteousness before the baptismal flood

In his Second Epistle, Peter goes on to say⁵⁰⁹ that God "did not spare the old world." God did, however, at that time -- "save [or preserve] Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness." It was only thereafter, that God "brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly."

Here again, it is clear neither baptism nor the flood made Noah righteous. For he was already a "preacher of righteousness" -- and hence also himself a righteous man -- when he preached to the ungodly precisely before the flood. Furthermore, to the extent to which the floodrain itself 'baptized' Noah and his family inside the ark -- it was then 'baptismally' sealing an already righteous man!

As Calvin comments:⁵¹⁰ "After God had submerged the human race, He founded as it were a new world over again.... He [Peter] calls Noah 'a preacher of righteousness'.... He [Noah] tried to bring a degenerate world to a sound state of mind.... He did so, not only by teaching and exhortations to holiness -- but by his constant and anxious toil for a hundred and twenty years in building the ark."

The "apostle's purpose," Calvin concludes about Peter in his Second Epistle, "is to place before our very eyes the wrath of God against the wicked." God does this, precisely "so as to encourage us in imitation of the saints." And such 'saints' are sanctified people -- like the elect members of Noah's family already regenerate before the flood!

First John on regeneration also in tenderest infancy

⁵⁰⁶ *W.C.F.* 27:3g.

⁵⁰⁷ *W.L.C.* 161s, 163c & 167s.

⁵⁰⁸ *W.L.C.* 161s, compare *W.S.C.* 91v.

⁵⁰⁹ II Pet. 2:5 *cf.* Gen. 6:8-9 & 7:1-4 and Heb. 11:6-7.

⁵¹⁰ J. Calvin's *Commentary on Second Peter* (2:5), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948.

In his First Epistle, the apostle John insists:⁵¹¹ "Whosoever has been [re]generated by God, does not keep on committing sin. For His seed keeps on remaining in him: and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been [re]generated by God."

This can only mean that if one has been regenerated before birth or in tenderest infancy, before infant baptism -- God's seed, the seed of faith, is thereby sown in one's heart (where it starts to grow forthwith). Such, as the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession* rightly states, is indeed the case of all elect infants dying in infancy.⁵¹² Consequently, regeneration and faith often precede baptism. They are no way fruits thereof, as baptismal regenerationism so wrongly asserts.

Calvin here observes:⁵¹³ "The hearts of believers are so effectually governed from above, that they follow with undeviating affection. 'Whosoever has been born from God, does not keep on committing sin. For His seed remains in him.' First John 3:9."

Calvin then explains⁵¹⁴ what John means when he "says that 'Whosoever has been born from God, does not keep on committing sin; for His seed keeps on remaining in him.' First John 3:9. He elsewhere gives the reason, 'This is the victory that keeps on overcoming the world: even our faith!' First John 5:4." For John himself soon adds⁵¹⁵ that "whatsoever has been [re]generated by God, keeps on overcoming the world. And this is the victory which has overcome the world: our faith!"

On this latter passage, Calvin further comments⁵¹⁶ that "all who are begotten by God, overcome the world.... Now he [John] also expresses the way to overcome... He places the victory over the whole world in faith" -- and not in being baptized!

John then immediately adds⁵¹⁷ that "the Son of God... Jesus Christ came by water and blood. Not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit Who keeps on bearing witness.... For there are three that keep on bearing record on earth - the Spirit, and the water, and the blood."

Calvin comments here⁵¹⁸ that "how He came by water, may be queried. It is improbable that it refers to baptism.... Christ's side was a fountain of blood and water -- so that believers might know that the true cleansings, of which the ancient baptisms were figures, is in Him; and that they might also know that then was fulfilled what all the sprinklings of blood formerly promised!"

Yet Calvin also explains⁵¹⁹ "that so long as we are without Christ and separated from Him, nothing which He suffered and did for the salvation of the human race is of the least benefit to us.... He must become ours.... We obtain this, by

⁵¹¹ I Jh. 3:9 (*Pas ho gegeneemenos ek tou Theou hamartian ou poiei, hoti sperma Autou en autoo-i-#. # kai ou dunatai harmartanein, hoti ek tou Theou gegenneetai*).

⁵¹² *W.C.F.* 10:3 (citing Lk. 18:15f; Jh. 3:3,5,8; Acts 2:38f; Rom. 8:9; I Jh. 5:12).

⁵¹³ *Inst.* II:3:10.

⁵¹⁴ *Ib.* II:5:10.

⁵¹⁵ I Jh. 5:4 (*Pan to gegenneemenon ek tou Theou nika-i- ton kosmon#. # kai hautee-i- estin hee nikee hee nikesasa ton kosmon, hee pistis heemoon*).

⁵¹⁶ J. Calvin's *Commentary on First John* (5:4), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948.

⁵¹⁷ I Jh. 5:5f.

⁵¹⁸ *Comm.* on I Jh. 5:6.

⁵¹⁹ *Inst.* III:1:1.

faith.... As there are said to be Three Witnesses in heaven (the Father, the Word, and the Spirit) -- so there are also three on the earth (namely water, blood and Spirit).

"It is not without cause that the testimony of the Spirit is twice mentioned -- a testimony which is engraven on our hearts by way of seal." Compare too the outward sign of baptism - which confirms that inward testimony of the Spirit in the heart of the believers!

John concludes his argument:⁵²⁰ "He who has the Son, has life. But he who does not have the Son of God, does not have life." This obviously applies even to spiritual life before regenerational birth, and therefore also before baptism.

Calvin's further comments on regeneration in First John

As Calvin here comments:⁵²¹ "God placed life in Christ alone.... He excludes from the hope of life all who do not seek it in Christ. We know what it is to have Christ. For He is possessed by faith. So He deprives of life all who are outside the body of Christ." The latter, as the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession* rightly states, consists only of those who profess faith in Christ -- together with their children (both born and not yet born).⁵²²

Calvin goes on⁵²³ to refer to the case of "Cornelius, whom Luke said was accepted by God.... Acts 10:2.... The seed of faith does not come up on the very first day.... But God has hidden" it within the heart of His own, nonetheless. And "God has hidden [or secret] and wonderful ways of acting [or working]!"

Thus, God had secreted the inconspicuous seed of faith in the heart of Cornelius -- even before Peter met (and baptized) him. Similarly, God sows and hides the seed of faith in the hearts of many little children of believers -- even before their very birth!

Calvin explains further:⁵²⁴ "It is true, as John says, that there is no life without the Son of God. First John 5:12.... Those who have no part in Christ, whoever they be, whatever they do or devise, are hastening on -- during their whole career - to destruction and the judgment of eternal death."

Finally, in refuting the Romanists, Calvin discusses⁵²⁵ "good works called 'moral'.... Thereby [claim the Romanists] men are rendered agreeable to God -- before they are ingrafted into Christ. As if Scripture spoke falsely, when it says: 'he that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life!' First John 5:12.... Is there no meaning in its being said that 'whatsoever is not of faith, is sin? Romans 14:23. Or can good fruit be produced by a bad tree?" No, of course not!

Yet infants of believers are not the fruit of bad trees. To the contrary, they

⁵²⁰ I Jh. 5:12.

⁵²¹ *Comm.* on I Jh. 5:12.

⁵²² *W.C.F.* 25:2bc.

⁵²³ *Comm.* on I Jh. 5:12.

⁵²⁴ *Inst.* III:14:4.

⁵²⁵ *Inst.* III:15:6.

are holy little branches -- proceeding from holy roots! Romans 11:16.

Consequently, as the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession* rightly declares,⁵²⁶ "elect infants -- dying in infancy -- are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit.... John 3:3 -- 'Jesus answered..., "Except a man [alias a person]⁵²⁷ be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God'.... [Yet,] First John 5:12 -- 'he that hath the Son, hath life!'"

John's Revelation contradicts baptismal regeneration

In the last book of the Bible, John declares⁵²⁸ about Christian believers: "Jesus Christ...loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." Very clearly, it is the Saviour's blood which washes away sins -- not the water of baptism!

This text, Revelation 1:5, is cited in the Calvinistic *Westminster Larger Catechism*.⁵²⁹ It is quoted there, in order to prove that baptism is a sign and seal of remission of sins by the blood of Christ.

John goes on to explain⁵³⁰ that the Spirit of God the Father promises to give all who are overcomers -- a white stone with a new name written on it. Christ's Spirit also promises to write the Name of God upon them.⁵³¹ For they are to be sealed in the Name of the Trinity. Matthew 28:19. John also explains⁵³² that "the seal of the living God" -- apparently baptism -- is the sign whereby "the servants of our God are sealed on their foreheads."

Without doubt, this sign is intended even for the infants of such adults as profess faith in Christ. Such infants are themselves to be regarded as being among the faithful. For how could the 144,000 sealed persons mentioned there -- the sum total of all twelve of the various tribes of Israel⁵³³ -- be devoid of infants?

Anti-Calvinistic Arminians, who derive everything from man's free will, maintain that faith first begins where a person expresses it. Calvinists, however, say that the work of God can already take root -- while one is yet within one's mother's womb. Hence, a work of God may commence -- and should (rebuttably) be presumed to have commenced -- within covenant children even prenatally!

This is why Calvin presumes the 'seed of faith' already to be within such children. The same presumption is made also by Calvinists like Peter Martyr, Ursinus, Trelcatius, Polanus, Walaeus, Voetius, Mastricht, Alting, Wendelin, Turretin, Heydegger, and De Moor *etc.*⁵³⁴

⁵²⁶ *W.C.F.* 10:3 (citing Lk. 18:15f; Jh. 3:3,5,8; Acts 2:38f; Rom. 8:9; I Jh. 5:12).

⁵²⁷ John 3:3 has *tis* (anyone), and not *anthroopos* (a mature human) or *aneer* (a mature male alias a man) or *gunee* (a mature female alias a woman).

⁵²⁸ Rev. 1:5.

⁵²⁹ *W.L.C.* 165g.

⁵³⁰ Rev. 2:17.

⁵³¹ Rev. 3:12.

⁵³² Rev. 7:2-3.

⁵³³ Rev. 7:4.

⁵³⁴ Kuyper: *Sacraments* p. 139.

For, as John goes on to point out, it is not just Jesus Christ Himself -- holy from His conception onward! -- Who was conceived within a godly woman and brought forth for His bride (alias the Church of God).⁵³⁵ In a somewhat different sense, the same is also true of "the remainder of her seed who keep the Commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."⁵³⁶ Indeed, those remnants of her seed are (as it were) Christ's younger brothers and sisters -- His subordinate fellow-members of His Own Church.

Even in glory, the Visible Church is regarded as a holy city. Indeed, there it is seen to be the New Jerusalem or the bride of the Lamb.⁵³⁷ So John went on to declare⁵³⁸ that "there shall in no way enter into it anything that defiles, nor whosoever keeps on working abomination or keeps on telling a lie. But [only] those who have been written in the Lamb's book of life!"

Precisely at this very point, Calvin searchingly asks:⁵³⁹ "How are infants regenerated...? We answer -- that the work of God, though beyond the reach of our capacity, is not therefore null.... If they [infants] are born sinners..., they must either remain unaccepted and hated by God -- or be justified. And why do we ask more -- when the Judge Himself publicly declares that 'except a man [alias a person] be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God?' John 3:3....

"Infants who are to be saved -- and that some are saved at this age, is certain! -- must without question be previously regenerated by the Lord.... They bring innate corruption with them from their mother's womb. They must be purified, before they can be admitted into the Kingdom of God -- into which shall not enter anything that defiles! Revelation 21:27."

John's last description -- is that of the eschatological destination in glory of the "pure river of water of life." It irrigates the grove of fruitful trees of life -- on the renewed earth. The Lamb Himself shall be there. "And His servants shall serve Him. And they shall see His face. And His Name shall be on their foreheads."⁵⁴⁰

Yet it is only His servants who there and then have the Christ-ian Name impressed upon their foreheads! Matthew 28:19 *cf.* Luke 1:59-64 (*q.v.*). These are they who will first have trusted in Him -- before following and serving Him. They will have done this-- before being permanently impressed with God's Triune Name -- unto the final goal of their Christian baptism!

Calvin says sacraments strengthen faith already present

In the 1536 edition of his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin draws a parallel between circumcised yet backslidden Old Testament Israelites on the one hand -- and baptized yet heretical Romanists on the other. Calvin acknowledges the many errors of Romanism. Yet he seems to assume that early-dying infants conceived of Christ-professing Romish parents, should still be treated

⁵³⁵ Rev. 12:1-5.

⁵³⁶ Rev. 12:17.

⁵³⁷ Rev. 21:2,9.

⁵³⁸ Rev. 21:27.

⁵³⁹ *Inst.* IV:16:17.

⁵⁴⁰ Rev. 22:1-4.

as God's covenant people.

By this is meant infants who die before being baptized, or at any rate before being raised in that tarnished and syncretizing yet by no means pagan communion. Such children should be presumed just as regenerate as were early-dying Israelites during Old Testament times of gross backslidings among the adult Hebrews.

Thus Calvin declares:⁵⁴¹ "In ancient times, there remained among the Jews certain special privileges of a Church.... The covenant of the Lord continued there [among the impious Israelites].... Nor could circumcision be so profaned by their impure hands, as not still to be a true sign and sacrament of His covenant. Hence the children who were born to them, the Lord called His own (Ezekiel 16:20).... By special blessing, they...belonged to Him."

Calvin also defines⁵⁴² "what a sacrament is." He declares that "it is an external sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences His promises of good-will toward us, in order to sustain the weakness of our faith -- and [by which] we in our turn testify our piety towards Him.... We may also define [it] more briefly, by calling it a testimony of the divine favour toward us, confirmed by an external sign with a corresponding attestation of our faith toward Him." Very clearly, this definition presupposes faith -- before circumcision (formerly) and baptism (currently) -- also in respect of covenant infants themselves!

Calvin continues:⁵⁴³ "From the definition which we have given, we perceive that there never is a sacrament without an antecedent promise -- the sacrament being added as a kind of appendix with the view of confirming and sealing the promise and giving a better attestation or rather in a manner confirming it.... It [a sacrament] does not so much confirm His Word, as establish us in the faith of it.... As our faith is slender and weak..., sacraments therefore are exercises which confirm our faith in the Word of God."

Calvin also refers "Galatians 3:27" and "First Corinthians 12:13" especially to baptism. For there, he explains⁵⁴⁴ that "however the ungodly and hypocrites may by their perverseness either suppress or obscure or impede the effect of divine grace in the sacraments -- that does not prevent them [the sacraments], where and whenever God is so pleased, from giving a true evidence of communion with Christ.... The sacraments are truly termed evidences of divine grace, and as it were seals of the goodwill which He entertains toward us. They -- by sealing it to us -- sustain, nourish, confirm and increase our faith!"

The great Genevan adds⁵⁴⁵ that "the Lord...confirms us by His sacraments.... He illumines our mind by the light of His Holy Spirit and opens up an entrance into our hearts for His...sacraments which would otherwise only...fall upon our sight, but by no means affect us inwardly.... With regard to the increase and confirmation of faith..., in assigning this office to the sacraments -- it is not as if I thought that there is a kind of secret efficacy perpetually inherent in them..., but because our Lord has instituted them for the express purpose of helping to establish and increase our faith....

⁵⁴¹ *Inst.* IV:2:11.

⁵⁴² *Ib.* IV:14:1.

⁵⁴³ *Ib.* IV:14:3 & IV:14:6.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ib.* IV:14:7.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ib.* IV:14:8-9.

"A pious mind is confirmed in faith by means of the sacraments... The sacraments do not avail one *iota*, without the energy of the Holy Spirit.... Yet, in hearts previously taught by That Preceptor -- there is nothing to prevent the sacraments from strengthening and increasing faith" already priorly present.

"The sacraments," explains Calvin,⁵⁴⁶ "are confirmations of our faith.... The Lord...spiritually nourishes our faith by means of the sacraments.... Neither ought our confidence to be fixed on the sacraments, nor ought the glory of God to be transferred to them. But, passing beyond them all -- our faith and confession should rise to Him.... Ancient writers intended...to intimate that sacraments are the signs of sacred and spiritual things...[so] that they may contribute to our faith in God.... [Sacramental] mysteries would be frigid (as has been seen), were they not helps to faith!"

Sacramentalism is just as wrong as anti-sacramentarianism

Calvin repudiates both the Zwinglian as well as the Romish view of baptism. Having just distanced himself from reactionary anti-sacramentarianism ('baptism is **merely** a sign') - Calvin next⁵⁴⁷ repudiates the mechanical sacramentalism of "others who ascribe to the sacraments a kind of secret virtue which is nowhere [in Holy Scripture] said to have been implanted in them by God....

"That the sacraments...justify and convey grace..., is plainly from the devil! For first, in promising a righteousness without faith, it drives souls headlong on destruction. Secondly, in deriving a cause of righteousness from the sacraments - it entangles miserable minds....

"What is a sacrament received without faith -- but most certain destruction to the Church? For, seeing that nothing is to be expected beyond the promise, and the promise no less denounces wrath to the unbeliever than offers grace to the believer - it is an error to suppose that anything more is conferred by the sacraments, than is offered by the Word of God and obtained by true faith.

"From this, another thing follows -- viz. that assurance of salvation does not depend on participation in the sacraments, as if justification consisted in it! This, which is treasured up in Christ alone..., may be completely enjoyed without this seal. So it is true, as Augustine declares, that there may be invisible sanctification without a visible sign."

Calvin thoroughly approves⁵⁴⁸ of "the distinction...repeatedly made by Augustine -- between the sacrament and the matter of the sacrament.... When speaking of the Jews, he [Augustine] says: 'Though the sacraments were common to all, the grace was not common'.... They are effectual in regard to us...when that which is offered there, is received by us in true faith.... We must not suppose that there is some latent virtue inherent in the sacraments by which they in themselves confer the gifts of the Holy Spirit."

"Things which were done to assist and establish their faith, were also sacraments.... They are testimonies of grace and salvation from the Lord. So,

⁵⁴⁶ *Ib.* IV:14:12-13.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ib.* IV:14:14.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ib.* IV:14:15-19.

in regard to us, they are marks of profession by which we openly swear by the Name of God, binding ourselves to be faithful to Him.... Sacraments are ceremonies by which God is pleased to train His people first to...strengthen faith within, and secondly to testify our religion to men."

Baptismal regenerationism is thoroughly false

Coming now to the sacrament specifically of baptism, Calvin explains⁵⁴⁹ that it is "given us by God primarily to strengthen our faith in Him" or to "be conducive to our faith in Him" -- also so that "it may serve the purpose of a confession among men.... Baptism contributes to our faith" -- but does not originate it! For it is "a sign and evidence of our purification..., a kind of sealed instrument by which He assures us that all our sins are...covered and effaced."⁵⁵⁰

Calvin continues:⁵⁵¹ "We could find no better argument to refute the error of those who ascribe everything to the water -- than by a reminder of what is the meaning of baptism which withdraws us...from the visible element...to make us rely wholly upon Jesus Christ." So baptism was not instituted to wash away sins at all, but instead to point to Christ -- Whose blood alone washes away all sins (past, present, and future)!

Explains Calvin:⁵⁵² "Nor is it to be supposed that baptism is bestowed only with reference to the past.... To this error in [post-apostolic] ancient times, it was owing that some refused to be initiated by baptism -- until their life was in extreme danger and they were drawing their last breath, so that they might thus obtain 'pardon' for all the past!

"Against this preposterous precaution, ancient bishops frequently inveigh in their writings.... We are baptized...for the whole of life. Therefore, as often as we fall, we must recall the remembrance of our baptism.... It is not abolished by subsequent sins!"

