Foundations

An international journal of evangelical theology

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Foundations Theological Journal

Foundations is an international journal of evangelical theology published in the United Kingdom. Its aim is to cover contemporary theological issues by articles and reviews, taking in exegesis, biblical theology, church history and apologetics, and to indicate their relevance to pastoral ministry. Its particular focus is the theology of evangelical churches which are committed to biblical truth and evangelical ecumenism. It has been published by Affinity (formerly The British Evangelical Council) from its inception as a print journal. It became a digital journal in April 2011. The views expressed in the articles published in Foundations do not necessarily represent the views of Affinity or its partners although all content must be within the bounds of the Affinity Doctrinal Basis.

Contents

EDITORIAL

The theme of this issue of Foundations is the doctrine of adoption, a doctrine not always highlighted in church life, Christian discipleship, and theological studies. There are four articles, each one looking at the doctrine from a different viewpoint.

In the first article, Tim Trumper surveys the ways the doctrine has been approached in the past and how it could be explored in the future. The second article is by David McKay and considers what the Old Testament says about divine sonship. Dan Peters deals with the important matter of preaching about the doctrine of adoption. The fourth article is about a notable Scottish publication on sonship and the fatherhood of God by a leading Scottish theologian in nineteenth-century Scotland, and Malcolm Maclean describes its contents and some responses to it.

There are two book reviews. Mark Thomas takes us through Philip Eveson's recent book, *Baptised with Heavenly Power*, which focuses on Martyn Lloyd-Jones' theology of the Holy Spirit and his emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in revival and in preaching.

The other book reviewed is Tim Trumper's *Adoption: A Road to Retrieval*. Thomas Davis of Edinburgh Theological Seminary assesses the author's explanations of three key areas: the theological history of adoption, the metaphorical import of adoption, and the biblical exposition of adoption, and observes that the author provides a comprehensive theological history of adoption, presents a rigorous investigation of the Scriptural teaching concerning adoption, and offers a fresh approach to the wider study of systematic theology.

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THE RECOVERY OF ADOPTION: A BRIEF PROGRESS REPORT

Tim J.R. Trumper

Abstract: Talk of the neglect of the doctrine of adoption has become commonplace over the last decades. Less recognised is that this awareness has arisen from a slowly developing concern to recover the doctrine. Thus, the author, participant in the endeavour for thirty-plus years, explains why the recovery became necessary, identifies Robert S. Candlish's 1864 Cunningham Lectures on the Fatherhood of God as its dawn, and traces the emergent interest in adoption down to the present via the disciplines of historical, biblical, and systematic theology. Various phases of the recovery are traversed, and numerous tensions (methodological, exegetical, linguistic, and structural) are highlighted. Their resolution promises the matured exposition and application of adoption, and calls for the methodological renewal of classic systematics. Aspects of this renewal and its benefits are mentioned, for adoption can only be said to be finally recovered once the doctrine is fully and satisfactorily (re-)integrated into the discipline of systematic theology.

We love to sing Augustus Toplady's hymn of 1774, 'How Vast the Benefits Divine which we in Christ possess.' Yet, for much of church history the thought of including adoption among them did not arise. Toplady's lyrics illustrate this: "We are redeemed from guilt and shame and called, [not to sonship, but exclusively] to holiness." He, thus, typified most before him and many following who thought of the gospel in terms of redemption, regeneration, justification, and sanctification, but not adoption.

