

## 5th. Reformed subculture in the United States (Page 8 for discussion ~~9-26-10~~)

c) We follow Calvin's root to its fruit on how Scripture counts sonship (C, Rom 9.26, 372f).

Calvin's comments on the "not my people" language harmonize in principle with our emphasis on Israel's covenant standing under judgment for they are "put on a level with the Gentiles"; then, "having equalized the Jews and the Gentiles, he would gather a Church for himself from aliens, so that they who were not a people would begin to be so" (372).

How do we relate eternal election to childship to recognition of it in the Church? To this point he says, "Though they indeed, whom God in his eternal counsel has destined as sons to himself, are perpetually his sons, yet Scripture in many parts counts none to be God's children but those, the election of whom has been proved by their calling: and hence he teaches us not to judge, much less to decide, respecting God's election, except as far as it manifests itself by its own evidences" (373; i.e. there must be a transition from wrath to grace in history).

Connecting eternal election to the counting of childship to God in history, Calvin's orbit of thought includes the visible church and human judgment. What we do with this, contrary to Calvin, is conclude that we are to identify covenant children, not by birth (as is typical in reformed theology), but by how "it manifests itself by its own evidences," which we take to be repentance, and in turn, the seeing the evidences of repentance lead to the administration of repentance-baptism.

Granted, in his comments on Romans 9.26, Calvin is connecting eternal sonship (per the *pactum salutis*) to counting someone to be a child of God in the judgment of the church. He is not addressing the notion of covenant standing within history (per the covenant with Abraham). Thus, he draws on the covenant with Abraham and his seed to arrive at the conclusion of covenant standing and identification (counting as children of God) by birth to covenant parentage. Our assessment is that these are contradictory or at least stand in tension with each other: counting as children of God by birth and counting as children of God by evidences that manifest calling (and calling results in faith and repentance as two sides of the same coin). Note that on Romans 9.26, Calvin says that *we* are "not to judge" and "decide" regarding "God's election" (that makes people "perpetually his sons") or "count [them]...to be God's children" "*except as far as it manifests itself by its own evidences*" (italics mine).

Therefore, we think it is true to Calvin and in harmony with reformed theology to resolve contradictions or confusing lines of thought in Calvin. We think that the connection between being perpetually covenant children and being identified as such per the evidences of repentance is clearly biblical and, contrary to Calvin, that it leads away from infant baptism because it leads away from identifying covenant children by natural birth. On the other hand, we think that we follow Calvin regarding the fact that the Jews are put on a level with the Gentiles (Rom 9.26) so that the church is gathered from aliens (of both Jews and Gentiles). However, we think he fails to go far enough because he does not see the historical-redemptive implication that now the covenant promises belong to all people and he does not see the further implications that this has regarding the arguments for infant baptism. For example, he claims that we must baptize infants since otherwise we exclude our children from the new covenant becomes a matter of lesser grace than the old. However, the implications of the covenant people remaining such, but under judgment and blended with the nations as not my people, are that all people are covenant people but under judgment. Thus, all people are "not my people," the covenant belongs to all, all are covenant breakers, and some are to be identified as covenant keepers if they show the evidences of God's effectual calling, which are repentance and faith; and in turn, the *obedience* of baptism.