Calvin goes on:⁵⁵³ "Those who receive baptism with true faith, truly feel the efficacy of Christ's death in the mortification of their flesh -- and the efficacy of His resurrection in the quickening of the Spirit.... Our faith receives advantage from baptism.... It is now clear how false the doctrine is which some long ago taught, and others still persist in -- that by baptism we are exempted and set free from original sin."

To the contrary -- continues Calvin -- even after their baptism, unregenerate "infants bring their condemnation with them from their mother's womb." Yet "believers become assured by baptism that this condemnation is entirely withdrawn from them, since (as has been said) the Lord by this sign promises that a full and entire remission has been made for them already -- before their baptism!"

"Here," Calvin goes on,⁵⁵⁴ "we say nothing more than the apostle Paul expounds most

⁵⁴⁹ *Ib.* IV:15:1 (as translated in Wendel's *Calvin*, Collins, London, 1965, p. 318).

⁵⁵⁰ *Id.* (as rendered in the Beveridge translation, Clarke, London, 1957, II, p. 513).

⁵⁵¹ *Ib.* IV:15:2 (Wendel).

⁵⁵² *Ib.* IV:15:3 (Beveridge).

⁵⁵³ *Ib.* IV:15:5,6,10.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ib.* IV:15:12-13.

clearly in the sixth and seventh chapters of the Epistle to the Romans.... All who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, are at the same time regenerated by the Spirit.... We have an earnest [or pledge] of this regeneration in baptism.... Baptism serves as our confession before men, inasmuch as it is a mark by which we openly declare that we wish to be ranked among the people of God; by...which, in short, we publicly assert our faith."

Baptism is given to strengthen faith already there

So faith precedes baptism! As Calvin explains:⁵⁵⁵ "Our children, before they are born, God declares that He adopts for His own -- when He promises that He will be a God to us, and to our seed after us. In this promise, their salvation is included.... How much evil has been caused by the dogma, ill expounded, that baptism is necessary to salvation.... For when the opinion prevails that all are lost who happen not to be baptized in water -- our condition becomes worse than that of God's ancient people.

"As if His grace were [now] more restrained, than under the Law! In that case, Christ will be thought to have come not to fulfil but to abolish the promises. Since the promise which was then effectual in itself to confer salvation before the eighth day [compare Genesis 17:7-12 with Second Samuel 12-23], would not now be effectual -- without the help of a sign" such as baptism. Acts 2:38f and Colossians 2:11f.

Calvin further insists (in the 1559 edition of his *Institutes*)⁵⁵⁶ that "children who happen to depart this life before an opportunity of baptizing them in water, are not excluded from the Kingdom of heaven.... Unless we admit this position, great injury is done to the covenant of God, as if [it] in itself were weak -- whereas its effect depends not either on baptism or on any accessories. The sacrament is afterwards added as a kind of seal -- not to give efficacy to the promise as if in itself invalid, but merely to confirm it to us....

"Hence it follows that the children of believers are not baptized in order that, though formerly aliens from the Church, they may then for the first time become children of God. But rather are [they] received into the Church by a formal sign because, in virtue of the promise, they previously belonged to the body of Christ (*quia promissionis beneficio iam ante ad Christi corpus pertinebant*).

"Hence, if, in omitting the sign, there is neither sloth nor contempt nor negligence -- we are safe from all danger.... The better course, therefore, is to pay such respect to the ordinance of God -- as not to seek the sacraments in any other quarter than where the Lord has deposited them. When we cannot receive them from the Church, the grace of God is not so inseparably annexed to them that we cannot obtain it by faith according to His Word."

In the 1536 edition of his *Institutes*, Calvin states:⁵⁵⁷ "The children have faith,

⁵⁵⁵ *Ib.* IV:15:20.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ib.* IV:15:22, 1559 ed.; compare the 1550 ed. where it is located in a discussion of the Lord's supper (*Corpus Reformatorum* (ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz & E. Reuss, Brunswick, 1863-1900) I:1038. See too Calvin's *Opera Selecta* (ed. P. Barth & W. Niesel, Munich, 1926-36).

⁵⁵⁷ Calvin: *Corp. Ref.* I:118 & I:982 (compare too I:1038, in n. 556 above). The historical development of the above-mentioned penultimate paragraphs of this section of *Inst.* IV:15:22, is most interesting (in the 1536, 1539, 1550 and 1559 editions of the *Institutes*). See G. Kramer's book *The Connection between Baptism and Regeneration*, De Vecht, Breukelen, 1897 (pp. 137f, 140f, and 143 & n. 2). Compare the two paragraphs immediately preceding with the two paragraphs immediately succeeding this present

in common with the adults. But nobody should take this in the sense as if I wish to say that faith always begins from one's mother's womb (*a matris utero semper inchoari fidem*). For the Lord sometimes calls adults too -- sometimes earlier, and sometimes later. But I am only saying that all of God's elect enter into everlasting life by faith -- at whatever time of life they may be removed from this prison of destruction."

In the 1539 edition, he adds that he "would not wish to claim, anent the children, that they are endowed with the same faith as we (*eadem esse fide praeditos quam nos experimur*)." In the 1550 edition, he adds further: "or that they possess a 'faith knowledge' equal to that of ours (*aut omnino habere 'notitiam fidei' similem*)." Nevertheless, Calvin insists throughout that early-dying elect infants do have faith in Christ -- faint and embryonic though that faith indeed may be!

The covenant with Abraham proves infant baptism

Calvin further refers to the ancient promise made to Abraham and all His spiritual descendants: 'I will establish My covenant between Myself and you, and your seed after you in their generations, as an everlasting covenant -- to be a God unto you and to your seed after you.... This is My covenant which you people shall keep, between Me and you people and your seed after you. Every male among you shall be circumcised.... He who is eight days old, shall be circumcised among you; every male in your generations.' Genesis 17:7-12.

The great Genevan here observes⁵⁵⁸ that "prior to the institution of baptism, the people of God had circumcision in its stead.... When the Lord enjoins Abraham to observe circumcision, Genesis 17:10, He premises that He would be a God unto him - and to his seed.... These words include the promise of eternal life -- as our Saviour employs it to prove the immortality and resurrection of believers. 'God,' says He, 'is not the God of the dead but of the living.' Matthew 22:32....

"We have therefore a spiritual promise given to the fathers in circumcision, similiar to that which is given to us in baptism -- since it figured to them both the forgiveness of sins, and the mortification of the flesh.... The thing figured, is one and the same -- viz. regeneration.... Hence it is incontrovertible that baptism has been substituted for circumcision, and performs the same office.

"Baptism is properly administered to infants, as a thing due to them. The Lord did not anciently bestow circumcision upon them, without [first] making them [viz. the elect] -- partakers of all the things signified by circumcision.... The covenant remains firm and fixed.... It is no less applicable to the children of Christians in the present day, than to the children of the Jews under the Old Testament.... They are partakers of the thing signified! How can they be denied the sign? ... If they obtain the reality -- how can they be refused the figure?"

For "the covenant which the Lord once made with Abraham, is not less applicable to Christians now -- than it was anciently to the Jewish people.... The children of the Jews...were made heirs of that covenant.... They were separated from the heathen [and] were called a holy seed.... For the same reason, the children of Christians, or those who have only one believing parent, are called 'holy' and, by the testimony of the apostle, differ from the impure seed of idolaters." First Corinthians 7:14, compare Ezra 9:2 and Nehemiah 9:2.

footnote reference 557 in the main text of this present study.

⁵⁵⁸ *Inst.* IV:16:3-7.

"Our Saviour, in ordering little [covenant] children to be brought to Him, adds the reason -- 'of such is the Kingdom of heaven'.... If it is right that children should be brought to Christ -- why should they not be admitted to baptism, the symbol of our communion and fellowship with Christ? If the Kingdom of heaven is theirs -- why should they be denied the sign?"

Calvin refutes the Anabaptist views against paedobaptism

Speaking of the Anabaptists, Calvin adds:⁵⁵⁹ "The assertion they disseminate among the common people, that a long series of years elapsed after the resurrection of Christ, during which paedobaptism was unknown -- is a shameful falsehood! Since there is no writer -- however ancient -- who does not trace its origin to the days of the apostles....

"It remains briefly to indicate what benefit redounds from the observance both to believers who bring their children to the church to be baptized and to the infants themselves.... No one may despise the ordinance.... Any one who would think of ridiculing [infant] baptism under this pretence, would also ridicule the divine ordinance of [infant] circumcision....

"The divine symbol communicated to the child, as with the impress of a seal, confirms the promise.... I am not moved by the objection that the promise [itself] ought to be sufficient to confirm the salvation of our children [even without the sign of baptism]. It has seemed otherwise to God....

"Let those, then, who embrace the promise of mercy to their children -- consider it as their duty to offer them to the Church, to be sealed with the symbol of mercy, and [to] animate themselves to surer confidence on seeing with the bodily eye the covenant of the Lord engraven on the bodies of their children....

"Children [themselves] derive some benefit from their baptism.... When they have grown up, they are thereby strongly urged to an earnest desire of serving God -- Who has received them as 'sons'...before, from non-age!"

Calvin continues:⁵⁶⁰ "We have no doubt that in distinguishing the children of God from bastards and foreigners, that the election of God reigns freely.... Paul declares that the Jews were sanctified by their parents." See Romans 11:16. "He elsewhere says that the children of Christians derive sanctification from their parents." First Corinthians 7:14. "God is so good and liberal to His people, that He is pleased as a mark of His favour to extend their privileges to the children [generated or conceived by and] born to them."

Calvin next refutes⁵⁶¹ the Anabaptists' objection that 'spiritual regeneration is not applicable to earliest infancy.' For 'how' -- they ask -- 'are infants regenerated?'

Here Calvin replies: "We answer that the work of God -- though beyond the reach of our capacities [fully to understand it] -- is not therefore null" in infants! For such "infants who are to be saved -- and that some are saved at this age is

⁵⁵⁹ *Ib.* IV:16:8-9.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ib.* IV:16:15.

⁵⁶¹ *Ib.* IV:16:17.

certain! -- must, without question, previously be regenerated by the Lord....

"The Judge Himself publicly declares that 'except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.' John 3:3.... God gave, in the case of John the Baptist -- whom He sanctified from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15) -- a proof of what He might do in others [compare Luke 1:41-44].... The child, not yet born, would be filled with the Holy Spirit [compare Luke 1:15 & 1:41f].... Instead of attempting to give a law to God, let us hold that He sanctifies whom He pleases in the way in which He sanctified John -- seeing that His power is not impaired!"

Continues Calvin:⁵⁶² "Christ was sanctified from earliest infancy [from His conception onward], so that He might sanctify His elect in Himself at any age.... He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, so that -- completely pervaded with His holiness in the flesh which He had assumed -- He might transfuse it [His holiness] into us.... In Christ...we have a proof that the age of infancy is not incapable of receiving sanctification (*infantiae aetatem non usque adeo a sanctificatione abhorrere*)....

"We set down as incontrovertible, that none of the elect is called away from the present life without previously being sanctified and regenerated by the Spirit of God.... We deny...the power of God cannot regenerate infants! This is as possible and easy for Him to do, as it is wondrous and incomprehensible to us. It were dangerous to deny that the Lord is able to furnish them with the knowledge of Himself in any way He pleases."

The Anabaptists, however, 'deem it very absurd to attribute any knowledge of God to infants.' But Calvin replies⁵⁶³ that covenantal infants "are said now to receive some part of that grace of which they are to have the full measure shortly after[wards]....

"Some of those whom death hurries away in the first moments of infancy, pass into life eternal. They are certainly admitted to behold the immediate presence of God! Those, therefore, whom the Lord is to illumine with the full brightness of His light -- why may He not, if He so please, irradiate at present with some small beam...before He delivers them from the prison of the flesh" or lets them die in infancy and then takes their souls to glory?

Infant circumcision foreshadowed infant baptism

Calvin continues:⁵⁶⁴ "Circumcision was a sign of repentance.... Jeremiah 4:4.... Thus, Paul terms it a seal of the righteousness of faith. Romans 4:11.... God ordered circumcision to be performed on the bodies of infants [Genesis 17:10f].... Since God imputed circumcision, the sign of repentance and faith, [even] to infants -- it should not seem absurd that they are now made partakers of baptism."

Thus, the Christian believers' infant "children are baptized for...[ongoing] repentance and faith. Though these are not yet formed in them [fully], yet the seed of both lies hidden in them by the secret operation of the Spirit" -- *arcana tamen Spiritus operatione utriusque semen in illis latet* . "Still, even

⁵⁶² *Ib.* IV:16:18 (cf. Kramer's *op. cit.*, p. 136 n. 1).

⁵⁶³ *Inst.* IV:16:19.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ib.* IV:16:20.

regenerated babies understand all of this only in a babylike way, and certainly not with the adult comprehension they will one day attain.

Now the Anabaptists rightly argue that baptism 'is not to be given to any but those who are capable of such feelings' of 'regeneration and renewing.' Titus 3:5. But then, explains Calvin, "neither ought circumcision -- which is designated 'regeneration' -- to be conferred on any but the regenerate [Colossians 2:11-13)....

"They [the Anabaptists] always remain caught in this dilemma. The command of God to circumcise infants was either legitimate and exempt from cavil, or deserved reprehension. If there was nothing incompetent or absurd in it, no absurdity can be shown in the observance of paedobaptism!"

Calvin goes on:⁵⁶⁵ "If those on whom the Lord has bestowed His election...depart this life before they become adults -- He, by the incomprehensible energy of His Spirit, renews them in the way which He alone deems expedient.... We are born sinners.... We stand in need of forgiveness and pardon from the very womb.... God does not preclude this age from the hope of mercy, but rather gives assurance of it! Why should we deprive it [this 'age' of prenatal infancy 'from the very womb'] of the sign -- which is much inferior to the reality?"

For "infants receive forgiveness of sins. Therefore, they are not to be deprived of the sign.... By baptism, Christ intends to attest the ablution by which He cleanses His Church. It would seem inequitable to deny this attestation to infants, who are justly deemed part of the Church -- seeing they are called heirs of the heavenly Kingdom [Matthew 19:13f].... Infants whom He enumerates among His members, are to be baptized."

Calvin continues:⁵⁶⁶ "The Lord, when He chose Abraham..., after his faith in the promise, made him partaker of the sacrament [of circumcision].... The infant [Isaac] born to him..., is included in the promise by hereditary right from his mother's womb.... The children of believers...are partakers of the covenant.... There is no reason why they should be denied the sign, [just] because they are unable to swear to its stipulations....

"The Lord sometimes declares that the children born to the Israelites are begotten and born to Him. Ezekiel 16:20f & 23:37. For He undoubtedly gives the place of 'sons' to the children of those to whose seed He has promised that He will be a Father.... Children deriving their origin from Christians -- as they are immediately on their birth [and indeed even from their generation onward] received by God as heirs of the covenant -- are also to be admitted to baptism."

Even prenatal babies and infants all need to be born again

Continues Calvin:⁵⁶⁷ "No man, until renewed...by the Spirit, can enter the Kingdom of God. This moreover plainly explodes the fiction of those who consign all the unbaptized to eternal death.... What will they make of a youth who, after being imbued duly and properly with the rudiments of piety, while waiting for the day

⁵⁶⁵ *Ib.* IV:16:21-22.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ib.* IV:16:24.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ib.* IV:16:25-26; *cf.* too Calvin's *Sermons on Daniel* (9:19-20a), ed. Calvin Translation Society; and his *Op. Omn.* 41:577.

of baptism, is unexpectedly carried off by sudden death? The promise of our Lord is clear, 'he who hears My Word and believes in Him Who sent Me, has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but has passed from death to life.' John 5:24. We nowhere read of His having condemned him who was not yet baptized!"

"We must not deem baptism so necessary as to suppose that everyone who has lost the opportunity of obtaining it, has forthwith perished.... Moreover, baptism being, as they [the sacramentalistic antipaidobaptists] hold, necessary to salvation -- they, in denying it to infants, consign them all to eternal death! Let them now consider what kind of agreement they have with the words of Christ, Who says that 'of such [infants] is the Kingdom of heaven.' Matthew 19:14.... We have already established the doctrine concerning the regeneration of infants."

Calvin concludes:⁵⁶⁸ "It is certain that infants are blessed by Him [Matthew 19:13-15 *cf.* 18:1-6; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15f]. It follows that they are freed from death.... I admit that all the posterity of Adam, born of the flesh, bear their condemnation with them from the womb. I hold that this is no obstacle to the immediate application of the divine remedy!"

"Servetus [the antipaidobaptistic and anabaptistic unitarian] cannot show that by divine appointment, several years must elapse before the new spiritual life begins. Paul's testimony is that, though lost by nature, the children of believers are holy by supernatural grace [Romans 11:16 and First Corinthians 7:14].... When the office of teaching was committed to the apostles, they were not prohibited from baptizing infants [Matthew 28:19]....

Who can infer...that baptism is to be denied to infants whom...the Lord consecrated to Himself by gratuitous adoption? ... By baptism, they are admitted into the fold of Christ [the Visible Church].... Who will presume...to give the law to God and say that He may not ingraft infants into Christ by some...secret method? ... From non-age..., God takes His own methods of regenerating....

"The design of Satan in assaulting paedobaptism with all his forces, is to keep out of view and gradually efface that attestation of divine grace which the promise itself presents to our eyes. In this way, not only would men impiously be ungrateful for the mercy of God, but be less careful in training their children to piety. For it is no slight stimulus to us to bring them up in the fear of God and the observance of His Law, when we reflect that from their birth they have been considered and acknowledged by Him as His children!"

Calvin disproves the rejection of infant baptism by Servetus

Calvin's defence of his own baptismal views against those of the anti-trinitarian and anti-paidobaptistic heretic Servetus, are full of instruction. Declares Calvin:⁵⁶⁹ "Servetus, not the least among the Anabaptists..., [rightly] maintains that...all who believe not in the Son, remain in death [and that] the wrath of God keeps on abiding on them. John 3:36." But Servetus then wrongly assumes that "infants...are unable to believe, [and] lie under condemnation."

Replies Calvin: "Seeing it is certain that [covenantal] infants are blessed by Him [Christ], it follows that they are freed from death.... While I admit that

⁵⁶⁸ *Ib.* IV:16:31-32.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ib.* IV:16:31.

all the posterity of Adam, born of the flesh, bear their condemnation with them in the womb - I hold that this is no obstacle to the immediate application of the divine remedy.

"Servetus cannot show that by divine appointment several years must elapse before the new spiritual life begins. Paul's testimony is that though lost by nature, the children of believers are holy by supernatural grace... Servetus [himself] afterwards adds that no man becomes our brother, unless by the spirit of adoption -- which is only conferred by the hearing of faith."

Answers Calvin: "Who will presume from this, to give [or prescribe] the law to God -- and say that He may not ingraft infants into Christ by some other secret method? He [Servetus] objects that Cornelius was baptized after receiving the Holy Spirit.... He objects that infants cannot be regarded as new men.... But what I have said again and again, I now repeat.... From non-age...God takes His own methods of regenerating!"

In several letters to Servetus, Calvin makes even more pertinent remarks. "We acknowledge no use of baptism -- as long as this promise is not received by faith.... Yet one receives the promise not just for oneself, but likewise for one's children."⁵⁷⁰ "We say that Christ extends His hand to the children of holy parents as soon as they are born or conceived ('*simul ac nascitur* ') -- in order to liberate them from the general guilt of sin."⁵⁷¹ "The children whom God gathers from this life, are without doubt regenerated by the secret working of the Spirit."⁵⁷²

Furthermore -- as Calvin points out in his work entitled *Refutation of the Errors of Michael Servetus* (the antitrinitarian Anabaptist) -- the Spirit of God can indeed work in children to justify them. "We sense that the Kingdom of God starts in men" alias human beings, explains Calvin,⁵⁷³ "when they are regenerated. For we indeed say they are 'regenerated' -- when they are illuminated through faith in Christ, when their hearts are reformed in obedience to God, and summarily when the image of God is restored in them."