This trend in history is difficult to unsee, especially now that attention has been drawn to it. Thus, to help reverse it, we must recognise it, and then, in praise to God, briefly sketch the progress being made in recovering adoption. Certainly, the day is now closer than perhaps at any time in history when it is afforded full and settled inclusion among the "vast benefits divine."[1]

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1   For the supporting sources, evidence, and arguments underlying this brief report, see Tim J. R. Trumper, "An Historical Study of the Doctrine of Adoption in the Calvinistic Tradition" (University of Edinburgh: Ph.D. Diss., 2001 [sometimes listed 2002], available online at https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/6803, accessed August 8, 2025); *Adoption: A Road to Retrieval* (Grand Rapids: From

1. The Context of Recovery

Although interest in the grace of adoption is traceable back to Irenaeus (130-202), it did not flourish as we might expect. The trinitarian and christological debates that prompted Athanasius' fourth-century analysis of the Fatherhood of God also kept the church from soteriological discussion. Later, Augustine (354-430) became the first we know of to evaluate the doctrine. He both extolled "the word *adoption*" as "of great importance in the system of our faith, as is seen from the apostolic writings," and described it as "a significant symbol."[2] Yet, argues Scott Lidgett, "With the theology of Augustine, the Fatherhood of God... passed entirely out of sight. It had been replaced by the conception of his sovereignty."[3]

Consequently, soteriological debates of the Reformation era focused on the legal side of the faith, notably on the doctrine of justification. Calvin was, of course, all in on defending God's free justifying grace, yet his corpus also includes rich, Pauline, salvation-historical remarks on God's free adopting grace. Regrettably, but consistent with the breadth of Calvin's understanding of adoption, he omitted a chapter on the doctrine from his *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, and yet stands out as a, if not the, theologian *par excellence* of adoption. Despite retaining in his theological method the use of Aristotelian categories of cause and effect, his approach to adoption contrasts markedly with the Westminster Standards' distinctive, highly logicised statements on adoption (WCF 12; WLC, 74; WSC 34). Although the shortest chapter in the WCF, "Of Adoption" is, so far as we know, the first of its kind in church history.[4] Once copied verbatim into the Savoy Declaration (1658) and the Baptist Confession of Faith (1677/89), its influence broadened across Protestantism.

We would assume that, together, these biblical-theological and systematic-theological approaches to adoption were enough to ensure thereafter its normative inclusion in Reformed soteriology. Yet, Rome's strong opposition to the free grace of justification at the Council of Trent (1545-63), coupled with the endangering of that grace from within Protestantism by the accumulated threats of Rationalism, Deism, Arianism,

His Fullness Ministries, 2022); and *When History Teaches Us Nothing: The Recent Reformed Sonship Debate in Context*, first published 2008, second ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022).

2   Augustine, *Reply to Faustus the Manichaean, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, edited by Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 4:160.

3   J. Scott Lidgett, *The Fatherhood of God in Christian Truth and Life* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902), 200.

4   The first catechism we know of to include questions and answers on adoption is Craig's Catechism, 1581.

Socinianism, and Neonomianism,[5] led the Protestant and Reformed orthodox to forsake the reformers' creative orthodoxy for a knee-jerk defence of the juridical side of the gospel. Overall, then, they lost the legal and relational balance of Scripture, one which Calvin and the Westminster Standards had sought to reflect. The eighteenth-century Methodists with their emphasis on the Spirit of adoption became an exception; even so, John Wesley eradicated every reference to adoption from his revision of the WSC.

Clearly then, Toplady's omission of adoption around that time, while unintentional, was not coincidental. Indeed, further movements solidified the general loss of creative orthodoxy among confessional Protestants. Whereas Enlightenment Rationalism and post-Enlightenment Romanticism undercut commitment to Scripture and its confessional summaries, the advent of industrialisation turned the church toward social issues. Thus, despite the confessional standing that adoption gained at the Westminster Assembly, the doctrine gradually slid off most Protestant and Reformed radars. Thereafter, a juridically lopsided gospel became embedded in Reformed thought, so much so that in the early nineteenth century there erupted a theological revolt intent on recovering the relational (specifically, the familial) side of the gospel. The Victorian broad school offered an even more regrettable relationally lopsided alternative. This the theologically orthodox rejected, choosing to cling to what they knew, but failing in the process to discern their part in the concerns of the broad school. Thus, they neither recaptured the balance of Scripture nor prevented the broad school's aberrant protest for paternal grace from gathering momentum.