"If one may here reason after the manner of Servetus," continues Calvin,⁵⁷⁴ "would there not be a plausible complaint against God...that He is cruel Who -- [though] gratuitously condoning the crimes of His [adult] enemies -- had [then] not rescued from death His own most innocent images [namely covenantal infants]?"

However, Calvin himself responds: "Whomsoever Christ blesses, He exempts from the curse of Adam and the wrath of God.... [Covenantal] infants, it is known, were blessed by Him (Mark 10:16). Therefore, they are exempt from the wrath of God!"

Calvin's Catechisms on baptism

In his 1537 *Instruction in Faith*, Calvin presents the essence of his 1536 *Institutes* in popular form. There, he writes to [infantly baptized] older Christians --

⁵⁷⁰ *Corp. Ref.* VIII:483.

⁵⁷¹ *Corp. Ref.* VIII:615.

⁵⁷² *Corp. Ref.* VIII:494.

⁵⁷³ *Corp. Ref.* VIII:483,489,493.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ib.*, as cited by J. Stagg's *Calvin...on Universal Salvation of Infants*, Richmond Va., Presb. Committee of Publication, n.d., pp. 105f.

especially to prepare them for their first communion service (but not before their teenage).

Says Calvin:⁵⁷⁵ "Baptism has been given to us by God -- first to help our faith in Him, and secondly [to help] our profession of faith before men.... Baptism serves likewise as our acknowledgment of faith in the sight of men.... We rightly baptize our children, since they are already participants in the eternal covenant through which the Lord promises that He will be the God not only of us but also of our posterity." Genesis 17:1-14.

In 1541, we find the Little and General Councils in Geneva decreeing *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* for the Reformed Church in that city. There, by order of Calvin and others, we find it resolved⁵⁷⁶ that "baptism is not to take place except at the hour of preaching, and it shall be administered solely by the Ministers....

"The names of the children, together with the names of their parents, are to be recorded. If any illegitimate child is found, the magistracy is to be informed. Strangers are not to be accepted as godparents, but only Christian persons who are also members of our own communion -- since others are not capable of promising the Church to instruct the children as they should."

Furthermore, according to the original draft, the baptismal font was to be near the pulpit -- so that "the mystery and use of baptism" might better be recited so as to be audible to all present.⁵⁷⁷

In his 1541 *Geneva Catechism*, Calvin states⁵⁷⁸ that "the effect follow[s] the use of the sacraments..., when we receive them by faith." He also says that "the water" of baptism is "by no means" a "washing of the souls." Indeed, he further writes: that "the legitimate use of baptism" requires that "we baptize infants"; that "the administration...of baptism...is confined to...the Minister"; and that "the Minister ought...not to give it to every one who is clearly unworthy of receiving it..., because it cannot be done without insulting and profaning the sacrament!"

Significantly, this *Geneva Catechism* -- "Calvin's Catechism" -- was later approved by the Church of Scotland, and joined to the latter's *Book of Common Order*. See Crespin's (1606) *Catechism or Maner to Teache Children the Christian Religion*. The sub-title further describes this work as a catechism: "Wherein the Minister Demandeth the Question and the Childe Maketh Answere." This catechism is then said to have been: "Made by the Excellent Doctor and Pastor in Christe's Church, John Calvin."⁵⁷⁹

Baptism in Calvin's Liturgical Forms

In 1542, among his *Liturgical Forms*, we find Calvin⁵⁸⁰ adapting -- from the order for public worship used at Strassburg -- his *Form of Administering the Sacrament*

⁵⁷⁵ *Instruction in Faith*, ed. Fuhrmann, Lutterworth, London, 1949, ch. 28.

⁵⁷⁶ P.E. Hughes: *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1966, pp. 35 & 44.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ib.* p. 44 n. 4.

⁵⁷⁸ In *Tracts and Treatises*, II, pp. 33 & 85f.

⁵⁷⁹ L.B. Schenck: *The Presbyterian Doctrine of Children in the Covenant*, Yale, New Haven Conn., 1940, p. 40.

⁵⁸⁰ In *Tracts & Treat.*, II, pp. 99B & 113f; cf. too p. v "Contents" (pp. 99B - 129) & pp. 129f.

Composed for the Use of the Church of Geneva. There he insists: "It is particularly necessary to know that infants are to be brought for baptism...on the Lord's Day at the time of catechizing..., so that...it may be performed in the presence and under the eyes of the whole congregation...."

"Our Lord demonstrates in what poverty and wretchedness we are all born [or conceived], by telling us that we must be born again.... Our nature needs to be renewed, in order to gain admission to the Kingdom of God. It [baptism] is a sign that is altogether perverted" -- whenever conferred on all and sundry.

"By this, then, He admonishes us to humble ourselves.... Our gracious God, not contenting Himself with having adopted us for His children and with having 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.... He adopted them for His children.... The Lord Jesus Christ came down to earth not to diminish the grace of God His Father, but to extend the covenant of salvation.... There is no doubt that our children are heirs of the life which He has promised to us...."

"Hence St Paul says (First Corinthians 7:14) that God sanctifies them from their mothers' womb, to distinguish them from the children of pagans and unbelievers. For this reason, our Lord Jesus Christ received the children that were brought to Him" by believing parents -- "by declaring that the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them." Indeed, right before the administration of the infant baptism, Calvin would ask the parents who professed their own Christianity -- "to be careful to instruct it [the child] in all this doctrine, and generally in all that is contained in the Holy Scriptures etc."

Apparently also in 1542, in his *Brief Form of a Confession of Faith*, Calvin further declared that "the Sacraments...would be useless to us -- did not the Holy Spirit render them efficacious as instruments." Indeed, "since the promise of adoption reaches even to the posterity of believers -- I acknowledge that the infants of believers ought to be received into the [Visible] Church by baptism... In this matter, I detest the ravings of the Anabaptists!"

Calvin's Antidote to the Romish Articles of Paris

Still in 1542, we find Calvin publishing his *Antidote to the 'Articles Agreed Upon by the [Romish] Faculty of Sacred Theology of Paris'*.⁵⁸¹ The latter had drawn up a set of 'Articles' -- defining what it held to be orthodox Roman Catholic beliefs. It had prescribed them as binding -- upon lecturers and students alike.

Article I had held: 'We must believe...that to all, even to infants, baptism is necessary for salvation, and that by means of it the grace of the Holy Spirit is given.' Thus, fearing the damnation of all unbaptized infants, this very first Article implicitly re-authorized that even unordained women may baptize apparently dying infants. This was purportedly in order to 'regenerate' them -- lest they should die unbaptized!

Calvin's immediate reply is very witty. There, we find him publishing these Romish 'Articles' one by one. After each of these thus reprinted Articles, Calvin next supplies his own sarcastic (Quasi-Romish) 'proof' for the specific Romish Article momentarily under consideration. Then he adds his own candid and more positive

⁵⁸¹ *Ib.* I, pp. 69f.

exposition -- in counter-argument.

As his sarcastic Quasi-Romish 'proof' for Article I, advocating baptismal regeneration, the Genevan genius quips: "Because otherwise, there would be no efficacy in the baptism given by women, which is founded expressly on the belief that baptism is one of the essentials of salvation."

Still quipping sarcastically, Calvin then goes on to point out that Roman Catholic theologians alias teachers or "doctors still debate...whether an infant [in danger] at the point of death (*in periculo mortis*) -- if water is not at hand -- ought to be plunged into a well [and so drowned], rather than commended to God.... Whereas if baptism is not essential to salvation [as consistent Protestants allege], the act would be a murder -- deserving of death.... There are also other questions...as to whether, in a case of necessity, it be not true baptism to spit in the face. All these questions would be not only superfluous but foolish also -- did we not hold the principle!"

More seriously, Calvin then candidly observes in his own counter-argument (headed 'Antidote to Article I') how "Paul teaches that the children of believers are born holy. First Corinthians 7:14. And indeed, baptism would not at all be suitable to them, if their salvation were not already included in this promise: 'I will be a God to them, and to your seed after you!'" Genesis 17:7.

"For they [the children of believers] do not become the sons of God through baptism. But because, in virtue of the promise, they are heirs of adoption -- therefore the Church admits them to baptism!" Significantly, adds Calvin, we never read that the great saint "John [the baptizer] was baptized -- though he was the minister of baptism to others." Yet nonetheless, he was indeed justified -- even without baptism!

Calvin concludes: "In Abraham, the father of the faithful, the righteousness of faith preceded circumcision. So, in the children of the faithful, in the present day -- the gift of adoption is prior to baptism. According to the words of the promise: 'I will be a God to your seed!' Genesis 17:7."

No indiscriminate baptisms of all applicants (by whomsoever)

Although the above clearly establishes the rightness of baptizing the infants of believers, it should not be taken to imply that Calvin would have the children of believers baptized at any price. For the very next year -- in October 1543 -- he writes⁵⁸² to the ecclesiastical officers in Mompelgard that if a political potentate or a prince wishes to enforce 'baptism by women' -- they were to oppose it, even unto blood!

Nor were such baptisms in any way necessary. For elect "infants may obtain salvation without baptism," explains Calvin. "We hold that baptism, instead of regenerating or saving them, only seals the salvation of which they were previously partakers."

In Calvin's 1544 *Brief Instruction Against the Anabaptists*, he combats⁵⁸³ the view

⁵⁸² *Corp. Ref.* X:625 (as cited in Kramer's *op. cit.*, p. 111 n. 1. See too *Corp. Ref.* 9:101, as cited in R.S. Wallace's *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament*, Geneva Divinity School Press, Tyler Tx., 1982, p. 196 nn. 4 & 5.

⁵⁸³ *Op. Omn.* VII:61.

that the matter signified must always fully precede the sign. He explains: "It is to dispute against God, to wish that the truth always goes ahead of the sign."

Nevertheless, he adds: "It is sufficient that any faith whatever follows -- at least in part." Yet those words "at least in part" -- '*pour le moins en partie*' -- presuppose the probability of a 'small faith' also in the child of the covenant, already established as a fruit of the regeneration of that baby, even prior to his or her infant baptism.⁵⁸⁴

Calvin's 1545 Latin-language *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, is also very important in this regard. There,⁵⁸⁵ he has the catechumen answer his catechizer: "Baptism is a kind of entrance into the Church."

Here, the words "the Church" mean the Visible Church -- and not the Church Invisible alias the Kingdom of God. That is obvious -- from subsequent statements in the *Catechism*. For the catechizer soon thereafter asks: "Do you think that the water is a washing of the soul?"

To this, the catechumen then replies: "By no means! For it were impious to snatch away this honour from the blood of Christ, which was shed in order to wipe away all our stains and render us pure and unpolluted in the sight of God. First Peter 1:19; First John 1:7. And we receive the fruit of this cleansing, when the Holy Spirit sprinkles our consciences with that sacred blood. Of this, we have a seal -- in the sacrament."

Calvin's Ministerial Register anent baptism

In 1546, the above is fleshed out in the *Register of the Ministers of the Church in Geneva*. There, according to the presbyterial decree (of Calvin⁵⁸⁶ and others), it was decided that "baptism shall only be administered "at the same time as the sermon.

"The Ministers, moreover, shall admonish the people to link it with the catechism. The children to be baptized, shall be brought in when...the sermon begins. Their fathers shall be present." For those fathers or parents, being communicant members, would then and there need to promise publically to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Ephesians 6:1-4.

Here, very clearly, it is seen that Calvin was determined to eradicate -- from among Protestants -- the last remnants of Romish superstition concerning any real need for godparents at baptisms. Indeed, he here also emphasizes that there can, for Protestants, never be an 'emergency' need of baptism -- such as by midwives or nursemaids -- in respect of a suddenly dying baby.

Rome had made the use of godparents very fashionable. Consequently, this had become regarded as highly desirable -- if not a necessity -- at infant baptisms performed in the Romish Church. Often these 'godparents' were themselves but unknowledgeable children -- such as the baby's own older yet still immature nephew or niece!

⁵⁸⁴ Compare Kramer's *op. cit.*, p. 142.

⁵⁸⁵ Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.*, II, pp. 33 & 86f.

⁵⁸⁶ Compare Hughes: *op. cit.*, pp. 53 & 55f.

Rome had also decreed that even nursemaids working for Romish parents -- even if Mohammedan or Pagan maidservants -- should be told to perform 'emergency baptisms' on the unbaptized infants of their mistresses, if the babies suddenly seemed to be dying before a priest could be summoned. For those babies were not to be permitted to die unbaptized and -- according to Rome -- thereby miss out on going to heaven!

So Calvin here rejects all godparents -- except where knowledgeable and mature communicant members of the Protestant Church who could be expected and required to execute what they would be promising. And Calvin here also moves against all baptismal administrations by ex-romanistic midwives and nursemaids -- who, in their remnantal superstitiousness, might perhaps be tempted themselves to baptize unbaptized ailing babies (or even adults).

Hence Calvin continues:⁵⁸⁶ "No godparent shall be accepted as sponsor for a child -- unless...at least fifteen years old; of the same confession with us; and has been duly instructed." Further: "If midwives usurp the office of baptizing, they shall be reprimanded or punished according to the seriousness of the offence...under penalty of being placed for three days on bread and water and a fine of three sou's [alias fifteen centimes]. And all who consent to it and do not report it, shall be subject to the same penalty!"

All such superstitious 'emergency baptisms' (*sic*) need to be discouraged as strongly as possible. For, as Calvin further points out,⁵⁸⁷ salvation does not depend upon the baptism of a person. Baptism does not confer upon infants the power of becoming sons and heirs of God. Because the infants of believers are already in that position before their baptism, the grace of adoption is sealed by their baptism. Otherwise, the Anabaptists would be right -- to deny such infants this sacrament!"

The baptismal views of Rome's Council of Trent

In 1545-47, we find Rome enacting some very important decrees during the first seven sessions of her great Ecclesiastical Council in its meeting at Trent. There, we see it resolved:⁵⁸⁸ "Whosoever...denies that this merit of Christ Jesus is applied to infants as well as adults by the Sacrament of Baptism duly conferred after the form of the [Roman Catholic] Church -- let him be *anathema* " alias accursed! "Whosoever denies that the guilt of original sin is remitted by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which is conferred in baptism..., let him be *anathema*!"

Further:⁵⁸⁹ "Unless they were born again in Christ, they would never be justified.... Justification of the ungodly...is a translation from out of that state in which man the son of the first Adam is born, and into a state of grace.... Which translation, since the Gospel was promulgated, cannot be effected without the bath of regeneration or the wish for it (*sine lavacro regenerationis aut ejus voto*). As it is written, 'Unless a man be born again,' &c."

⁵⁸⁷ Cited in Schenk: *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁵⁸⁸ *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* V:3 & 5 (cited in Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.*, II, pp. 79f).

⁵⁸⁹ *Sixth Session of the Council of Trent*, chs. 4 to 8 and can. 12 & 23. As quoted in Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.*, III, pp. 93-96 & 105f. See too Schaff's *Creeeds of Christendom*, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1983 ed., II, pp. 91f.

For Trent holds that the sacrament of baptism comes to "the damned" -- and "totally expunges" the guilt of all pre-baptismal sin. Baptism itself "translates" a man from the state of death, into spiritual life, "by its own working" -- *ex opere operato*.

"The causes of justification, are these. The final cause is the glory of God and Christ.... The efficient cause is a merciful God Who freely washes and sanctifies.... The instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which justification is never obtained....

"Whosoever shall say that justifying faith is nothing else than trust in the Divine mercy forgiving sins by Christ, or that this trust is the only thing by which we are justified -- let him be *anathema* Whosoever shall say that a man, once justified, cannot sin any more or lose grace...unless it be by the special privilege of God as the Church holds concerning the blessed Virgin -- let him be *anathema!*"

Yet more:⁵⁹⁰ "Whosoever shall say that the [seven Romish] Sacraments of the New Law are not necessary to salvation...and that without them or a wish for them, men by faith alone obtain the grace of justification, though all [Sacraments] are not necessary for each [person] -- let him be *anathema!* Whosoever shall say that these Sacraments were instituted for the sake of nourishing faith alone -- let him be *anathema!*

"Whosoever shall say that in the three Sacraments - namely Baptism, Confirmation and 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!*"

Calvin's general demolition of Rome's Tridentine baptismal views

In Calvin's 1547 *Antidote to Trent* -- published in 1551 - he roundly declares⁵⁹¹ that these Tridentine Romanists had "been pleased to exclude from the Kingdom of God infants who have been snatched away before they could be offered for baptism." Objects the Reformer: "As if nothing were meant when it is said [precisely in Holy Scripture] that the children of believers are born holy! First Corinthians 7:14.

"Nay," continues Calvin, "on what ground do we [paidobaptist Protestants] admit them [the children of believers] to baptism -- unless that they *^a^r^e* the heirs of promise? For did not the promise of life apply to them -- it would be a profanation of baptism to give it to them." (*Nisi iam antea ad eos pertineret vitae promissio, baptismum profanaret quisquis daret*). "God *^h^a^s* adopted them into His Kingdom. How great injustice is done to His promise, as if it were not of itself sufficient for their salvation....

"The salvation of infants is included in the promise in which God declares to believers that He will be a God to them and to their seed. In this way, He declared that those deriving descent from Abraham were born to Him. Genesis 17:7. In virtue of this promise, they are admitted to baptism because they are considered members of the Church. Their salvation therefore has not its commencement in

⁵⁹⁰ *Seventh Session of the Council of Trent* can. 4 & 5 & 9, and *Of Baptism* ch. 5. As quoted in Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.*, III, pp. 164f. For the Latin text "*baptismo...est signum...indelebile unde eac iterari non possunt*," see Schaff's *Creeeds* II, p. 121.

⁵⁹¹ See Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.*, III, pp. 109f & 116f (against can. 5 & 8 of the *Sixth Session of the Council of Trent*). Compare too Calvin's *Op. Omn.* VII:444.

baptism -- but, being already founded on the Word, is sealed by baptism!"

"I neither can nor ought to let pass the very great [Romish] absurdity of calling baptism alone the 'instrumental' cause [of justification].... Baptism is the sacrament of faith.... It [baptism] is nothing else than an appendage of the gospel. They [the Romanists] therefore act preposterously in assigning it the first place.... Whosoever, postponing the Gospel, enumerates baptism among the causes of salvation -- by so doing gives proof that he knows not what baptism is!"

Trent's Seventh Session on baptism -- and Calvin's Antidote

The 1546 Seventh Session was Trent's most important, on baptism. There, the Romanists declared:⁵⁹² "Whosoever shall say that baptism is free, *i.e.* , not necessary to salvation -- let him be *anathema* !"

In 1547, Calvin responds:⁵⁹³ "We acknowledge that the sacraments are intended not only to maintain but [also] to increase faith" already present. "But these horned gentry" or mitred gentlemen at Trent "mean something else! For they pretend that the sacraments have a magical power which is efficacious -- without faith!"

"This error destroys the relation which the Scriptures uniformly establish between the sacraments and faith.... The sacraments are nothing but instrumental causes of [non-regeneratingly] bestowing grace upon us -- and are beneficial and produce their effect only when they are subservient to faith....

"No sound Christian makes all men equal in the administration of Word and sacraments. Not only because all things ought to be done in the Church decently and in order [First Corinthians 14:40]. But also because, by the special command of Christ, Ministers are ordained for that purpose [Matthew 28:16-19]. Therefore, as a special call is required -- no man who is not called, may take the honour upon himself [Hebrews 5:4]. Moreover: where" -- either in Scripture or in Early Church History -- "do they [the Romanists] find the office of baptizing enjoined on women, as they [the Romanists] permit them to do?"

Continues Calvin:⁵⁹⁴ "There is a twofold grace in baptism" -- both (1) before it, and (2) during its administration. In the pre-baptismal grace, "both remission of sins and 'regeneration' are offered to us" -- namely by grace alone, and through faith alone. During the later administration of baptism, these benefits are sealed.

As to the pre-baptismal grace -- explains Calvin -- "we teach that full remission is made, but that regeneration is only begun and goes on making progress during the whole of life." Accordingly, "sin really remains in us." For it "is not instantly in one day extinguished by baptism" -- as Rome wrongly teaches in its false doctrine of baptismal regenerationism!

As to the baptismal grace -- regeneration, already (rebuttably) presumed to exist in the baptizee -- is signified and sealed. Precisely for this reason, regeneration is no way effected or engineered by baptism itself.

⁵⁹² *Of the Sacraments in General* can. 5 & 9, in Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 165. For the full text of Canon 9, see at n. 590 above.

⁵⁹³ See Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.*, III, pp. 174 & 176f (*Antidote* against can. 5 & 9-10 on the *Sacraments in General* and against can. 10 *On Baptism*) of the *Seventh Session of the Council of Trent*).

⁵⁹⁴ In *Corp. Ref.* XXXV:425.

Rightly does the Calvinist Rev. Prof. Louis Berkhof remark⁵⁹⁵ that Calvin uses the term 'regeneration' to comprehend not only the first (pre-baptismal) inception of everlasting life in Christ. Calvin also uses the same term to refer as well to the subsequent manifestations of that grace -- since baptism, and throughout the rest of our earthly life.

Syncretism between Romanism & Pseudo-Protestantism anent baptism

Germany was by now strongly divided into Romish and Protestant factions. Already in 1541, four German Romish theologians (Eck, Gropper, Pflug and Helling) had met together in Regensburg with four conciliatory Protestants. The latter were: the antinomian Agricola, who had fallen away from Lutheranism; Bucer the Ex-Lutheran Zwinglian; the overly moderate Melancthon; and the unstable Protestant Pistorius (who later lapsed back into Romanism). All together, this consortium had then drawn up the *Colloquy of Ratisbon*.⁵⁹⁶

By 1546-47, Emperor Charles V of Germany -- above all else desirous of preserving the unity of his factionalized country! -- had issued the *Interim Declaration of Religion*.⁵⁹⁷ This was apparently little more than an expanded version⁵⁹⁸ of the 1541 *Ratisbon Colloquy*.

Yet the *Interim* was very appropriately so named! For the Romish Emperor Charles desired it to maintain the *status quo* in his land -- but only until Rome would be able to 're-absorb' the Protestants. Meantime, the *Council of Trent* investigated possible reforms⁵⁹⁹ -- and in 1563 finally completed that work.⁶⁰⁰

Fortunately for Germany and for Protestantism, the Romish Charles was defeated by Protestant princes in 1555. At that time, the Peace of Augsburg was established -- guaranteeing freedom to Lutherans in all the Lutheran areas of Germany.⁶⁰¹

The *Interim*, then, was by and large little else than "an undisguised transcript of Popery." It made only two concessions to Protestants of any real substance. Firstly, it allowed married Protestant Ministers (who had been Romish priests previously) to retain their wives. Secondly, it conceded to the laity communion in both kinds (at the Lord's supper).⁶⁰² Further than that, the *Interim* was Romish to the core.

Hence, this re-romanizing *Interim Declaration of Religion* was nothing other than slightly adulterated Romanism. No doubt for this very reason, we find Calvin

⁵⁹⁵ *Manual of Reformed Doctrine*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1933, p. 235.

⁵⁹⁶ See the arts. *Bucer*, (Butzer) Martin (1491-1551); *Ratisbon (Regensburg), Colloquy of (1541)*: in ed. Douglas's *op. cit.*, pp. 162 & 826. Also compare the art. *Pistorius, Johannes*: in ed. Schaff-Herzog's *op. cit.*, III, p. 1845. See too the *Translator's Preface* by Henry Beveridge, in Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III pp. xi.

⁵⁹⁷ In Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III p. 189.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ib.* pp. 232f *cf.* n. 596 above.

⁵⁹⁹ Art. *Augsburg, Interim of (1548)*, in ed. Douglas's *op. cit.* p. 85.

⁶⁰⁰ Schaff's *Creeeds*, II, pp. 77f.

⁶⁰¹ Art. *Augsburg, Peace of (1555)*, in ed. Douglas's *op. cit.* p. 85.

⁶⁰² Beveridge's *Translator's Preface* pp xi-xii, in Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III.

rightly calling it: the **Adultero** -German Interim!⁶⁰³ For he shrewdly saw through it as a deceptive attempt by the Romish Emperor Charles V to lure German Protestants back into a re-united 'Holy Roman Empire.'

Nowhere was the re-romanizing intent of the *Interim* more glaring, than in respect of its doctrine on baptism. There, it boldly declared⁶⁰⁴ that "as it is necessary to man for salvation, that he be regenerated into a new creature - seeing that otherwise he is by nature a child of wrath -- Christ Himself instituted the Sacrament of Baptism to be the laver of that Regeneration, which is not less necessary to the new and spiritual life than carnal nativity is to the natural life.... This Sacrament therefore washes, sanctifies, justifies us....

"In regard to the office of Baptism -- though it belongs chiefly to Priests -- yet a layman may rightly and usefully baptize in case of necessity.... Let the Ancient Ceremonies used in the Sacrament of Baptism all be retained -- viz. Exorcism, Renunciation, Profession of Faith, Chrism, &c. For they tend to figure and shew forth the efficacy of this Sacrament!"

Calvin attacks the 'Adultero-German Interim' on baptism

Calvin immediately wrote against this *Interim Declaration of Religion*. Then, in 1547, he published that refutation - under the title '*The Adultero-German Interim*': to which is added '*The True Method of Giving Peace to Christendom and of Reforming the Church*.'⁶⁰⁵

In this tract of his, *The True Method of Reforming the Church* (short title), Calvin is forthright from the very outset. For there he declares:⁶⁰⁶ "I am not here debating with Turks and Jews, who would wish the name of Christ utterly extinguished; nor with grosser Papists, who demand from us an open abjuration of true doctrine. But [I am...debating here] with the contrivers of a kind of specious pacification who leave us a half-Christ -- but in such a manner that there is no part of His doctrine which they do not obscure or bespatter with some stain of falsehood. And this artifice for deforming piety they send forth -- so help them! -- under the name of **reformation**."

Specifically referring to infant baptism, Calvin declares⁶⁰⁷ that "paedobaptism had...derived its origin from circumcision.... The offspring of believers are born holy: because their children, while yet in the womb, before they breathe the vital air, are included in the covenant of eternal life" -- *antequam vitalem spiritum hauriant, cooptati tamen sunt in foedus vitae aeternae*. Nor indeed are they admitted into the [Visible] Church by baptism on any other ground -- than that they belonged to the body of Christ before they were born. He who admits any others to baptism, profanes it....

"How could it be lawful to put [baptism as] the sacred impress of Christ -- on strangers? Baptism must therefore be preceded by adoption, which is not the cause merely of a partial salvation -- but bestows salvation entire, and is afterwards

⁶⁰³ Thus in Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III pp. 193f.

⁶⁰⁴ *Interim Declaration of Religion*, ch. 15:1-2 & 15:6 & 26:1; in Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III pp. 209f & 235.

⁶⁰⁵ Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III pp. 189f.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ib.* pp. 240f.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ib.* pp. 269 & 275f. See too Kramer's *op. cit.*, p. 111 n. 1 & p. 122 n. 2.

ratified by baptism....

"Error usually springs from error. The office of baptizing, which Christ committed to the Ministers of the Church alone, they [the Romanists and the Romanizers] delegate...to silly women....

"When discussing the form of baptism, they postpone the explanation of the doctrine" of the sacrament (*explication mysterii*). They do so, "as if it were of little moment - and insist on the bare pronounciation of the words (*pronuntiatio verborum*). As if Christ, when He ordered His apostles to baptize in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, had dictated some kind of magical charm" or song (*magicum carmen*).

But No! Christ "rather meant summarily to indicate whence the whole efficacy of baptism flows -- in Whose Name and by Whose order it is administered; on what faith it depends; and to what end it ought to be referred!"

Calvin's baptismal Appendix against syncretism

The first two of the latter three paragraphs are repeated by Calvin almost *verbatim* -- at the outset of his approximately 1548 *Appendix*. This is often called, in its own right: *Appendix to the Tract on 'The True Method of Reforming the Church.'*

Calvin wrote this *Appendix* to refute the sacramentalistic censure of himself -- that had been made by an anonymous printer. The latter had misprinted the German edition of Calvin's original document (*The True Method of Reforming the Church*). The printer had done so, it would seem, under the influence of another. Many suspect that other influence to have come from a prominent and fanatically Anti-Calvinistic Ultra-Lutheran, such as either Flaccius Illyricus or Joachim Westphal. At any rate, the document seriously misrepresented Calvin's own views regarding the sanctification of infants -- and anent baptism by women.⁶⁰⁸

The anonymous printer, remarks Calvin, had "corrupted and mutilated" the "German copy" or edition of Calvin's 1547 tract on *The True Method of Reforming the Church*. So now, almost a year later, Calvin was issuing his *Appendix* to that tract -- in order to present his true views on these matters especially to the German public.

In his *Appendix*, after repeating most of the above-mentioned three paragraphs of his tract on *The True Method of Reforming the Church*, Calvin further goes on⁶⁰⁹ to insist: "If any one at this time maintains paedobaptism keenly, and on strong grounds, I am certainly in the number.... [Yet] I disapprove of the absolute necessity which they [the Romanists and the Ultra-Lutherans] urge too strongly, and do not admit that a child who from sudden death has not been able to be presented for baptism -- is therefore excluded from the Kingdom of God!"

"The children of believers, before they were begotten, were adopted (by the Lord) -- when He said: 'I will be your God and the God of your seed.' Genesis 17:7. That in this promise the baptism of infants is included, is absolutely certain.... The genuine children of Abraham even before they were born, are the heirs of eternal life. Since the promise of God places them in the same position....

⁶⁰⁸ Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III pp. 344f. Citing *Corp. Ref.* VII & XLII, Kramer's *op. cit.*, pp. 143f & 145f n. 3, attributes the authorship to Flaccius.

⁶⁰⁹ Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* III pp. 346f (compare Kramer's *op. cit.* pp. 122 n. 2).

"I maintain that they [covenant infants] may obtain salvation without baptism.... Because the promise which assigns life to them while still in the womb, has sufficient efficacy in itself. Hence it is, that Paul makes honourable mention of them as holy -- First Corinthians 7:14 intimating that they are separated from the common race of mankind by virtue of the covenant."

Now "paedobaptism" or the baptism of infants, continues Calvin,⁶¹⁰ "rests on this ground -- that God recognizes those who are presented to Him by our ministry [when baptizing them], as already His own.... He anciently called all who derived their origin from Israel, His own [Ezekiel 16:20-21]. And justly! For the offspring was holy, as Paul teaches. Romans 11:16 [cf. too First Corinthians 7:14]....

"Believers beget their children not by the Spirit, but [by] the flesh. The natural condition of all, therefore, is in this alike -- that they are obnoxious...." That is to say, they are subject not only "to sin" but also to "eternal death." However, "the special privilege which the apostle attributes to the children of believers, flows from the covenant. By the supervening of this, the curse of nature is destroyed.... Those who were by nature unholy, are consecrated to God by grace....

"I then infer that [even covenant] children have need of regeneration. But I maintain that this gift comes to them by promise, and that baptism follows as a seal.... John the baptizer was sanctified from the womb....

"Christ...ordered that not saints only or the children of saints, but that all nations should be baptized" -- and what nation can ever exist, without its own infant children? Exodus 12:37 and First Corinthians 10:2! Yet "I say that baptism is profaned -- if we admit aliens....to it, without distinction....

"Those who were formerly aliens, are ingrafted into the Church. This Paul teaches. Romans 11:20.... Aliens are indeed called to baptism by the Voice of Christ, but are adopted previously into the family.... Thus Abraham [himself] was of the household [of the faithful] -- before he received the sign of circumcision. In regard to the young, as God comprehends them also under the covenant, they are no longer reputed aliens -- but are heirs of grace, as we learn from Peter's discourse [Acts 2:38f]....

"The infant [of a believer] is included in the covenant by hereditary right -- even from its mother's womb.... If the children of believers, without the help of understanding, are partakers of the covenant -- there is no reason why they should be kept from the sign [just] because they cannot swear to the stipulations of the covenant! But he who is an infidel, being descended of wicked parents, is regarded as an alien from the communion of the covenant -- until he is united to God by faith."

Are emergency baptisms by nursemaids proper and praiseworthy?

Throughout this *Appendix to the True Method of Reforming the Church*, Calvin is refuting this sacramentalistic anonymous printer. For the latter had misprinted the German edition of Calvin's tract on *The True Method of Reforming the Church*. There, the printer had tried to make it appear that Calvin himself favoured emergency baptism by nursemaids!

⁶¹⁰ *Ib.* pp. 348f.

Writes Calvin of the printer:⁶¹¹ "He asks whether baptism is to be denied to a Jew or a Turk, if they request it. Here, everybody sees under what gross hallucination he labours - in assuming that those are [still] aliens, to whom He [God] assigns faith." For unbaptized Jews and Turks who request baptism, thereby show that they have already embraced the Christian faith -- even before their baptism!

"When I say that baptism is profaned if it is bestowed on 'aliens'" -- Calvin continues -- by 'aliens' "I mean...not those...who, dead in themselves, seek life in Him [Christ].... By 'aliens' are to be understood not all [those] who have been[!] alienated from God by sin -- but those whom He still[!] keeps from His Kingdom. Our ministry [of baptizing] does not extend to them....

"Such are all those to whom baptism is not destined by the command of God." This anonymous printer who, unlike Calvin, himself favoured 'emergency' baptisms -- observes Calvin -- "never considers what distinction there is between the children of Christians and Turks" (alias the infants of Moslems).

Calvin continues:⁶¹² "From the same source [viz. the anonymous printer], flows the delirious dream of making women administer baptism -- in what he calls 'a case of necessity'.... This opinion, rashly conceived under the darkness of the papacy, has so prevailed -- that there are many from whose minds it can scarcely be eradicated....

"All admit that the right and office of baptizing, is not ordinarily competent to a woman.... I am not unaware that the pretended necessity is wont to be inferred from the words of Christ: 'Unless a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.' John 3:5.

"Led away in old time by a similar error, they [the Papists] gave the bread and cup of the eucharist to infants. Because it is written 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you!' John 6:53. But in the present day, even the Papists -- blind though they be -- do not stumble at this stone!

"I know not how it happened that they placed the absolute necessity in baptism -- though this is absurd. And that - while they admit of some modification in the case of adults, they shew themselves indeed inexorable only to infants! They grant that a man of adult age may be saved without baptism -- provided he has a wish for it. Why then should not the pious vows of parents exempt a new-born infant from punishment?"

Calvin continues:⁶¹³ "We are agreed that infants [of believers] ought to be baptized, and that the omission of the sign is not optional.... I verily admit that all die in Adam, and that infants no less than adults need the redemption of Christ.... Only I think Augustine mistaken when, in fixing the danger, he cuts off the hope of life from [unbaptized] infants whom the Lord declares to be His Own -- and to whom baptism would not be competent if they were not already called to the fellowship of the Church by the promise of God."

In infant baptism, however, "the parent may see the salvation which the Lord has promised in His Word -- sealed and...engraven on the body of his child.... He

⁶¹¹ *Ib.* pp. 351f.

⁶¹² *Ib.* pp. 351f.

⁶¹³ *Ib.* pp. 354f.

may not be seen to neglect the badge which has been given to confirm faith..., so that the child may bear the ensign of Christians [even] unto the grave....

Calvin next discusses -- critically -- the view of Augustine anent baptism by laymen. Says the Reformer:⁶¹⁴ "We may also conjecture, from what he says,⁶¹⁵ that baptism by women was altogether unknown in that age" around 400 A.D. "He says 'If a layman, compelled by necessity shall have given baptism -- I know not if any one can say piously that it is to be repeated. If it is done without any necessity compelling, it is the usurpation of another's office. If there is urgent necessity, it is no fault -- or a venial one.'"

Calvin's critique of Augustine's emergency baptisms

Next follows Calvin's critique of the above statement of Augustine. Calvin explains that Augustine "certainly ought rather to have raised the question with regard to women - had any such example then existed! As he is in doubt with regard to men only -- everybody must see that [baptism by] women never occurred to him.... The thing was altogether unheard of. He still remains undecided as to men, and dares not wholly excuse them of venial sin!"

In other words, according to Augustine, it is somewhat sinful for unordained men -- even in 'emergencies' -- to administer baptisms. Nevertheless, such baptisms are valid -- and should therefore not be repeated later. For -- and Calvin here agrees with Augustine -- "I know not if any one can piously say that it is to be repeated!"

Indeed, the very unrepeatability of circumcision -- and even of the highly irregular and totally unauthorized circumcision performed by Moses' wife Zipporah -- would tend to endorse this perception. Exodus 4:24-26, compare the *Westminster Confession of Faith* 28:5n-7s.

Continues Calvin:⁶¹⁶ "But clearly, all doubt is removed by a decree of the Council of Carthage [in 257 A.D.] -- in which, without exception, women are prohibited from administered baptism.... [Even before then, the *circa* 195f A.D.] Tertullian says 'it is not permitted to a woman to speak in the Church, nor to baptize, nor to serve or offer [the sacrament of the Lord's supper] -- lest she should claim for herself any function of the man, not to say of the presbyter'....

"Nor ought we to omit what is found [around 400 A.D.] in Epiphanius who, in the first book of his *Against Heresies*, upbraids Marcion with giving women licence to baptize, and counts it among the absurd mockeries of which he says his [Marcion's] sect was full. And, in the second book -- speaking of the [Montanistic] Phrygians and Priscillians -- he [Epiphanius] ridicules their madness in making bishops of women....

"No 'necessity' is excepted by Epiphanius.... He calls it 'mockery' to permit women to baptize.... This corruption is condemned by him as not excusable under any pretext! In the third book, when he says that the thing was not even permitted to the holy mother of Christ, and adds no restriction -- who sees not that baptism by women is absolutely disapproved by him?

⁶¹⁴ *Ib.* pp. 355f.

⁶¹⁵ Aug.: *Lib. ii, cont. ep. Parman. c. iii.*

⁶¹⁶ *Ib.* pp. 356f.

"In short, it is the height of impudence here to pretend the support of antiquity -- when it plainly appears that this abuse was not established without a barbarous confusion throughout Christendom.... The words of Christ [specifically to His (eleven) apostles and their ministerial associates] are clear: 'Go and teach all nations, and baptize them' [Matthew 28:16-19]. He certainly appointed them both preachers of the gospel and ministers of baptism. If, as the apostle testifies [Hebrews 5:4], no man duly takes honour upon himself in the Church unless he who is called as was Aaron -- I hold that whosoever baptizes without a lawful call, rashly intrudes into another's office....

"In the baptism by women -- what certainty can there be, while a rule delivered by Christ is violated? For that office of the Gospel which He assigns to ministers -- women [then] seize to themselves.... Tell me whether it be lawful for men [or human beings] to put asunder, what the Lord joins [together].... Two things were conjoined by Christ -- the preaching of the gospel and the administration of baptism. Let [not] the mouth of women then be opened contrary to the distinct prohibition of the Spirit -- if we would permit them to do another thing which is a [con]sequence from it!"

Non-Lutheran Calvinists 'de-zwinglianize' the Swiss churches

Probably early in 1548, we find Calvin from Geneva writing to the Zurich Reformer Bullinger about the new *Confession of Faith* the two of them were then drawing up -- to try and unite the Swiss Reformed Churches. Declares Calvin:⁶¹⁷ "Children do not receive the Spirit of regeneration at the same moment as they are baptized." To the contrary, covenant children usually receive that "Spirit of regeneration" before their own infant baptism!