The protest began, chiefly, with two Scotsmen: John McLeod Campbell (1800-72) and Thomas Erskine of Linlathen (1788-1870). Observing from parish work the general joylessness of his people, MacLeod Campbell abandoned his penal view of atonement and posited assurance as of the essence of faith (contra WCF 18). Hastily deposing him from the Church of Scotland's ministry in 1831, Westminster Calvinists were unable to hear from McLeod Cambell that our joy is fed not only by the retrospective aspect of the atonement (redemption) but its prospective aspect (the life of sonship). Meanwhile, Erskine, a laird, set out independently to promote a familial-friendly Calvinism, only to drift into a posthumously revealed Universalism.[6] All it took was his romantic notion of

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5   For an unpacking of the historical movements in this and the next paragraph, see Trumper, *When History Teaches Us Nothing*, 1-32.

6   Thomas Erskine, *The Spiritual Order and other Papers Selected from the Manuscripts of the late Thomas Erskine* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871).

Christian consciousness (an approach to theologising based not on exegesis but on one's inner light) and his subtle retranslation of Paul's term *huiothesia* as 'sonship' rather than 'adoption'. Erskine thereby eradicated the adoptive act (the believer's entrance into sonship) and paved the way for the espousal of the universal Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. Man needs, he taught, not an adoption but an education in the sonship he already possesses. Instead, then, of rebalancing biblically the juridical and relational sides of the faith, Erskine helped render the familial side of the faith guilty in the eyes of the theologically orthodox by its association with Universalism. With hindsight, then, we may belatedly confess that the culpability for the fissure within Protestantism has rested with us as also with the heterodox, albeit in divergent ways.[7]

2. The Contours of Recovery

Since Universalists oppose the doctrine of adoption, its recovery has been left to the theologically orthodox. While slow to recognise this responsibility, we may briefly trace the hopeful developments that have unfolded, focusing on the disciplines of historical, biblical, and systematic theology.[8]

i) Adoption in historical theology

By beginning with historical theology, we can continue the preceding narrative and show how a growing awareness of the annals of adoption is helping the recovery.

The dawn: 1864–1947

By 1864, McLeod Campbell, after a quarter-century in an ecclesiastical wilderness, had published *The Nature of the Atonement* (1856). Others had joined Erskine in pressing for a fully-fledged Universalism. The theologically orthodox, though, continued to reinforce the juridical side of the faith. Yet, in 1864, pastor-theologian Robert S. Candlish (1806-73), a leader in the Free Church of Scotland, delivered the first series of Cunningham Lectures. These were named after Candlish's fellow leader and historical-theological stalwart, William Cunningham (1805-61).

 Addressing the Fatherhood of God, Candlish's lectures are chiefly remembered for stirring a close-to-home debate with Thomas J. Crawford, Professor of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh, over God's general or creative Fatherhood and the nature

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7   For more on McLeod Campbell and Erskine, and, given what follows, on Robert Candlish and Thomas Crawford, John Girardeau and Robert Webb, see Trumper, "An Historical Study," 280-455.

8   For the progress in practical theology, see Trumper, *Adoption*, 103-10.

of the believer's sonship *vis-à-vis* Christ's.[9] Yet, the lectures also included the first recognition in print of the historic neglect of adoption accompanied by a call for its recovery. Candlish observed, "the subject has not hitherto been adequately treated in the Church" nor "received the prominence to which it is on scriptural grounds entitled." The creeds and confessions, he lamented, are silent, meagre, and defective on the Fatherhood of God and adoption. As for the reformers, their "hands were full." Thus, he concluded, "I have long had the impression that in the region of that great truth there lies a rich field of precious ore to be surveyed and explored; and that somewhere in that direction theology has fresh work to do, and fresh treasures to bring out from the storehouses of the Divine Word."[10]

We presume Candlish's disappointment that his lectures neither turned the tide against the Victorian broad school nor retrieved immediately the familial in Reformed soteriology. Yet, his seeds sown did not die. Across the Atlantic, esteemed Southern Presbyterian minister Benjamin Morgan Palmer (1818-1902) floated in 1881 the idea that John L. Girardeau (1825-1898), Professor of Didactic and Polemical Theology at Columbia Seminary, complete the system of theology begun by the prematurely deceased James Henley Thornwell (1812-62). Palmer envisioned a theological tome to represent the Seminary's brand of Reformed theology.