In November 1548, the first draft of that new Confession -- the *Tigurine Consensus* [alias the 'Agreement of Zurich'] -- was ready. Here, we find an attempt by Calvin [and Bullinger] to unite both branches of the Swiss Reformed Church -- Calvinist and Zwinglian -- in a common doctrine of the sacraments. The *Consensus* was constantly improved. Ultimately, it was embraced by all of the Swiss Reformed Churches -- in Zurich, Geneva, Basle, Biel (Bienne), Berne, Coire, Milhausen, Neuchatel, St Gall, Schaffhausen, and the Grisons.

Thus the Swiss Reformed congregations -- never Lutheran -- were now 'de-zwinglianized' and thoroughly 'calvin-ized.' The Lutherans in general, however, were displeased with the *Consensus*. Indeed, particularly Westphal -- the Ultra-Lutheran extremist -- was immoderately furious!⁶¹⁸

Already on 13th March 1549, Calvin⁶¹⁹ and the Company of Pastors in Geneva sent *Articles concerning the Sacraments* to the Synod of Ministers in the State of Berne (both French-speaking and German-speaking). There, 'Article Six' and 'Article Seven' insist that in baptism and in the supper "the material element of water

⁶¹⁷ *Corp. Ref.* VII:704.

⁶¹⁸ Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* (II pp. 199-220); See A.A. Hodge's *Outlines of Theology* (Nelson, London, 1879, pp. 651f); Boeckel's *op. cit.*, 1847, pp. 173f); Ives's art. *Zurich Agreement* in ed. Douglas's *op. cit.* p. 1072; and Schaff's *Creeds* (I pp. 471).

⁶¹⁹ Heads of Consent 7-13,15,17-19a; as cited in A.A. Hodge's *op. cit.*, pp. 651f. For the Nineteenth Head -- that statement that "believers *before* and *without* the use of the sacraments, communicate with Christ" -- see Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* II p. 218. See too (ed.) P.E. Hughes's *op. cit.*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1966, pp. 100-2, 115f, and especially pp. 121f.

or bread or wine in no way offers us Christ.... Hence the error of the Papists is overthrown, who gaze on the elements and attach the confidence of their salvation to them."

The Zurich Articles anent the sacraments

These *Articles concerning the Sacraments* were then finalized, in and as the *Agreement of Zurich*, on 1st August 1549. There, Calvin further states that "the sacraments...have also these ends: to be marks and tokens of Christian profession...; to incite gratitude (thanksgiving); and to be exercises of faith....

"The testimonials and seals of His grace...are verities.... He Himself will beyond all doubt make good to us inwardly by His Spirit what the sacraments symbolize to our eyes and other senses, viz. [prior] possession of Christ.... We believe that all who by faith embrace the promises therein offered, do spiritually receive Christ.... They who have before been made partakers of Christ, do continue and renew their communion....

"The water, bread or wine by no means present Christ to us.... We must look rather to the promise whose office it is to lead us to Christ.... Faith makes us partakers of Christ... Hence the error of those who superstitiously worship (*obtupescent*) the elements.... For the sacraments apart from Christ, are nothing.... It is God alone Who works by His Spirit.... In using the instrumentality of the sacraments, He thereby neither infuses into them His own power nor abates in the least the efficiency of His Spirit....

"Paul advises us that 'he who plants, is nothing; [so too] neither he who waters [or baptizes] -- but God Who keeps on giving the increase!' First Corinthians 3:7.... The sacraments...are nothing. For they will be of no avail, except God work the whole....

"The sacraments are sometimes called seals; are said to nourish, confirm and promote faith; and yet the Spirit alone is properly the seal, and the same Spirit is the [pre-baptismal] Originator and Perfecter of our faith. For all these attributes of the sacraments, occupy a subordinate place -- so that not even the least portion of the work of our salvation is transferred from its Sole Author to either the creature or the elements" of the sacraments.

"God does not exert His power promiscuously in all who receive the sacraments.... Just as He enlightens unto faith none but those whom He has foreordained unto life -- so by the hidden power of His Spirit, He causes only the elect to receive what the sacraments offer.... Nothing is received in the sacraments except by faith.... Each one receives according to the measure of his faith....

Especially in the 'Nineteenth Head' of this *Agreement of Zurich* we read that "believers before and without the use of the sacraments communicate with Christ." Here Calvin insists: "The use of the sacraments [itself], confers on unbelievers [absolutely] nothing more -- than if they had abstained therefrom. Indeed, [it] is only pernicious to them! So, without their use -- the verity which they [the sacraments] symbolize, endures to those who believe." Thus, even before baptism and irrespective of baptism, "believers receive the reality which is there figured" in baptism.⁶²⁰

⁶²⁰ Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* II p. 218.

"Thus, in baptism...Paul's sins...had already been washed away before [Acts 9:5-18 & 22:8-16]. Thus also baptism was - to Cornelius.... He had already received the gift of the Holy Spirit [Acts 10:1-48 & 11:12-17]. So in the Supper, Christ...imparted Himself to us before -- and abides continually in us forever.... In the sacraments, [our] faith is confirmed!"⁶²¹

Baptismal water does not cleanse but seals salvation

The above *Confession* (or *Mutual Consent in regard to the Sacraments*), alias the *Tigurine Consensus* or the *Agreement of Zurich* between the ministers in the Church of Zurich and John Calvin of Geneva, was published in 1551. It was expounded in an *Exposition* -- itself published in 1554. "This *Confession*," says Calvin's successor Beza, "knit Bullinger and Calvin and the Churches of Zurich and Geneva in the closest ties."⁶²²

In the 1554 *Exposition* itself, Calvin shows⁶²³ that Ultra-Lutherans like Westphal were very unlike Luther himself (who had died in 1546). For "Luther, whose imitators they would fain be thought, is too well known to all.... He could not bear that the sacraments should be regarded merely as external marks of profession and not also as badges and symbols of divine grace....

"Without making further mention of a man [like Luther] whose memory I revere, and whose honour I am desirous to consult - let me declare my opinion simply.... They [the **Ultra-** Lutherans] hear us [Calvin-ists] confess on the one hand that the sacraments are neither empty figures nor mere external badges of piety, but seals of the divine promises.... On the other [hand], they are instruments by which God acts effectually in His elect.... They are signs distinct from the things signified....

Calvin continues:⁶²⁴ "Augustine (in his *Eightieth Homily on John*) truly and wisely teaches that the elements become sacraments only when the Word is added -- not because it is pronounced, but because it is believed.... Our Saviour pronounces the apostles clean...because of the Word which they had heard from Him -- not because of the baptism with which they had been washed.... What can a mortal and earthly man do, by pouring water on the heads of those whom he baptizes -- if Christ does not pronounce from above that He washes their souls by His blood, and renews them by His Spirit?

"We therefore truly conclude that it is not at all by the material of water...that we obtain possession of Christ and His spiritual gifts.... We are conducted to Him by the promise - so that He makes Himself ours and, dwelling in us by faith, fulfils whatever is promised and offered.... God alone performs whatever we obtain by the sacraments....

"The reality of baptism was not wanting to Cornelius who, previous to the washing of water -- had been sprinkled with the Holy Spirit.... [On the other hand,] many are baptized with water...who, as they advance in life, are so far from showing that they were inwardly baptized -- that they rather make void their baptism, by

⁶²¹ Head of Consent 19b; as cited in A.A. Hodge's *op. cit.*, p. 654.

⁶²² Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* II p. 199.

⁶²³ *Ib.* pp. 224f.

⁶²⁴ *Ib.* pp. 227f.

doing what in them lies to quench the Spirit of God!"

England's Edward VI warned against baptismal regeneration by Calvin

In his 1551 *Letter Dedicatory to King Edward VI of England*, which accompanies his *Commentary on First Peter*, Calvin refers⁶²⁵ to "the Roman Antichrist" and its "recent rabble at Trent...assembled under the authority of Antichrist.... It is easy to show how preposterous and perverted is the administration of the sacraments under the Papacy.... The sacraments are adulterated.... The power of the Spirit is impiously tied to them...."

"We must beware of...evil such as prevails among the Papists.... In not distinguishing as they ought, between the thing and the sign -- they stop at the outward element and fix on that their hope of salvation. Therefore the sight of the water takes away their thought from the blood of Christ and the power of the Spirit. They do not regard Christ as the only Author of all the blessings offered to us in it [water-baptism]. But they transfer the glory of His death to the water, and tie the secret power of the Spirit to the visible sign!"

(Ultra-)Lutherans informed that Calvin opposes baptismal regenerationism

Sadly, Calvin had to refute not merely Romish but also Ultra-Lutheran sacramentalism. Thus, his 1556 *Letter to Clauburger* -- the Magistrate of Frankfurt -- defends the beliefs of French Calvinist refugees living in that German Lutheran city (which was then almost Ultra-Lutheran). For those French Calvinists (together with the absentee Calvin as their mentor in Switzerland) were being accused by their opponents in Frankfurt -- of holding unacceptable baptismal views.

As Calvin observes to Clauburger:⁶²⁶ "I was very much surprised that, when they [the opponents] lately maintained that infants should rather be baptized at home and even by women, than that they should depart out of this life without baptism -- they odiously brought an accusation against me." However, as far as the Lutheran and Romish practice of emergency baptism is concerned -- explains Calvin -- "on what slight grounds has this error been propagated!"

For, as Calvin next explains: "Baptism is not conferred on children in order that they may become sons and heirs of God. But, because they are already considered by God as occupying that place and rank -- the grace of adoption is sealed in their flesh by the rite of baptism.

"Otherwise, the Anabaptists are in the right -- in excluding them [the covenantal infants] from baptism! For unless the thing signified by the external sign can be predicated of them -- it will be a mere profanation to call them to a participation of the sign itself!

"But if any one were inclined to refuse them baptism -- we have a ready answer. They are already of the flock of Christ, of the family of God -- since the covenant of salvation which God enters into with believers, is common also to their children. As the words import: 'I will be your God -- and the God of your seed after you!' Unless this promise [Gen. 17:7] had preceded -- certainly it would have been wrong

⁶²⁵ *Dedication in Calvin's Commentaries on Hebrews and I & II Peter*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1963, pp. 219f & 296.

⁶²⁶ *Sel. Works: Tracts & Let.*, VI Pt. 3, pp. 278f.

to confer baptism on them....

"If a sudden death carry off any one who shall have embraced the gospel of Christ -- will they therefore doom him to destruction, [just] because he has been deprived of the outward washing with water? Do not ancient histories furnish us with some examples of martyrs who were dragged away by tyrants to execution - before they had presented themselves for baptism? And for this want of water -- will the blood of Christ be of no avail to the holy martyr, who does not hesitate to shed his own blood for the faith of the gospel in which is placed the common salvation of all?"

Calvin next makes a most startling and unforgettable statement. For he implies that -- as regards their doctrine of the absolute necessity for baptism -- the Ultra-Lutherans are further away from the Scriptures, than were the Romanists themselves!

He declares: "Assuredly, the Papists were more moderate" - than these Anti-Calvinistic Ultra-Lutherans! For "the Papists..., at least in this case of necessity" -- as regards the salvation of unbaptized adults desiring baptism -- "substitute for the washing of water, the 'baptism' of blood."

Retorts Calvin himself: "unless we choose to overturn all the principles of religion -- we shall be obliged to confess that the salvation of an infant does not depend on, but is only sealed by, its baptism. Whence it follows -- that it [baptism] is not rigorously nor absolutely necessary!"

Calvin refutes the Ultra-Lutheran Westphal on 'baptismal heresy'

Already back in 1551, the *Consensus Tigurinus* had been published.⁶²⁷ This had enraged the Ultra-Lutheran Westphal. He had then: massively misrepresented Calvinist sacramentology; bitterly attacked Calvin; and even accused the Genevan genius of heresy!

We see Calvin replying in 1554 with his *First Defence*. We find him making a *Second Defence* in 1556. And we see him giving his *Third Defence* -- alias his *Last Admonition to Joachim Westphal* -- in 1557.

Thus, 1556 saw the publication of Calvin's *Second Defence of the Faith concerning the Sacraments (in answer to Joachim Westphal)*. Calvin introduces this *Defence* -- with an accompanying *Pastoral Letter* to the Church of Saxony and Lower Germany.⁶²⁸

In that *Pastoral Letter*, Calvin protests⁶²⁸ that his accompanying *Second Defence* had "been extorted" from him. The very reluctant Calvin felt he had been 'forced' into writing it -- "if I were not, by my silence, to betray the truth of Christ." For here, "certain ferocious men" -- like the Ultra-Lutheran Westphal -- even "exceed the barbarism of the Papacy!"

Calvin explains: "Joachim Westphal...writes that my books were highly esteemed and relished by the men of his sect [of Ultra-Lutherans] -- at the time when they thought that I differed from the teachers of the Church of Zurich [such as Bullinger and others]. Whence the sudden alienation now? Is it because I have abandoned my opinion?"

⁶²⁷ See in Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* II pp. 199 & 245.

⁶²⁸ *Ib.* II pp. 246f.

Apparently not. For Calvin had not abandoned his previous opinion on the sacraments, since becoming a Protestant. He had not abandoned Calvinism and become a Zwinglian.

To the contrary, it was Westphal that had changed! He had abandoned Luther's views, and had now become an Ultra-Lutheran! Even Westphal himself, observes Calvin, "does not disguise...the hatred which this man [Westphal] bears to those against whom he has once declared war.... He assails the very doctrine which he himself formerly favoured!"

Calvin's *Second Defence* against Westphal on baptism

In his *Second Defence*, Calvin admits⁶²⁹ that Calvinists "sometimes allow children to die unbaptized.... We do not resign [or assign] the office of baptizing to silly women.... Women do not [among Calvinists] -- without any command from Christ -- seize upon the solemn office of pastor.

"Joachim [Westphal] holds the necessity for baptism to be so absolute -- that he would sooner have it profaned by illicit usurpation, than omitted when the lawful use is denied!" For Westphal would sooner see unordainable nursemaids baptize infants -- than see an ordained Calvinist minister exercise his godly discretion not to baptize a dying baby.

"The thing that offends him [Westphal], he immediately after[wards] discloses. It is because we give hopes that infants may obtain salvation without baptism. Because we hold that through baptism they are neither regenerated nor saved, but the salvation is sealed of which they were previously partakers." *Per baptismum non regenerari aut salvari, obsignari illic tantum salutem, cuius prius fuerint participes!*

Calvin, however, draws the correct conclusion. "If the salvation of infants is included in the element of water -- then the covenant, by which the Lord adopts them, is made void....

"Let an Anabaptist come forward! Let him maintain 'that [baptism as] the symbol of regeneration is improperly conferred [by Ultra-Lutherans like Westphal] on the cursed children of Adam whom the Lord has not yet called to the fellowship of His grace'....

Retorts Calvin: "Westphal must remain dumb" against such an Anabaptist attack! "The only defence that can avail him - is [the Calvinistic defence] that the grace which was offered in the person of their parents, is common to them [the children of those believing parents].

"Hence, it follows that they [the children] are not absolutely regenerated by baptism. Yet therefrom they **ought** to be debarred -- if God did **not** rank them [unbaptized covenant children] among the members of His Son!

"With what face can he [Westphal] deny infants the title of 'holy' -- by which Paul distinguishes them? If the readers will look at this passage [First Corinthians 7:14] as it is explained in our [Calvinistic] *Catechism* -- they will pronounce...that our children trained in such rudiments have much sounder views

⁶²⁹ *Ib.* II pp. 252f & 319f (compare Kramer's *op. cit.*, pp. 146f).

than this veteran theologian [Westphal] has derived from his speculations!"

Continues Calvin:⁶³⁰ "He [Westphal] asks why I say that infants begotten of believers are holy and members of the Church before they are baptized? I answer -- so that they may grow up the more into communion with Christ (*ut magis coalescant in Christi communionem*).... The effect of the sacraments...makes those who are already ingrafted into the body of Christ, to be united to Him more and more....

"There are many sheep of Christ outside the Church, just as there are many wolves dwelling within.... Let Westphal...answer...as to the three thousand men whom Peter gained over to Christ by his first sermon; also as to Cornelius and others. If he [Westphal] denies that they were members of the Church before baptism -- then, according to him, faith and repentance have no effect....

"What then remains -- but for Westphal to concede that in some measure...there were members of the Church who were afterwards initiated into its society by baptism? Thus, the sins of Paul were 'washed away' in baptism -- though he had obtained pardon of them previously, by faith!

"There is nothing to prevent our applying this to infants.... For either, the covenant by which God adopts them is vain, and the promise void. Or, those whom God declares to be of His flock -- are not wholly strangers!

"God gives the name of 'sons' -- to those whom the inheritance of salvation has been promised in the person of their parents. By what title can He be their Father -- if they in no way belong to the Church? There is nothing, however, to prevent His sealing this grace and confirming anew the same thing that He had given before. It is strange that Westphal denies this right to infants. Though without it -- he could not properly admit them to baptism!"

Baptism only for those apparently already regenerated

Calvin goes on:⁶³¹ "While I acknowledge that we become members of the Church [Visible] by baptism -- I deny that any are duly baptized, if they do not belong to the body of the Church [Invisible]. It is not ours to confer the sacraments on all and sundry. But we must dispense them according to the rule prescribed by God.

"Who authorized you, Westphal, to bestow the pledge of eternal life, the symbol of righteousness and renovation, on a profane person lying under curse? Were an Anabaptist to debate with you, I presume your only valid defence would be that baptism is rightly administered to those whom God adopted before they were born -- and to whom He has promised that He will be a Father." But precisely defence, however, is Calvinistic -- not Ultralutheran!

Continues Calvin: "If God did not transmit His grace from parents to children -- to admit new-born infants into the Church [Visible] would be a mere profanation of baptism! But if the promise of God under the Law caused holy branches to proceed from a holy root -- will you restrict the grace of God under the gospel or diminish its efficacy, by withholding the testimony of adoption by which God distinguishes infants [of believers from the children of unbelievers]?" See Romans 11:16 and First Corinthians 7:14!

⁶³⁰ Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* II pp. 336f (compare Kramer's *op. cit.*, p. 147).

⁶³¹ Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* II pp. 338f.

Calvin goes on: "The Law ordered infants [of God-professing parents] to be circumcised on the eighth day [Genesis 17:7-12f]. I ask whether that was a legitimate ingrafting into the Church of God? Who dares deny that it was? But Scripture declares them to have been holy from the womb -- being the offspring of a holy race. In other words, for the reason for which Paul teaches -- that the children of believers are now holy!

"Westphal argues as if God were not at liberty gradually to perfect the faith of His people.... I hold that those whom God has already set apart for Himself, are rightly brought for baptism.... We are...speaking of...an adoption manifested by the Word which sanctifies infants not yet born.... Baptism is a solemn recognition...; a true and effectual sealing of the promise; a pledge of sacred union with Christ. It is justly said to be the entrance and reception into the [Visible] Church....

"If Westphal does not admit this rule -- the apostles waited foolishly and against reason till those whom they were afterwards to admit to baptism, should be made sons of God." Acts 2:38-39. For **on Westphal's hypothesis**, it was not through faith before baptism but instead through baptism itself that Peter's listeners on Pentecost Sunday became Christians -- before they could be regenerated!

Westphal implies baptismal regeneratees can still get lost

Thus, "according to his [Westphal's] dogma, they ought to have [been] baptized first -- lest the Church, by receiving them into her bosom as already holy, should render baptism superfluous. Unless indeed with the same equity with which he denied hospitality to the pious exiles of Christ, he expunge those who are regenerated by the Spirit from the Kingdom of heaven!" [For some of the details of the Ultralutheran German Westphal's mistreatment of those exiled French Calvinists, see Calvin's *Letter to Clauburger* above.]⁶³²

Calvin goes on:⁶³³ "Cornelius, before he was baptized with his household, having received the Holy Spirit..., justly held some place among the children of God. The baptism which was afterwards added, Westphal must hold to be preposterous -- if he insists that none are to be admitted to it but strangers....

"This disposes of another calumny, where he [Westphal] says that some of us [Calvinists] -- while holding that infants...before eternal ages had been adopted as sons -- are afterwards visibly ingrafted [by baptism] into the body of Christ.... The question between us turns on infants. He [Westphal] contends that by baptism they become members of Christ and heirs of life. By what passage does he confirm this view? Clearly, by none -- except perhaps by Mark 16:16."

Yet, Calvin continues,⁶³⁴ it is precisely "from this passage [Mark 16:16]...that the order appointed by Christ is overthrown -- if faith do not precede baptism! Their error" -- explains Calvin of Westphal and his Ultralutherans -- is obvious. Here in this passage Mark 16:16, "Westphal breaks forth and extracts from it, like oil from stone, that salvation is given to infants by baptism!" Yet the passage

⁶³² See our text between nn. 625 & 627 above.

⁶³³ Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* II pp. 339f.

⁶³⁴ *Ib.* pp. 340f (*prodesse ut semen, dum in terram proiicitur, quod licet non eodem momento agat radicem, vel germinet, non tamen est inutile: quia nisi hoc modo satum temporis successu germen non emitteret*).

itself distinctly places faith before baptism -- in its words: 'he who believes and is baptized!'

Thus, Calvin argues: "We deny that by the washing of baptism, men are born again.... We know how gross are the errors on the sacraments which prevail in the Papacy. [We know there] how the minds of all, being fascinated by a kind of magical enchantments, pass by Christ -- and fix their confidence of salvation on the elements [in the sacraments themselves]. We know that so far from applying the sacraments to their proper end -- they rather make them the cause of grace!

"He [Westphal] would sooner immerse himself in the deepest pools of the Papacy -- than make any approach to us.... He confesses with me that...infants who have been washed at the sacred font, often show no benefit from it after some passage of years.... Only he adds...that they are [nevertheless] always truly regenerated and sanctified in baptism -- though afterwards, from want of due training, they relapse into the defilements of sin....

"I ask if Simon Magus was truly sanctified at the same moment when he was washed with the water? It is not likely that the hypocrisy for which he is so severely rebuked by Peter, was ever eradicated from his mind. Hence, it followed that the effect of [his] baptism did not immediately appear" -- if ever, to put it mildly (Acts 8:13-24)!

Calvin concludes: "The sacraments do good, just as a seed when thrown into the ground. Though it may not take root and germinate at the very moment, [it] is not without its use. Had it not been sown in this manner -- it would not in process of time have sent forth its shoot. Baptism becomes at last effectual, [even] though it does not work effectually at the same moment at which it is performed.

"Westphal objects that its virtue is not to be put off to distant years, as if God did not regenerate infants when they are baptized.... He has still to prove that they are always regenerated [during baptism].... I do not hold it.... God, whenever He sees meet, fulfils -- and exhibits in immediate effect -- that which He figures in the sacrament!" This is often done before baptism -- and it then continues after baptism, life-long!

Calvin's *Third Defence against Westphal*

Westphal quickly responded, lashing out again not only at Calvin but also against the famous Polish Reformed theologian Jan Laski (Alasco). Westphal sent letters to the chief cities in Northern Germany, and urged all Lutherans there to unite against the Calvinistic *Tigurine Confession* alias the *Zurich Consensus*.

Westphal was supported in this by some of the other Ultralutherans -- including Timan, Schnepf, Alberus, Gallus, Judex, Brenz and Andreae. They were resisted as regards this matter, by an equally determined *consortium* of Reformed theologians -- including Calvin, Alasco, Beza, Bibliander, Ochino and Polanus.

Rightly does Calvin, in his *Third Defence against Westphal*, then rebuke these "rude and barbarous insults." He declares that those Ultralutherans sought peace more with the Moslems and the Papists -- than with the Reformed (in Switzerland and elsewhere)! The Ultralutherans were, he alleged, not truly followers but only "apes of Luther."

To Farel, we then see Calvin writing: "With regard to Westphal and the rest...you call those 'brethren' who, if that name be offered to them by us, do not only reject

but execrate it.... How ridiculous we should appear, in bandying the name of 'brother' -- with those who look upon us as the worst of heretics!"⁶³⁵

It is true that the Lutheran Church -- with her concept of baptism as the actual channel of justifying grace -- now teaches the sinner's need for baptism with greater urgency than does the Reformed Church. It is also true that even Luther himself in a sermon once stated consubstantiationistically that, because of the connection of God's Name with the words of the baptismal formula, the former interpenetrates the latter -- so that one might therefore call it 'a thoroughly divinized' or a 'sugared' water.⁶³⁶

However, while Calvin rightly repudiates the baptismal views of the Lutherans and especially of the Ultralutherans -- he never repudiates the validity of baptisms administered by them (nor by any other Trinitarians). Indeed, all Protestant Christians (including the Lutherans and even the Ultralutherans) generally upheld the following statement together with the Reformed: *non privatio sed contemptus sacramenti condemnat* -- it is not the lack but the contempt of baptism that condemns!⁶³⁷

Calvin's *French Confession* and his letter to Knox on baptism

In 1559, the *Confessio Fidei Gallicana* or the *French Confession of Faith* was written -- principally by Calvin. It was presented by Beza to Charles IX, the Romish King of France, in 1561. It was revised in 1571 for the Protestant Queen of Navarre -- as the *Confession of Rochelle*.⁶³⁸

The *Gallicana* declares⁶³⁹ that "the sacraments are added to the Word for more ample confirmation -- so that they may be to us pledges and seals of the grace of God, and by this means aid and comfort [or strengthen] our faith. First Corinthians 10...; Romans 4:11; Acts 22:16; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 5:26....

"Baptism is given as a pledge of our adoption.... We are baptized only once. Yet the benefit ('*le profit*') it symbolizes, reaches over our whole lives and to our death.... It is a sacrament of faith and penitence.... God received little children into the Church with their fathers. We say, upon the authority of Jesus

⁶³⁵ Schaff: *Church History*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, ed. 1969, VIII p. 663f; cf. Calvin's 1557 *Letter to Farel*.

⁶³⁶ Luther's 1535 *Sermon on Holy Baptism* at Matt. 3:13-17 (in the Erlanger ed. of his *Works* XVI pp. 43f, & esp. at pp. 63f): "When you see how this water is connected with God's Word and Name, because He Himself commands that these words be spoken over it: 'I baptize you in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' -- you cannot say that it is only a watery or an earthly water. But you must say that it is a water of the divine Majesty itself. For it is not we humans but God

Himself Who baptizes with it (through our hand). And He has thrust and woven His Name into it, so that the latter is thoroughly mixed into it and may be called a thoroughly deified water (*ein durchgoettet Wasser*)."

Thereafter, Luther compares the baptismal water with a red-hot iron (which is not just iron but also red-hot); and with sugared water. Thus Gravemeijer's *op. cit.* III:20 pp. 111f n. 2f & 112 n. 1.

This view of Luther's is strongly advocated by Hoefling, in his *The Sacrament of Baptism*, Erlangen, 1846, I p. 26: "God Himself acts with us in and with and under the water of baptism; and indeed amid this action...produces our regeneration..., our justification and salvation."

⁶³⁷ Winer's *Compar. Darst.* p. 182, as cited in Gravemeijer's *op. cit.* III:20 p. 119 & its n. 2.

⁶³⁸ Schaff's *Creeeds* I pp. 493f.

⁶³⁹ *Ib.* III pp. 356f (arts. 34 & 35).

Christ, that the children of believing parents should be baptized. Matthew 19:14 and First Corinthians 7:14."

Also in 1559, we see Calvin writing a letter to his ex-student the Scottish Reformer John Knox. "God's promise," Calvin there explains, "comprehends not only the offspring of every believer in the first line of descent -- but extends to thousands of generations [Exodus 20:5f and Isaiah 59:20f]...."

"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." Compare: Isaiah 59:21; Acts 16:1; First Corinthians 7:14; Second Timothy 1:5.

Continues Calvin: "No just reason suffers children to be debarred from their initiation into the Church [Visible], in consequence of the bad conduct of only one parent.... In the meantime, we confess that it is indispensable for them to have sponsors" who are proper persons.

"For nothing is more preposterous, than that persons should be incorporated with Christ -- of whom we have no hopes of their ever becoming His disciples. Therefore, if none of its relations [such as the Protestant father of an infant with a Romish mother] presents himself to pledge his faith to the church that he will undertake the task of instructing the infant -- the rite is a mockery, and baptism is prostituted!"⁶⁴⁰

Heshusius's sacramentology rejected by Calvin

In 1561, we find Calvin writing his work *The True Partaking of the Flesh and Blood of Christ in the Holy Supper*. It targets on the Ultralutheran Heshusius (alias the German Heshus or Heshusen).

Heshus had connected regeneration to the very time of baptism. Indeed, he had even declared 'that the Calvinists are Manichees and Marcionites' -- and had accused Calvin and the latter's followers of committing blasphemy 'worse and more execrable than the Papists.' As the great church historian Rev. Prof. Dr. Philip Schaff has observed: "Tilemann Heshusius...outluthered Luther and outpopped the pope!"⁶⁴¹

Responding to Heshusius, Calvin now asks:⁶⁴² "Are we not, independent of baptism [in infancy], cleansed by the blood of Christ and regenerated by the Spirit?" Indeed: "Let him [Heshusius] then accuse Paul of blaphemy -- for saying that Christ is formed in us like the *foetus* in the womb! His well-known words to the Galatians are: 'My little children, for whom I again travail, as in birth -- until Christ Jesus be formed in you!' Galatians 4:9.

"This is not unlike what he [Paul] says in another place: 'Until you grow up into a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' [Ephesians 4:13, compare First Corinthians 14:20]...."

⁶⁴⁰ 7th Nov. 1559; cited in *Sel. Work*, VII, Pt. 4, pp. 73f.

⁶⁴¹ Compare in Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* II pp. 502 & 508; cf. Schaff's *Ch. Hist.*, VIII pp. 671f.

⁶⁴² *Ib.* pp. 534f.

"The objection of Heshusius is, 'What then is to become of an infant which, immediately after being baptized, dies without having received the Supper?'" Heshusius asked this - declares Calvin -- "as if I were imposing a law on God; or denying His power of working when He pleases, without the aid of the Supper! For I hold, with Augustine, that there may be invisible sanctification without the visible sign...."

"John the baptizer was never admitted to the Supper [nor even to baptism]! And yet, surely, this did not prevent him from possessing Christ? All I teach, is that we attain to communion with Christ gradually [or step-by-step].... Thus, it was not without cause" when Christ "added the supper to the Gospel - and to baptism. Hence, though God calls suddenly away from the world many who are children not in age merely but in faith -- yet one spark from the Spirit is sufficient to give them a life" immortal unto all eternity!

Calvin shows how to get concord between Calvinists and Lutherans

Also in 1561, we find Calvin publishing his document on *The Best Method of Obtaining Concord* between the Calvinists and the Lutherans⁶⁴³ -- especially as regards their sacramentology. There, Calvin argues⁶⁴⁴ "that the sacraments are not only marks of outward profession before men -- but are testimonies and seals of the promises, giving a stronger confirmation to our faith...."

"Their use is twofold -- to sustain our consciences before God, and to testify our piety before the world.... The grace or virtue of the Spirit is not inclosed by the external signs.... They help forward the salvation of the elect; and, instead of conferring anything on others [the non-elect], rather turn to their destruction.... Sacraments are of no avail, unless they are received in faith.... [They are] external helps [which are] only added to meet the weakness of our capacity."

In 1562, the *Confession of Faith in the name of the Reformed Churches of France* was drawn up by Calvin -- "for presentation to the Emperor and Princes and States of Germany." Calvin's successor Beza relates that its purpose was to vindicate the French Calvinists, whom French Romanists had "most undeservedly traduced to the Germans as holding certain false doctrines."⁶⁴⁵

For the Papists Rambouillet and d'Oisel had lied to the German Lutherans about the French Calvinists -- falsely alleging that the latter opposed the truly sacramental character of baptism etc.⁶⁴⁶ Thereby, these lying French Romanists had been seeking to persuade the German Lutherans to give no aid whatsoever to French Protestants -- in the latter's civil war against the Romanists of France.

"The sacraments" are also discussed in Calvin's 1562 *Confession of Faith*. It declares:⁶⁴⁷ "We hold them to be at once an attestation to the grace of God, to ratify it in us." It also regards them as "external signs by which we declare our Christianity before men.... The sacraments are, as it were, seals -- to seal the grace of God in our hearts and render it more authentic...."

⁶⁴³ *Ib.* pp. 573.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ib.* pp. 575f.

⁶⁴⁵ Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* II pp. xvf & 137f.

⁶⁴⁶ Compare P.J.S. de Klerk: *Reformed Symbolics*, Van Schaik, Pretoria, 1954, pp. 68f.

⁶⁴⁷ 1562 *Confession of Faith*, art. 24 (in Calvin's *Tracts & Treat.* II pp. 152f).

"They are not vain or elusory figures -- since God...gives them to us for confirmation of our faith.... Moreover, since God has placed the sacraments as a sacred deposit in His Church, we believe that individuals are not to use them apart.... The use of them ought to be common to the assembly of the faithful.... They ought to be administered by the Pastors, to whom the charge and dispensing of them has been committed."

Calvin continues:⁶⁴⁸ "We hold, then -- that baptism is a spiritual washing and sign of our regeneration.... We ought to apply it during the whole period of our life -- in order to confirm us the promises which have been given us.... Since baptism is a treasure which God has placed in His Church, all the Members ought to partake of it.

"Now we doubt not that little children born of Christians are of this number -- since God has adopted them, as He declares. Indeed, we should defraud them of their right -- were we to exclude them from the sign [of baptism], which only ratifies [or confirms] that thing contained in the promise....

"Children ought no more in the present day to be deprived of [baptism as] the sacrament of their salvation -- than the children of the Jews were in ancient times [deprived of corresponding circumcision].... Now, the manifestation must be larger and clearer than it was under the Law! Therefore, we repudiate all fanatics who will not allow little children to be baptized."

Against the Anabaptists, Calvin declares that the covenant seed are "children who belong to the Church [Invisible] -- before they depart their mother's womb."⁶⁴⁹ Again: "I everywhere teach that no one can be condemned justly and perish -- except on account of actual sin.... To say that the countless mortals taken from life [in infancy], are precipitated from their mothers' arms into eternal death -- is a blasphemy to be universally detested!"⁶⁵⁰

Calvin on the baptismal heresies of Castelio and Servetus

Yet the above 'actual sin' -- naturally also includes the imputed original sin of Adam, which lies at the root of all subsequent human sins (also in babies and even in the unborn). For, apparently against the blasphemous heretic Castelio, Calvin proclaims:⁶⁵¹ "I detest this blasphemy -- wherever it is publically exposed.... You deny that it is lawful and right in God to condemn any mortals -- unless it be on account of sin committed" by them themselves, personally.

"Well now!" retorts Calvin. "Numberless mortals are taken out of life -- while yet perfect infants! You had better then commence your virulent war against God Himself, Who casts innocent babes just taken from the wombs of their mothers under the guilt of original death" -- unless, as Calvin himself clearly taught elsewhere, those infants first be born again (prior to their pre-baptismal early deaths)!

⁶⁴⁸ *Ib.* art. 26.

⁶⁴⁹ Calvin's *Treat. Ag. Anab.* (Article One: Baptism), p. 48.

⁶⁵⁰ Calvin as cited in the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, Oct. 1890, pp. 634-5.

⁶⁵¹ Calvin's *Defense of the Secret Providence of God*; as cited in Stagg's *op. cit.*, p. 100), and in Cole's *Calvin's Calvinism*, Wertheim & Macintosh, 1856 ed., p. 117.

In his *Refutation of the Errors of Michael Servetus*,⁶⁵² Calvin declares that the Spirit of God can work not only in a man capable of learning, but also in children. Thus, elect babies of believers always acquire for themselves a personal faith in Christ (however small) -- even where die during infancy. Even early-dying unborn covenantal infants do so. For, explains Calvin, also "little children need regeneration."⁶⁵³ Indeed, continues Calvin, "only those who have been sanctified by the Word already -- are qualified to receive the sign" of baptism.

"Yet, whenever a believing parent conceives a *foetus*" -- according to Calvin⁶⁵⁴ even that very act of "generation is like the holy olive tree, of which the faithful fathers are the holy root producing holy branches.... The fathers are the firstfruits who sanctify the whole harvest." Romans 11:16.

Calvin proclaims:⁶⁵⁵ "I do not doubt that the infants whom the Lord gathers together from this life, are regenerated by a secret operation of the Holy Spirit." Thus, "Christ extends His hand to the children of holy parents as soon as they are born [or even conceived] *simul ac nascantur* -- in order to liberate them from the general guilt of sin (*ut a communi reatu absolvat*)!"⁶⁵⁶

For the "ordinary visible mode of calling (by hearing the Word)-- which the Lord upholds -- no way prevents Him from exercising, as has been seen, a hidden power of the Spirit in children! Moreover, when Paul says 'faith is by hearing' [Romans 10:17], it certainly does not by these words impose a necessity upon God whereby the Word never draws disciples to Himself by way of a secret instigation!"⁶⁵⁷

Most of Calvin's own infants died justified but unbaptized

The cases of the various baptisms in Calvin's own family circle, are most instructive. He, John Calvin, was baptized only in infancy -- and indeed in the French Roman Catholic Church in Noyon. He was never rebaptized elsewhere, in any way whatsoever.

His wife Idelette had been (re)baptized as an adult in an Anabaptistic sect in Holland. After being converted to the Reformed faith only thereafter, she had embraced Presbyterianism. Still later, after being widowed, she had married Calvin. She was, of course, never rebaptized upon becoming nor while remaining a Presbyterian (right up to the time of her death).

Their eldest child was baptized by Calvin in the Reformed Church at Geneva -- and then died in early infancy. Calvin refused baptism to their subsequent children -- because expiring practically at birth. Yet those children had been justified, of course, by the blood of Christ -- from their faithful father's loins, and from

⁶⁵² *Corp. Ref.* VIII:489,493.

⁶⁵³ *Ib.* VII:42.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ib.* VII:680; compare VII:493f & IX:114.

⁶⁵⁵ *Ib.* VIII:494, compare *Op. Omn.* (Amsterdam ed.) VIII:522.

⁶⁵⁶ *Corp. Ref.* VIII:615. See Kramer's *op. cit.*, *op. cit.* p. 135 n. 1.

⁶⁵⁷ *Corp. Ref.* VIII:616. *Sed hunc ordinarium vocationis modum (ex auditu Verbi) quem tenet Dominus, minime obstare, quominus occultum vim Spiritus in pueris, ubi visum est, exercent. Imo quum dicit Paulus, fidem esse ex auditu, ne his quidem verbis imponitur Deo necessitas quin arcano instinctu ad Se trahat discipulos!* Calvin apparently said this in his *Letters to Servetus* from about 1547 onward, published in 1554. Compare *Corp. Ref.* XI:895f & n. 656 above. See too Kramer's *op. cit.* pp. 136 & 137 n. 1, p. 142 nn. 3 & 4, & p. 146 para. 2).

their faithful mother's womb!⁶⁵⁸ Romans 11:16 and First Corinthians 7:14!

Infant baptisms to be refused: unless godly promises made to educate

According to Calvin, the responsibility of parents to give their baptized children a Christian education -- is very heavy! "They are to promise to instruct the child to be baptized, in the right doctrine; and to warn him or her to live according to the rule of Christ -- in self-denial, dedication and the service of God; and to the edification of one's neighbour." Thus Calvin's *Form for the Administration of Baptism*.⁶⁵⁹

For these reasons, Calvin regards it as neither advised nor permitted for infants of Romanists to be baptized by Protestants. For in such cases, there is no guarantee of a Christian education according to the pure Gospel!