However, Girardeau's shorter theological incumbency led him to focus instead on those issues deficiently handled in the respective Union and Princeton systematic theologies of Robert Louis Dabney (1871) and Charles Hodge (1880). Significantly, both leant on Francis Turretin's seventeenth-century *Institutio Theologica Elenctica*. No text had greater influence on the post-Reformation loss of adoption, given Turretin's subsuming of the doctrine under justification and the protracted use of his Institutio by theologians, pastors, and students. Thus, Girardeau took up the theme of adoption, yet his papers reveal that his treatment of it in his *Discussion of Theological Questions* (1905) are largely an amalgam of addresses countering the universal Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man.

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9   Other pastor-theologians to weigh in included Hugh Martin ('Candlish's Cunningham Lectures,' *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 14 [Oct. 1865], 720–87) and John Kennedy of Dingwall (*Man's Relations to God: Traced in the Light of 'the Present Truth*,' reprint of 1869 ed. [The James Begg Society, 1995]).

10   Robert S. Candlish, *The Fatherhood of God: Being the First Series of the Cunningham Lectures*, fifth edition (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1869), 192-93.

His son-in-law, Robert A. Webb (1856-1919), followed in his train. A one-time student at Columbia Seminary, Webb went on to teach theology at Southwestern and Louisville Seminaries, thus spreading the Columbia interest in adoption. His lectures, however, were only published posthumously, the sponsors airing their conviction that his insights would counter effectively the dogma of the universal brotherhood of man. Yet, *The Reformed Doctrine of Adoption* (1947) fell far short of the promoters' hopes, remaining significant today, as we shall see, but not as Webb or his sponsors would have hoped.[11]

The post-dawn: 1950s-the present

By the mid-twentieth century, neo-orthodoxy had arisen as an Enlightenment-wedded middle ground between the Reformed orthodox and the heterodox. The writings of P.T. Forsyth (1848-1921), a Barthian before Barth, and Karl Barth (1886-1968) bear testimony to their endeavour to keep together the juridical and relational sides of the gospel.[12]

Gradually, this caught on with the Reformed orthodox. Enter systematician John Murray (1898-1975). Noted for his *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (1955) and *Collected Writings* (1977), he witnessed firsthand the emergence of Reformed biblical theology and the renewed study of Calvin – two related movements that have proven essential to the recovery of adoption. Moreover, his close reading of the WCF kept before him the long-underutilised inclusion of adoption in Reformed soteriology. Additionally, as a Scottish theologian resident in America, Murray knew of the Candlish-Crawford debate and its influence on Southern Presbyterianism (*et al*.). Thus, he resurrected the WCF's interest in adoption, distinguished the doctrine from both regeneration and justification, and challenged the hold of Turretin's view on the tradition. Adoption, he proclaimed by contrast, is "much more than either or both of these acts of grace." It is rather "the apex of redemptive grace and privilege."[13]

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11   The minimal influence of Thomas Houston's welcome volume *The Adoption of Sons, Its Nature, Spirit, Privileges and Effects: A Practical and Experimental Treatise* (Paisley, UK: Alex. Gardner, 1872) might have warned the promoters against excessive confidence.

12   P. T. Forsyth, God the Holy Father (1897) and Karl Barth, especially the sections in his *Church Dogmatics* 'God the Father' and 'God the Father as Lord of His Creature' (I.1 and III.3).

13   John Murray, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, reprint ed. (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), 132; Collected Writings of John Murray (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 233.

Thereafter, others took fresh notice of the doctrine, notably James Packer in his classic *Knowing God* (1973) and Sinclair Ferguson in *The Christian Life* (1981). Ferguson observed that, since Candlish, all too little had been written on the subject, adding in his later chapter 'The Reformed Doctrine of Sonship' in *Pulpit and People: Essays in Honour of William Still* (1986) that voices had begun calling for the doctrine's recovery. Then, Errol Hulse published "Recovering the Doctrine of Adoption" in *Reformation Today* (1988), drawing on Murray, Packer, and Ferguson to note deficiencies in the Puritan treatment of adoption. Next, Douglas Kelly published 'Adoption: An Underdeveloped Heritage of the Westminster Standards' in the *Reformed Theological Review* (1993). Supplementing Ferguson's brief gleanings from the fathers, medieval theologians, reformers, and Puritans, Kelly argued in effect that the Westminster Standards would not have been so criticised for their content had subscribers, through neglect of adoption, not created a distorted impression of them.

While the remarks of such authors were too isolated to effect much, once accumulated they became a platform on which the first full-length history of adoption could be constructed. Preparatory work began in the early 1990s at the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh, arising from a summarising of Herman Ridderbos's chapter 'The Adoption: The Inheritance' (*Paul: An Outline of His Theology* [1977]). Taken aback by his setting of adoption within the *historia salutis*, I began to inquire what else was written on the doctrine, only to discover its dearth of resources. Thus, the clues of Murray, Packer, Ferguson, Hulse, and Kelly were a Godsend, and led me to apply in 1993 for doctoral studies at the University of Edinburgh, specifically to piece together the history of adoption and to explain it.[14]

The overall history was first aired in the introduction to my doctoral dissertation (2001), then in two articles in the *Scottish Bulletin and Evangelical Theology* (headed 'The Theological History of Adoption' [2002]), and now most fully in *Adoption: The Road to Retrieval* (2022). Within that history I encountered a fascinating tension between the claim of Robert Webb that "Calvin ... makes no allusion whatever to adoption," and that of Brian A. Gerrish in his newly published 1990 Cunningham Lectures (yes, same series!), that "Calvin describes the gospel [as], quite simply, the

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14   For a fuller account of this journey, see Trumper, *Adoption*, xv–xxviii.

good news of adoption."[15] The subsequent probing of these claims resulted in the main body of the dissertation: a narrative of the fortunes of adoption from sixteenth-century Calvin to the nineteenth-century loss of adoption among those bearing his name.

Along the way, I discerned an array of reasons why adoption has been, and continues to be overlooked: unwitting neglect, preoccupation (with Adoptionism, and justification), excision (by Wesley, Erskine, and George MacDonald), absorption (N.T. Wright's redefining of justification), denial, and fear of how the recovery of adoption challenges traditions of theology, whether methodologically or theologically.[16] These could have been countered earlier had publishers been more inclined to create a market for serious treatments of adoption, and to realise the role they could play in retrieving adoption.

While the history now on record is the most comprehensive to date, it isn't exhaustive. The narrative can yet benefit from a fuller probing of the church fathers, the Middle Ages, and non-Protestant traditions of the professing church. Hindered during the doctorate by the University's word limit, I have since been thankful for Joel Beeke's fleshing out of the post-Reformation interest in *Heirs with Christ: The Puritans on adoption* (2008) and have woven his findings into my most recent account of the history. He exonerates the Puritans from an absolute neglect of adoption, but not, I argue, from a quantitative or qualitative neglect. Their 1,200 pages on adoption (1620-1727) cannot match their 30,000 booklets on church-related issues (1640-1662),[17] nor can their curtailment of adoption to the *ordo salutis* compensate for the salvation-historical scope of the Pauline doctrine, and neither can their admixture of Pauline and non-Pauline filial and familial terms justify the obscuring of the clarity of Paul's thought.

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15   Robert A. Webb, *The Reformed Doctrine of Adoption* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1947), 17; Brian A. Gerrish, *Grace & Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 89.