Calvin's 15th July 1553 *Letter to Farel*⁶⁶⁰ about this matter, is most instructive. A member of Farel's congregation -- apparently a middle-aged widow -- had encouraged her daughter to marry a Romish man. That daughter then went and did so. Subsequently, the daughter renounced the Reformed faith and herself become a Romanist. After a child was then born to the daughter -- the member of Farel's congregation (herself being the above-mentioned grandmother of the child) requested its baptism in the Reformed Church.

Farel refused. He regarded the child as being outside the covenant -- because both parents were Romanists. But Farel's Co-Pastor pointed out that the grandmother, who was herself still a member of the Reformed Church, was promising to raise that grandchild of hers in the Reformed faith -- and to care for its education for the rest of her life. However, because Farel could not regard this grandmother's promises as trustworthy -- he sought the advice of Calvin.

The great Genevan Protestant replies that "it is a stupidity to baptize those who could not be regarded as members of our fellowship. Because 'those' include the children of papists, we do not see how it is permissible to administer baptism to them."

For the baptismal sponsors would have to be required to promise to nurture the child in the Reformed faith. They would have to possess the power and authority to do so -- either in themselves, or by being requested to do this by the father and/or the mother of the child. Failing this authority -- the baptism should not be performed (in a Reformed Church).

Did the grandmother really have the right to educate the child? No, for the grandchild concerned was not then a member of her household! However, even if the grandmother were to acquire that right -- such as in the event of the deaths both of that grandchild's two parents as well as those of the rest of the child's other living grandparents -- was the 'Reformed' grandmother truly desirous of giving her grandchild a Reformed education? A child should not be baptized in a Reformed Church just to please a grandmother -- if that grandmother did not have the right to educate the child, and also if the child still stood outside of that grandmother's own household.

⁶⁵⁸ See T.B. van Halsema's *This was John Calvin*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1959, pp. 96 & 121.

⁶⁵⁹ *Corp. Ref.* VI:188.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ib.* XIV:567f.

Again, it should also be investigated whether the grandmother was now -- after her former bad advice to her own daughter (to marry the Romish man) -- really a good member of the Reformed Church. Did she really occupy a place in the congregation of the pious? Did she have the ecclesiastical right even to sponsor the baptism of her grandchild in a Reformed Church? As matters stood, she was worthy of censure -- on account of her having encouraged her daughter to marry the Romanist. Consequently, she had forfeited her possible claim to baptismal sponsorship (*jure sponsionis*) of her own Romish grandchild -- in a Reformed Church.

Anyway, the grandmother would first have to confess her guilt -- before the grandchild could even be considered for baptism under her sponsorship in a Reformed Church! Until then, concludes Calvin -- the Reformed Church should refuse to baptize the child. For -- as he also said elsewhere⁶⁶¹ -- "the Turks, the Jews, the Papists, and all suchlike -- are cut off and alienated from Christ."

Solace if believers' infants suddenly die unbaptized

Calvin's compassion toward those whose children were dying or dead -- nourished by the similar experiences of his own infantly dying children -- needs to be recounted. Whenever the children of believers died before they could receive baptism during a regular church service, Calvin urged the parents not to doubt the salvation of those children. For God had promised to receive them.⁶⁶²

To one DeFalais, a man with a very sick son, Calvin writes:⁶⁶³ "It pains me not to be able to be with you, at least for half a day -- to laugh with you, even while trying to make that little child [of yours] laugh, though he but cries and weeps!"

To DeRichebourg, who had lost a child, Calvin writes:⁶⁶⁴ "All that I am saying to you, is designed to make you moderate and temper your most just sorrow -- so that, having shed the tears which result from human nature and from your paternal feelings, you do not end by taking pleasure in your grief!"

Calvin also comforts a father whose child had died unbaptized -- because the father was unwilling to have it baptized in the Roman Church, which was the only religious institution in the place where he lived.⁶⁶⁵

And to a worried gentleman of Turin, whose baby had died unbaptized, Calvin writes:⁶⁶⁶ "**Do not fear**, but rely boldly on God's promise -- 'I am the God of your seed!'" Genesis 17:7.

Protestant baptisms for infants of deromanizing parents?

To a Christian in Provence, Calvin writes a most instructive letter about the condition of the former's child -- which had died before receiving baptism.

⁶⁶¹ *Sermon* on Eph. 1:7-10.

⁶⁶² *Corp. Ref.* VII:9.

⁶⁶³ *Op. Omn.* XIII:578.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ib.* XI:194.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ib.* XIII:308.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ib.* XV:227-8.

Apparently, both of the parents of the child had been Roman Catholics at the time of the conception. However, during the pregnancy, it seems the parents had both become Protestants at heart. For even then they had resolved, after the birth, to join the Reformed Church - and then to have the child baptized there.

Sadly, however -- very soon after the birth -- the child suddenly and unexpectedly died unbaptized. This was before the parents had in fact had sufficient time to adjust themselves, as new Members of the Reformed Church.⁶⁶⁷

Declares Calvin in his letter:⁶⁶⁸ "Dearly beloved brother! I have learned that God has, within these few days, visited you with a twofold affliction. First, in taking to Himself[!] the child -- with which He had blessed you.... Next, that some worthy brethren are scandalized -- because you did not have...[the child] baptized in time, though the means were within your power....

"With regard to the child dying without having been baptized, our worthy brethren would certainly have occasion to be scandalized at it -- had that taken place from indifference or contempt. For baptism is too sacred a thing to be left in the background.... In your case, [however,] in point of fact all you have to do is to declare to the brethren what were your intentions -- to take away all subject of scandal....

"If your intentions had been to reside in those parts as one of them -- you could not, without offending God and your neighbours, have brought up your child without having it baptized. Not that those who present their children to be polluted with Popish superstitions, are to be held excusable. But your intention was quite different....

"You were desirous to take refuge, even before the period of your wife's confinement, in the bosom of the [Reformed] Christian Church.... Should this [at that time] be found impracticable, you thought of conveying the child [into the Reformed Church] soon after its birth -- along with its mother -- in order to have it baptized according to the ordinance of God....

"This would have been an open declaration that you were very far from despising baptism! On the contrary, from the deepest respect in which you held it, you wished it to be pure and entire -- such as was instituted by our Lord. Such a delay - forming part of the confession of your faith! -- ought not to offend the godly....

"It is lawful for a Christian man to withdraw himself from the pollutions of Popery.... It is not only lawful but obligatory for him to take with him his infant child -- in order to offer it with purity to God, and have it baptized without Popish superstition....

"Now [however,] God has been pleased to deprive you of that blessing" of having your child baptized at all, and indeed specifically in a Reformed Church. "Your intention was both pious and praiseworthy.... Your child has been deprived of baptism, which is the sign of salvation.... Its condition is not the worse for that, before God....

"By what are our children saved?" They are saved by God -- "by [His]...saying, 'I am the God of your offspring!'" Genesis 17:7. "But for that -- they would not

⁶⁶⁷ See *Sel. Works*, VI p. 71 n. 1.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ib.* pp. 71f.

be capable of even being baptized!

"We must not conclude that all the children who die without baptism go to perdition.... On your part, there has been no contempt of the sacrament. It brings no prejudice to the salvation of your child that it died before you had leisure to have it baptized!"

Infants of ungodly covenant parents are still God's children!

Calvin's last important written work, was his *Commentary on Ezekiel*. He apparently began to write it⁶⁶⁹ on 20th January 1563. That was long after the Romish Council of Trent had finished⁶⁷⁰ expostulating on baptism, during her Seventh Session in 1547.

Thereafter, Trent's last eighteen sessions⁶⁷¹ hardly mentioned baptism at all. They seem to do so only in a passing reference to post-baptismal penance -- when simply re-iterating that "baptism itself is for those who have not as yet been regenerated."⁶⁷² The Tridentine Council finally terminated⁶⁷³ her remaining work -- regarding the various post-baptismal Romish sacraments, purgatory and indulgences⁶⁷⁴ -- on 4th December 1563.

Calvin started expounding Ezekiel⁶⁷⁵ on 20th January 1563. He reached Ezekiel chapter twenty, some time between February 1564 and his death in May 1564. His incomplete commentary on Ezekiel (chapters one to twenty) was first published by his successor Beza⁶⁷⁶ -- on 18th January 1565. That was fully more than a year after the final termination of the Council of Trent.

Now in Ezekiel's time, around 594 B.C., some of the covenantal babies in Jerusalem had been slain even by their own wicked Hebrew parents (under the influence of paganism). Yet those infants were also the children of their *Other Parent*. For they were God's infants too! Ezekiel 16:20-21 (compare First Corinthians 7:14).

While commenting on the above passage in Ezekiel, Calvin also made his last statement about baptism. (That was long after Trent had made her last baptismal statement -- centrally by 1547; and obliquely, in a minor way, again in 1551. For Calvin's last baptismal statement, was made in 1564.)

⁶⁶⁹ *Comm. on Ezk.*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1948f, I, p. xlvii.

⁶⁷⁰ Trent's last statement on baptism itself was made at her *7th Session*, on 3rd Mar. 1547. See Schaff's *Creeds* II pp. 118f.

⁶⁷¹ After her *Seventh Session* in 1547, Trent's doctrinal pronouncements only resumed at her *Thirteenth Session* (on 11 Oct. 1551). This was followed by another seventeen sessions. Only some of those (the Fourteenth and also the Twenty-first to and including the Twentieth-fifth Sessions) address doctrinal matters. See Schaff's *Creeds* II pp. 126-206.

⁶⁷² After her 1547 Seventh Session, Trent does not further refer to baptism. The only exception to this, is a brief reference at [the 25 Nov. 1551] Second Chapter of the Fourteenth Session ("On the difference between the Sacrament of Penance and that of Baptism"). That Second Chapter on 'Penance' then calls it "a laborious 'kind of baptism'...for those who have fallen after baptism." It then further simply (re-)states that "baptism itself is for those who have not as yet been regenerated." See Schaff's *Creeds* II pp. 139 & 141, and especially p. 143.

⁶⁷³ Thus Schaff's *Creeds* II pp. 198 & 205.

⁶⁷⁴ Thus Trent's *Thirteenth* up to and including her last or *Twenty-fifth Session*.

⁶⁷⁵ *Comm. on Ezk.*, I p. xlvii & II pp. 3 & 346.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ib.*, I pp. xxxv & xlv (cf. xlvi).

Thus, only very shortly before his death, we find Calvin commenting⁶⁷⁷ on Ezekiel's people in Jerusalem that "God places Himself in the position of a parent.... He had adopted the people as His own.... All their offspring, were His sons.... God's treaty with the people was a marriage. All who spring from the people, ought to be esteemed His children."

Once again, we here encounter Calvin's well-known doctrine of the presumed regeneration of all early dying covenant infants. Indeed, inasmuch as all covenant infants could die during their infancy -- Calvin also presumed, rebuttably, that all covenant infants had already been regenerated! Furthermore, he believed they should continue to be deemed regenerate -- unless and until the contrary clearly became evident, through their behaviour, during their later life. Compare Romans 11:16-21.

So, argues Calvin,⁶⁷⁷ "God therefore calls those who were thus slain -- 'His sons.' Just as if a husband should reproach his [abortionist] wife with depriving him of their common children.... Children are more precious than all goods.... A father is more grievously injured, if children are taken away.... God here pronounces...[to Israel His wife]: 'you have born them unto **Me!**'"

Calvin continues:⁶⁷⁸ "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.... And so 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." Compare too Romans 11:16.

Calvinism and Romanism on baptism right after Calvin's death

Calvin died on 27th May 1564. Against baptismal regeneration, he had taught the following. Firstly, all sons of Adam are sinners from their very conception onward.⁶⁷⁹ Secondly, there is a difference between unborn believers and unbelievers.⁶⁸⁰ Thirdly, regeneration generally precedes regular baptism.⁶⁸¹ Fourthly, baptism itself never regenerates.⁶⁸² Fifthly, baptism is not for the dead nor for the dying.⁶⁸³ Sixthly, baptism is only for believers (whether infants or

⁶⁷⁷ *Comm.* on Ezk. 16:20.

⁶⁷⁸ *Comm.* on Ezk. 16:21.

⁶⁷⁹ 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 Method of Giving Peace* (with its *Appendix*); in *Corp. Ref.* 8:615; and his *Op. Omn.* 8:522.

⁶⁸⁰ See: Calvin's *Comm.* on Gen. 17:7-14, Ex. 11:7 - 13:5, Ps. 22:9-10, Lk. 1:15-45, Rom. 9:11-13, 11:16, I Cor. 7:14 & II Tim. 1:5-6; his *Serm.* on Eph. 1:7-10; his *Inst.* IV:16:5f,17f,24f; his *Literary Form for Administering Baptism*; and his *True Meth. Giv. Peace* (with its *Append.*).

⁶⁸¹ See: Calvin's *Comm.* on Ezk. 20-21, Mt. 19:14, Acts 2:38-39, 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 *Antidote to Trent*; his *Second Defence Against Westphal*; and his *True Partaking of the Holy Supper*.

⁶⁸² 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 *Antidote to Articles of the [Romish] Paris Theological Faculty*; his *True Meth. Giv. Peace*; his *Appendix to the True Method of Reforming the Church*; his *Antid. to Trent*; (with Bullinger), his *Tigurine Confession*; his *2nd Def. Ag. Westphal*; and his *Letter to a Christian Gentleman of Provence* (in his *Sel. Works*, VI pp. 71f).

⁶⁸³ 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. Ag. Westphal*; and his *Op. Omn.* 15:227-8.

adults).⁶⁸⁴ Seventhly, baptism should take place only in a church setting.⁶⁸⁵

About six months later, on 13th November and 9th December 1564, the papal bulls of Pius IV appeared. Together, these became known as the *Profession of the Tridentine Faith*. Every Romish priest then, and every convert to Romanism today, is expected to subscribe to it.⁶⁸⁶

In 1566, we see the Papists publishing their 'Romish Catechism from the Decrees of the Council of Trent' (alias the *Catechismus Romanus ex Decreto Concilii Tridentini*). Significantly, it was directed especially against Calvin's brand of Protestantism.

There, the Papists insist⁶⁸⁷ that the baptismal "sacrament...has the power of both signifying and effecting both sanctification and justification"; that it is "the sacrament of regeneration through water"; and that both the "good" and the "bad" enjoy its benefits. It further holds that "perfect conversion is posited in a new birth through baptism," and that "baptism is prescribed by the Lord for all men."

Shockingly, it then also adds: "Unless they are born again by the baptismal mercy of God, whether their parents are believers or unbelievers they are brought forth unto everlasting misery and punishment.... There is no otherway for tiny children to obtain salvation -- than through the administration of baptism."

It also claims that baptism effects "an infusion of grace," wiping out all taints in the soul. It engineers an "infusion of virtues" -- such as faith, hope and love. It brings about "the opening up of the gate of heaven," so that those dying immediately after baptism before they sin afresh go straight to glory. Indeed, it is absolutely essential to salvation. Consequently, children dying without baptism are lost -- because of unforgiven original sin inhering in them.

Shortly after the formulation of this *Roman Catechism*, the famous Romish theologian Bellarmine (1542-1621) re-iterated that after death, all unbaptized children and babies go to limbo.⁶⁸⁸ Naturally, all this denies the presence of pre-baptismal saving grace and faith in those baptized. It 'transubstantiates' the sacrament of baptism from being a Scriptural seal of an already-present faith. It changes baptism into a 'magical mandrake' alleged to initiate a living faith -- the prior existence of which, in the baptizee, is wrongly denied!

Only in Calvinism does Chalcedonian christology and sacramentology come into its own. There is thus no transubstantiation nor consubstantiation at either baptism or the Lord's supper. Therefore there is no baptismal regeneration; no rebaptism; and no mass!

⁶⁸⁴ 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. Ag. Westphal*; and his *Letter to Farel* (in *Corp. Ref.* 14:567).

⁶⁸⁵ See: 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 *Lit. for Admin. Bap.*; his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*; his *Register of Genevan Pastors* (ed. Hughes); and his *True Meth. Giv. Peace* (with its *Append.*).

⁶⁸⁶ Schaff's *Creeeds* II pp. 207f; compare art. *Roman-Catholic Church* (in Schaff-Herzog's *op. cit.*, III, p. 205).

⁶⁸⁷ *Catechismus Romanus* II:1:14; II:2:4; I:10:6; II:2:18f; II:2:25-33; II:2:38,39,44. Cited in Gravemeijer's *op. cit.*, II; 20th Section (on *Sacraments*), p. 118 and nn. 1 & 2. Cf. too the art. *Catechetics, Catechisms and Catechumens* (in Schaff-Herzog *op. cit.*, I, pp. 417f).

⁶⁸⁸ Bellarmine: *On Purgatory* 2,6.

Calvinism's early *Swiss Confessions* on baptism

The various Continental Calvinistic Confessions all declare that covenant children are to be regarded as *already holy even before their infant baptism*. Thus both the 1561 *Belgic Confession* and the 1563 *Heidelberg Catechism*⁶⁸⁹ -- and especially the two Helvetic Confessions: namely the *First Swiss Confession* and the *Second Swiss Confession* (respectively of 1536 and 1566).

The 1536 *First Helvetic Confession* was composed by Calvin's associates Bullinger and others. There, the Swiss Reformers had declared⁶⁹⁰ that "these sacraments...are not merely empty signs -- but consist of signs and the things signified. For in baptism, the water is the sign. The signified thing itself, however, is regeneration and adoption in the family of God...."

"In baptism...the Lord exhibits to His elect...a 'bath of regeneration'.... We baptize our children in this holy bath." Literally: 'we tinge our infants' -- in the original Latin. "It would be unfair if we were to rob those born from us (who are God's people) -- of the fellowship of God's people" (namely the parents of such infants). For "our children...are those whose pious election is to be presumed!"

In the last sentence, the official Latin text reads: *infantos nostros...tingimus...de eorum electione pie est praesumendum.*" The official German translation here runs: *taufen wir unsre Kinder...von denen man vermuthen soll, sie seien von Gott erwählt.*"⁶⁹¹ To prove this 'presumed election' of the infant children of believers -- the *Confession* itself then immediately goes on to cite:⁶⁹² "Titus 3; Acts 10; Genesis 17; First Corinthians 7; and Luke 18."

The above-mentioned *First Swiss Confession* of the Calvinist Bullinger and others, was expanded considerably -- in the *Second Swiss Confession*. Precisely and particularly in this latter -- once again written by Calvin's associate Bullinger -- the baptismal regenerationism of the *Decrees of Trent* and the *Tridentine Catechism* (alias the *Catechismus Romanus*) was utterly refuted. This is seen especially where the *Second Swiss Confession* faithfully expresses the Calvinistic doctrine of baptism.

For this great sixteenth-century Swiss Calvinistic symbol states:⁶⁹³ "There is but one baptism in the Church of God.... It is sufficient to be once baptized or consecrated unto God. For baptism, once received, continues for all of life and is a perpetual sealing of our adoption...."

⁶⁸⁹ *Belgic Confession* art. 34: "Christ shed His blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful than for adult persons.... What circumcision was to the Jews, that Baptism is to our children"). Cf. too the *Heidelberg Catechism* 74: "Are infants [of believers] also to be baptized? Yes; for since they, as well as adults, are included in the Covenant and Church of God..., they also must...be distinguished from the children of unbelievers."