16   Trumper, *Adoption*, 1-161.

17   Among these pages are treatises by Thomas Granger (1620), M.G. (1645), Samuel Petto (1654), Simon Ford (1655), John Crabb (1682), Samuel Willard (1684), and Cotton Mather (1727). For further details, see Joel R. Beeke, *Heirs with Christ: The Puritans on Adoption* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008, 7-14). The estimate concerning the church-related booklets is by Thomas M'Crie the younger and is cited in *The Reformation of the Church: A Collection of Reformed and Puritan Documents on Church Issues*, Selected with introductory notes by Iain H. Murray, reprint ed. (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 7.

ii) Adoption in biblical theology

The recovery of adoption requires more, then, than additional spilled ink. In Reformation fashion, we need to return to Scripture (*ad fontes*). This is essential if we are to resolve the methodological, exegetical, linguistic, and structural tensions unearthed from the history.

Methodological tensions

Advocates of a rethinking of the way we expound adoption see in the likes of Irenaeus and Calvin forerunners of a fresh salvation-historical approach. Both theologians predate the emergence of Protestant scholasticism and the unmistakable hiatus it created in the exposition of adoption. Thus, today, attention to adoption is revealing competing biblical-theological (historical) and systematic-theological (logicised) approaches to the doctrine and is cautioning us against dismissing methodological discontinuities in the Reformed tradition amid the defence of its theological continuities.

While Scripture remained authoritative for Protestant scholastics, their emphasis on its divineness (one God, one Bible, one gospel) came to overshadow its humanness, notably the progressively revealed unfolding of God's dealings with his people, the authorial diversity of the New Testament, and the functioning of figures of speech. Their strength lay in advocating systems of theology and eliciting from the biblical text its doctrinal *principia* or *axiomata*, not so much in expounding Scripture on its own terms. To quote Hans Emil Weber, their exegesis served to provide "a logically coherent and defensible system of belief."[18] Thus, what treatments of adoption followed in Protestant and Reformed orthodoxy were impoverished hermeneutically and exegetically, which is why the mere repetition of the highly logicised treatments of our Puritan forebears do not satisfy. They are neat but inclined to eisegesis, and while they follow exegetical traditions, we err to assume that the traditions, given the neglect of adoption, were the product of mature reflection.

The open-mindedness of Puritan advocate D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' (1899-1981) fascinates in this regard. Including adoption in his Friday evening lectures at Westminster Chapel (1952-55), he very much followed Paul's salvation-historical unfolding of adoption, although theologically he echoed A.A. Hodge's (re)interpretation of the WCF, teaching that adoption is a capstone that sits astride justification and regeneration.

18   Richard Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford University Press, 2003), 76.

Concurrently, John Murray was not only raising the profile of adoption but began injecting salvation-historical considerations into his systematics. In this, he was not only influenced by Geerhardus Vos (1862-1949), the first Princeton professor of Biblical Theology and the father of Reformed Biblical theology, but by the emerging renaissance in Calvin studies emanating from Scotland via the work of the neo-orthodox Torrances and their co-labourer Ronald Wallace. Murray thus began advocating a more objective assessment of ratiocinated systematics, questioning in effect whether classic systematics do justice to the shape and feel of Scripture. Thus, he prepared the way for a fresh look at adoption but did not get so far as to consider adoption metaphorically or to challenge the engrained conflation of the filial and familial terms of the New Testament.[19]

Yet, two years after Murray's death and coinciding with the appearance of his *Collected Writings* (1977), Ridderbos' *Paul* appeared in English. His brief chapter on adoption is what first alerted me to variant approaches to its exposition, for he implicitly challenged the reading of non-Pauline authors into Paul, and the confinement of adoption to the ordo salutis. "Sonship," he wrote, "is not to be approached from the subjective experience of the new condition of salvation, but rather from the divine economy of salvation."[20] In this, Ridderbos seemed to me to be a lone voice until I learned that Calvin had long before discerned Paul's redemptive-historical perspective on adoption. Between them, they convinced me that a biblical-theological approach must shape the systematic-theological treatments of the doctrine, and that we can only say that adoption is recovered once it has.

Exegetical tensions

That shaping begins with certain indisputable exegetical facts. First, we must know that *huiothesia* is the sole term in Scripture for adoption, referring, literally, to the placing of the son (*huios* plus *thesia*, from *tithemi*, to place). Indeed, there is no comparable term in Scripture, which means that *huiothesia* makes a unique contribution to the gospel, for, unlike such terms as 'child' or 'son', *huiothesia* encompasses both the adoptive

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19   For an unpacking of methodological developments in confessional Reformed thought since Vos and Murray, see Tim J. R. Trumper, "John Frame's Methodology: A Case Study in Constructive Calvinism", *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John Frame*, edited by John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 2009), 145–172.

20   Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, transl. by John Richard De Witt (London: SPCK, 1977), 198.

act (entrance into sonship) and the adoptive state (the life of sonship).[21] Second, none other, and no one less than the Apostle Paul introduced *huiothesia* into our theological vocabulary, by including it in three of his high-profile epistles (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5).

Such facts, though, have been lost on many. First, because the specificities of the filial and familial terms of Scripture have been inadequately considered. Luther, for instance, translated *huiothesia* not even as *Sohnschaft* (sonship) but as *Kindschaft* (childhood). Indeed, to this day, dynamic-equivalent Bible translations, being more interpretative, use a mix of adoption and sonship translations, and thus obscure the uniqueness of Paul's term. Second, because the scholastic stress on systems of theology has influenced the conflation of the distinctive language of Paul (*huiothesia*) with the more generic filial or familial terms of non-Pauline authors. Third, because the scholastic emphasis on the divineness of Scripture precluded the inconveniences of its humanness, such as those arising from the New Testament's distinctively structured figures of speech. This remains mystifying, for while we seek to avoid mixing metaphors in everyday conversation, theologians have typically run together the Johannine and Petrine language of the new birth and the Pauline language of adoption without a second thought.

Challenges to this tendency are gradually gaining ground. James Scott's scholarly work *Adoption as Sons* (1992), while not proactively pursuing the recovery of adoption, has nevertheless served it well. By unearthing compelling evidence from the Greco-Roman world that *huiothesia* means 'adoption' or 'adoption as son', Scott has negated clumsy translations of *huiothesia*, historic conflations of adoption and the new birth,[22] the subsuming of adoption under justification (Turretin, et al.), attempts either to depict Paul as a Universalist (Erskine) or to redefine justification (N.T. Wright), and has lent support to formal-equivalent translations of *huiothesia* as 'adoption'.[23] Note, for instance, that the NIV now uniformly translates *huiothesia* as 'adoption', henceforth impeding theologians from ignoring its distinctive meaning.[24]

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21 I am indebted to Sinclair Ferguson for this distinction (from personal correspondence in the early 1990s).

22 For more on this, see Trumper, *Adoption*, 172-93.

23 Ricky Andries Tan's forthcoming study *Adoption Reimagined: An Unconcealed Theology of Huiothesía (Υἱοθεσία) in Pauline Thought* (Wipf and Stock), boldly claims that adoption is not *huiothesia*, yet the manuscript as of September 2025 omits any mention of Scott's research.

24 Cf., the NIV (1973, 1978, 1984) and the NIV (2011).

Linguistic tensions

Rarely has the question been raised as to how the word *huiothesia* functions. In highly logicised systems of theology, adoption is treated as a proposition rather than as a figure of speech. Calvin refers to tropes such as *metaphorae*, but, to date, I have found no reference to his view of adoption. God, however, is using the postmodern fascination with language and its claim that truth is but a social construct to challenge our presumptions about Paul's language of adoption.