⁶⁹⁰ Art. 20-21 (21-22). The official Latin text runs: "*non nudis signis, sed signis simul et rebus constant. In baptism enim aqua signum est; at res ipsa regeneratio adoptioque in populum Dei.... Baptisma quidem ex institutione Domini lavacrum regenerationis quam Dominus electis suis, visibili signo per ecclesiae ministerium (qualiter supra expositum est) exhibeat. Quo quidem sancto lavacro infantes nostros idcirco tingimus, quoniam e nobis (qui populus Domini sumus) genitos populi Dei consortio rejicere nefas est tantum non divina voce huc designatos, praesertim quum de eorum electione pie est praesumendum.*"

⁶⁹¹ Schaff's *Creeds* III pp. 223-4.

⁶⁹² *Ib.* p. 224 n. 2.

⁶⁹³ Ch. 20.

"To be baptized in the Name of Christ -- is to be enrolled, entered and received into the covenant and family and so into the inheritance of the sons of God." It is "to be called after the Name of God;⁶⁹⁴ that is to say, to be called a son of God.⁶⁹⁵ ... Inwardly, we are regenerated, purified and renewed by God through the Holy Spirit.... Outwardly, we receive the assurance of the greatest gifts -- in the water by which also those great benefits are represented."⁶⁹⁶ So: "We are baptized, that is, washed or sprinkled."⁶⁹⁷

"God also separates us from all strange religions and peoples, by the symbol of baptism -- and consecrates us to Himself as His property.... Hence we are enlisted in the holy military service of Christ -- so that all our life long we should fight against the world, Satan, and our own flesh....

"Baptism should not be administered in the Church by women or midwives.... For Paul deprived women of ecclesiastical duties, and baptism has to do with these. We condemn the Anabaptists, who deny that new-born infants of the faithful are to be baptized."⁶⁹⁸

"For, according to evangelical teaching, of such [infants of the faithful] is the Kingdom of God,⁶⁹⁹ and they are in the covenant.... Why, then, should the sign of God's covenant not be given to them? Why should those who belong to God...and are in God's Church⁷⁰⁰ not be initiated [into his Visible Kingdom] by holy baptism? We condemn the Anabaptists!"⁷⁰¹

Knox's *First Scots Confession* and *Book of Discipline* on baptism

The famous Scottish Calvinist John Knox had previously studied in Geneva under Calvin. Later, in his 1560 *First Scots Confession*, we see Knox and the other Scottish Calvinists who co-authored it -- insisting⁷⁰² that the sacraments...were instituted by God...to exercise the faith of His children and...to seal in their hearts the assurance of His promise.... If the recipient does not understand what is being done, the sacrament is not being rightly used.... We hold that baptism applies as much to the children of the faithful as to those who are of age and discretion. And so we condemn the error of the Anabaptists, who deny that children should be baptized."

Also in their 1560 *First Book of Discipline*,⁷⁰³ we witness Knox and the other Scottish Calvinists who co-authored it denouncing as "gross error" the

⁶⁹⁴ *nuncupari Nomine Dei.*

⁶⁹⁵ *appellari filium Dei.*

⁶⁹⁶ *foris autem accipimus obsignationem maximorum donorum in aqua, qua etiam maxima illa beneficia repraesentantur.*

⁶⁹⁷ *baptizamur id est abluimur aut adspargimur.*

⁶⁹⁸ *damnamus Anabaptistas, qui negant baptizandos esse infantulos recens natos a fidelibus.*

⁶⁹⁹ *horum est regnum Dei.*

⁷⁰⁰ *qui sunt peculium est in Ecclesia Dei?*

⁷⁰¹ *Damnamus Anabaptistas!*

⁷⁰² *Scots Confession* chs. 16,21-23.

⁷⁰³ Ch. XI 9th Head (1) 4.

superstition that "children be damned if they die without baptism." Next year, 1561, we find the *Preface* to that *First Book of Discipline* stating⁷⁰⁴ that "our infants appertain to Him [God] by covenant, and therefore ought not to be defrauded of those holy signs and badges whereby His children are known from infidels and pagans. Genesis 17; Colossians 2; Acts 2."

Still describing covenant children, the *Preface* then continues: "They be contained under the name of God's people.... Remission of sins in the blood of Christ Jesus doth appertain unto them by God's promise.... Paul...pronounceth the children begotten and born (either of the parents being faithful) to be clean and holy. First Corinthians 7.... The Holy Ghost assure[s] us that infants be of the number of God's people and that remission of sins doth also appertain to them in Christ.... Almighty God [is] their Father!"

Now the 'form of baptism' used in Switzerland's Geneva was - by way of the *First Book of Discipline* written by Knox and other Scottish Calvinists -- incorporated into the *Book of Common Order* in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The conviction of the writers of this *Book of Common Order*, is the Biblical view that the children of believers are Christians by conception and birth.⁷⁰⁵ It is because they are already federally holy before baptism, that they are entitled to receive that sacrament.

Post-Knoxian baptismal views of early Scottish Presbyterians

Significantly, we soon see certain 'Superintendents' and Ministers in the Church of Scotland writing⁷⁰⁶ to Calvin's successor Beza. They declare that the just published doctrine of the 1566 *Second Swiss Confession* is precisely "what we have been teaching constantly these eight years [1558-66], and still by the grace of God continue to teach in our churches."

Furthermore, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland -- on 25th December 1566 -- gave official sanction to the *Second Swiss Confession*. For the Scottish General Assembly then decided to "ordain the same to be printed, together with an epistle sent by the Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland approving the same." Too, Calvin's *Catechism* was also sanctioned by the Church of Scotland, and was subsequently usually adjoined to the *Book of Common Order*.⁷⁰⁷

The Presbyterian Church of Scotland also developed further Standards of its own. The *Second Book of Discipline* - drawn up by Andrew Melville and a Committee of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland -- was approved without dissent in 1578. In 1581, it was ordered to be recorded. It states: "Unto the Pastors only, appertains the administration of the sacraments."⁷⁰⁸ Yet "it pertains to the Eldership to take heed that the Word of God be purely preached..., the sacraments rightly administered, the discipline rightly maintained."⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁴ See C. Calderwood's *History of the Church of Scotland*, Wodrow Soc., Edinburgh, 1843, II, pp. 101f.

⁷⁰⁵ W. McMillan: *The Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church 1550 - 1638*, Univ. of Glasgow Press, London, 1931, pp. 243-7.

⁷⁰⁶ Cited in Schenk's *op. cit.* p. 39.

⁷⁰⁷ *Ib.* p. 30 & n. 90.

⁷⁰⁸ Ch. V:7.

⁷⁰⁹ Ch. VII:12.

The Ex-Dominican priest John Craig became a Protestant, and was later in 1562 appointed Knox's collegiate minister at St Giles Presbyterian Church in Edinburgh. In 1570, he became Chaplain to James VI of Scotland. The latter himself later became King James I of the United Kingdom of England and Scotland -- and then commissioned the translation of the authorized 'King James Version' of the English Bible.

Craig drafted the first *Scots Catechism* (and was also largely responsible for the 'National Covenant' alias the 1580 *Second Scots Confession*).⁷¹⁰ In his *Catechism*, when referring to the infant children of believing parents, Craig asks the question: "What comfort have we by their baptism?" And he answers: "This, that we rest persuaded they are inheritors of the Kingdom of heaven."⁷¹¹

Craig's 1580 *Second Scots Confession* was subsequently ratified as a 'National Covenant' by the King and Council and Court and People of Scotland in 1581. There, Craig condemns "that Roman Antichrist" with "his cruel judgment against infants departing without the sacrament: his absolute necessity of baptism!"⁷¹²

Baptism in the Westminster Directory for Publick Worship

All of the above found its way -- through the *Irish Articles* of 1615 -- into the 1643f *Westminster Standards*. Particularly relevant here, are: the *Westminster Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, the *Westminster Directory for the Publick Worship of God*, the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, and the *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

The *Westminster Directory for Publick Worship* states:⁷¹³ "Baptism, as it is not unnecessarily to be delayed -- so it is not to be administered in any case by any private person but by a Minister of Christ called to be the Steward of the mysteries of God. Nor is it to be administered in private places, or privately, but in the place of publick worship and in the face of the congregation where the people may most conveniently see and hear.....

"The child to be baptized...is to be presented by the father... The promise is made to believers and their seed.... The seed and posterity of the faithful..., born within the church..., by baptism are solemnly received into the bosom of the Visible Church.... They are Christians[!] are federally holy before baptism, and therefore are to be baptized!"

Baptism in the Westminster Larger Catechism

The *Westminster Larger Catechism* declares:⁷¹⁴ "The sacraments become effectual means [not of justification but] of salvation [alias preservation] -- not by any power in themselves...but only by the working of the Holy Ghost.... A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ in His Church to signify, seal and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace the benefits of His mediation; to strengthen and increase their faith....

⁷¹⁰ Art. Craig, John (1512-1600), in Douglas's *op. cit.* pp. 268f.

⁷¹¹ In Schenk's *op. cit.* p. 40 n. 128.

⁷¹² In Schaff's *Creeds* III pp. 480 & 482.

⁷¹³ *Westminster Directory for the Publick Worship of God* ('Of the Administration of the Sacraments').

⁷¹⁴ *W.L.C.* 161-167 & 177.

"Baptism is a sacrament...wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water...to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into Himself, of...regeneration by His Spirit.... Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out[side] of the Visible Church....

"The needful but much neglected duty of improving our baptism is to be performed by us all our life long." This is to be done "by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the...benefits conferred and sealed thereby."

This is also to be done by constant reflection on "our solemn vow made therein" and "by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament." For the baptized, are "those that have therein given up their names to Christ" -- having been "baptized by the same Spirit into one body.... The sacrament...of baptism...is...to be a sign and seal of our regeneration and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants."

Baptism in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*

All the above is beautifully summarized in the Calvinistic *Westminster Confession of Faith*. That, after and under the Bible, is the Subordinate Standard of all Presbyterian Churches everywhere.

Declares the *Westminster Confession*:⁷¹⁵ "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ.... All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth...to make partakers of the grace of adoption.... They are taken into...the children of God; have His Name put upon them...; are pitied...and...sealed to the day of redemption....

"The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word: by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments and prayer, it is increased and strengthened" -- and hence not initiated!

"Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized.... It be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance. Yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.... The sacrament of baptism is but once to be administered to any person."

Summary: Calvinism rejects baptismal regenerationism!

In this monograph, we looked at Calvinism *versus* 'christening' -- against baptismal regenerationism. We explained and expounded every single text in Holy Scripture remotely concerned with the effectiveness of circumcision and the baptism which replaces it. Throughout, after exegesis, we supplied Calvin's understanding of the text concerning -- and so too that of the Calvinistic *Westminster Standards*.

In every case, we clearly saw -- against Romanism and other varieties of baptismal regenerationism -- that baptism does not cleanse. Ever since the fall, all sons

⁷¹⁵ *W.C.F.* 10:3 & 12:1 & 14:1 & 28:4-7.

of Adam are sinners from their very conception onward. They cannot even see and still less enter into the Kingdom of God, until they have been born again. Jeremiah 1:5 & John 3:3-8.

There is a difference between unborn believers and unbelievers. Exodus 11:7 to 13:5. The elect necessarily get regenerated and receive 'the seed of faith' before their death -- even if they die unbaptized before their birth or during their infancy. Psalm 22:9f & Luke 1:15-45. Hence, regeneration generally precedes regular baptism. Mark 16:15f & Acts 2:38f. Thus, all covenant children who die before their possible infant baptism -- are made holy in the sight of God at, or since, their conception. Second Samuel 12:15-23 & Romans 11:16.

Baptism itself never regenerates. At most, it only seals already holy children -- as members of the Visible Church. Genesis 17:7-14 & Romans 4:10-12. It is not for the dead, nor for the dying. It is only for the viable, and to be administered solely with a view to life-long obedience and fruitfulness and ever-increasing faith here on earth. Romans 6:1-11 & Colossians 2:11-13.

Indeed, baptism is only for those (whether adults or infants) who seem to be believers already -- and who seem to possess at least 'the seed of faith' within their hearts. Matthew 18:1-6 & Acts 8:36-37. Consequently, it should to be administered only in the congregation of the saints -- and only after profession of faith by the baptizee or, if still tiny, by at least one of his or her parents. First Corinthians 1:2f; 7:14; 12:13.

Relevantly does the Calvinistic *Heidelberg Catechism* ask: "Is then the external baptism with water the washing away of sin itself?" And it rightly answers:⁷¹⁶ "Not at all! For only the blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost cleanse us from all sin. Matthew 3:11; First Peter 3:21; First John 1:7; First Corinthians 6:11."

Summarizing, according to our Supreme Standard (the *Holy Bible*) as well as our Subordinate Standard (the *Westminster Confession*), we reach the following clear conclusions as to the Calvinistic doctrine of saving grace in unbaptized covenant infants and in Christ-professing adults. For they are all to be regarded as believers -- and therefore as holy before baptism.

All sons of Adam are sinners from their very conception onward. Since Adam and Eve, Calvinists regard all persons (except Jesus) as having been conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, even before their birth. Ever since the fall, all are by nature therefore subject to the wrath of God. They cannot enter into or even see the Kingdom of God -- unless they are regenerated at some time before they die.⁷¹⁷

There is a difference between unborn believers and unbelievers. Calvinists assert that, even before their birth, God puts a difference between the tiny children of believers -- and the tiny children of unbelievers. He thus differentiates between elect children and reprobate children. The elect necessarily get regenerated and receive 'the seed of faith' before their death -- even if they die unbaptized before their birth or during their infancy.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁶ *Heid. Cat. Q. & A. 72.*

⁷¹⁷ Gen. 3:6-19; 5:3; 6:5; 8:21; Ecc1. 6:29; Job 14:4; 15:14-16; 25:4-6; Ps. 51:5; Jh. 3:3-8; Rom. 3:23; 5:12-19; I Cor. 15:21-22; Eph. 2:1-3; *W.C.F.* 6:2-3; and *W.L.C.* 25-26. Compare too at n. 679 above.

⁷¹⁸ Gen. 3:15; 17:7; 34:14; Ex. 11:7 - 13:5; Ps. 22:9-10; Ezra 9:2; Neh. 9:2; Ezk. 16:20-21; Mal. 2:15; Lk. 1:15-45; Acts 2:38-39; 8:36-37; Rom. 9:11-13; 11:16; I Cor. 7:14; Col. 2:11-13; II Tim. 1:5-6; *W.C.F.* 24:2; 25:2; 27:1; 28:4; and *W.L.C.* 166 & 177. Compare too at n. 680 above.

Regeneration generally precedes regular baptism. Calvinists presume that at least all believers' children dying in infancy, get regenerated and receive the 'seed of faith' before they die. Because all unborn babies can die any second, Calvinists also presuppose that all 'covenant children' that die before baptism, are made holy in the sight of God at or since their conception and long before their birth. Calvinists further presuppose (rebuttably) that all conceived in the covenant, are to be regarded as already holy -- until and unless their behaviour ever evidences the contrary during their later lives.⁷¹⁹

Baptism itself never regenerates. Because Calvinists regard covenant children as already holy before birth, they deny that baptizing them after their birth can make them holy! Such baptisms can at the most only seal already holy children as members of the Visible Church.⁷²⁰

Baptism is not for the dead nor for the dying. Because Calvinists see baptism as a sign pointing to life, they rightly oppose giving baptism to the dying and to the dead -- and to those dead in sin! Even covenant children, if they seem likely soon to die, are not to be baptized. For baptism is only for those likely to live, and likely to serve Christ in His Visible Church here on earth. Indeed, baptism is to be followed by life-long obedience; by fruitfulness; and by ever-increasing faith.⁷²¹

Baptism is only for believers (whether infants or adults). Because baptism is intended for believers alone, Calvinists oppose baptizing anyone who does not seem to believe in Christ already. For this reason, they urge the baptism of only those adults who profess faith in Christ, together with the children of such adults alone. For only such children would seem to possess 'the seed of faith' in their hearts. Thus, Calvinists refuse to administer baptism to those adults who do not rightly profess Christ. They also refuse to baptize the infant children of such adults.⁷²²

Baptism should take place only in a church setting. Calvinists say baptisms should occur only under Biblical conditions. This means baptisms are to be administered only: a) after catechizing the baptizee or his or her parent or parents, to the satisfaction of the Ruling Elders; b) before the entire congregation; c) during public worship; d) after the reading of God's Holy Word; e) with exclusively Reformed godparents, if any at all are used; and f) solely by an ordained Minister of the Word and Sacraments, or his acknowledged equivalent.⁷²³

Conclusion: baptism does not cleanse!

⁷¹⁹ II Sam. 12:15-23; Ps. 22:9-10; Jer. 1:5; Mt. 3:11; 19:14; Mk. 16:16; Lk. 1:15; 18:15-16; Jh. 3:3-8; Acts 2:38-39; 10:47; 16:15; 22:16; Rom. 4:10-12; 8:9; I Cor. 7:14; Heb. 6:2; I Jh. 5:12; *W.C.F.* 10:3 & 28:1; and *W.L.C.* 165 & 167 & 177. Compare too at n. 681 above.

⁷²⁰ Gen. 17:7-14; Rom. 4:10-12; I Cor. 1:17; 12:13; Gal. 5:3; Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5; Heb. 6:2; *W.C.F.* 10:3 & 28:3 and *W.L.C.* 161 & 165. Compare too at n. 682 above.

⁷²¹ Dt. 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25f; Rom. 2:25-29; 6:1-11; I Cor. 10:1-6; 15:29; Col. 2:11-13; *W.C.F.* 28:5 & 29:4; and *W.L.C.* 165 & 167. Compare too at nn. 640 & 683 above.

⁷²² Gen. 17:7f; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:38-39; 8:12-16; 8:36-37; Rom. 4:10-12; Col. 2:11-13; *W.C.F.* 28:4-5; and *W.L.C.* 166. Compare too at n. 684 above.

⁷²³ Ex. 4:22-26; Mt. 19:13f; 28:19f; Mk. 10:14; 16:15f; Lk. 18:15f; Acts 2:38-42; Rom. 11:16; I Cor. 1:2,14-16; 3:6; 4:1; 6:11-20; 7:14; 10:1-11; 12:13; Heb. 5:4; Knox's (& Others') *First Book of Discipline* Ch. II 2nd Head 1-3; Ch. IV 4th Head (1) 1-3; Ch. XI 9th Head (1) 4; *W.C.F.* 28:5 & 29:4; *West. Form of Presb. Ch. Gvt.* ('Of the Church' [d]; and 'Pastors' [p]); *West. Direct. Pub. Worsh. Of God* ('Of the Administration of the Sacraments'). Compare too at n. 685 above.

The above is what Presbyterians and other Calvinists should teach also their own covenant children. For not only Christ-professing adults are to be regarded as believers. So too are their infant children. Thus, also the latter are to be viewed as Christians -- and baptized accordingly.

Calvin's own views can be summed up in his *229th Letter*. There, he states that a child's salvation does not depend upon he or she being baptized. Baptism does not confer upon infants the power of becoming sons and heirs of God. But because they are in that position and degree in relation to God, the grace of adoption is sealed by baptism. Otherwise, the Anabaptists would be right in denying infants this sacrament -- as they wrongly do!⁷²⁴

For baptism is a sacrament, a holy oath. It is an oath sworn by believers, to serve their God. But even more so, it is an oath sworn by God Himself -- the Saviour of adult believers, and of their believing children!

In the famous words of the Calvinistic *Westminster Shorter Catechism*:⁷²⁵ "A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ." Therein, "by sensible signs -- Christ and the benefits of the New Covenant are represented, sealed and applied: to believers. Genesis 17:7,10...."

"The sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's supper.... Baptism is a sacrament wherein the washing with water in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace and our engagement to be the Lord's...."

"Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out[side] of the Visible Church, till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him. But the infants of such as are members of the Visible Church, are to be baptized. Acts 2:38-39; Genesis 17:10; Colossians 2:11-12; First Corinthians 7:14."

⁷²⁴ Calv.: *Letter 229*, cited in L.B. Schenck's *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁷²⁵ *W.S.C.* 92x-95d.

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