Gleaning from philosophical schools of thought, we dismiss a positivist view of *huiothesia*, since in positivism man can only know observable realities. Our adoption, by contrast, is received through faith and is enjoyed by an assurance in an unseen acceptance (Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:6). Likewise, we dismiss the idealist view, wherein man responds not to reality but to need, for our adoption was in God's mind before we ever felt our need of it (Eph. 1:4-5). This leaves us with two realist options. The naïve realist believes *huiothesia* speaks of our acceptance with God exactly the way it is, which likely explains why theologians rarely comment on how Paul's language of adoption functions. Yet, nowadays, critical realists believe naïve realists to blur the Creator-creature distinction by positing that God and man view adoption in the same way. Instead, critical realists view a term like *huiothesia* as reality-depicting but in metaphorical garb. Thus, God sees our acceptance the way it actually is, but reveals it to us as an adoption so that we, with our limited capabilities, can have some grasp of what it means to be accepted.

God's genius radiates through Paul's inspired use of *huiothesia*, for in this one metaphor multiple linguistic theories of metaphor play out. *Huiothesia* adorns the notion of our divine acceptance (the ornamental theory), it unveils the profundity of our acceptance (the incremental theories), it evokes praise to God (the emotive theories), and so forth. Suffice it to say, that the recovery of adoption is taking us into new spheres of discussion, offering fresh, amazing vistas in which lovers of God and his Word can delight.[25]

Structural tensions

Were *huiothesia* but a basic metaphor (a one-time analogy) its neglect might be tolerable. Yet, its five uses constitute *huiothesia* as a robust metaphor or theological

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25   For an unpacking of these linguistic tensions, see Trumper, *Adoption*, 193–215.

model. It possesses both a core meaning (adoption) and a graphic association of ideas (slavery, redemption, sonship, and inheritance, *et al.*). These we label subordinate metaphors, although they may function as their own models in contexts other than adoption.

Two issues are germane here. First, there is Erin Heim's entrance into the conversation.[26] Although welcome, her omission of Paul's use of *huiothesia* in Ephesians 1:5 is unwarranted, inconsistently argued, and detrimental to the apostle's thought. This, however, matters less to Heim, for she views Paul's uses of *huiothesia* not as a coherent model but as individual metaphors. Thus, despite sharing some helpful insights, Heim misses the apostles' unified narrative of God's adoptive dealings with his people. The narrative covers the entire scope of salvation history, from the first to the last things and from predestination to glorification: Ephesians 1:4-5; Romans 9:4; Galatians 4:4-7; Romans 8:15-16, 22-23. Indeed, the coherence of Paul's distinctive model is highly relevant to its exposition. This Calvin illustrates, Ridderbos implies, and others today demonstrate.[27] Indeed, this salvation-historical coherence is now seeping into popular treatments once dominated by the admixture of the Pauline and Johannine models of adoption and the new birth and, with it, the truncation of Paul's thought.[28]

The second issue pertains to the question of the origin of *huiothesia*. As the recovery advances, so the Semitic background is being written off, for there is no indisputable

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26   Erin Heim, 'Light through a Prism: New Avenues of Inquiry for the Pauline *Υἱοθεσία* Metaphors' (Ph.D. Diss.: University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, 2014), now published as (*Adoption in Galatians and Romans* [Brill 2017]).

27   Ridderbos, Paul, 197-204; Tim J. R. Trumper, "A Fresh Exposition of Adoption: I. An Outline," *SBET* 23 no. 1 (Spring 2005), 60-80, and *Adoption*, 237-302; David B. Garner, *Sons in the Son: The Riches and Reach of Adoption in Christ* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2016). Garner's warm-hearted exposition is, alas, marred by: (1) his confusion of the salvation-historical model of biblical theology with what Brevard Childs has called "biblical theology within categories of dogmatic theology"; (2) his unconvincing use of Romans 1:3-4 to promote the notions of Christ's resurrection-adoption and his two supposed dimensions of Sonship (the one eternal and static, the other human and developmental); and (3) his silence concerning how Paul's language functions. Thus, he rounds off Paul's thought systemically in ways not true to the apostle's model, he skews the exposition making Romans 1:3-4 rather than Galatians 4:4-7 the key adoption text (contrary to the likes of Calvin), and while evading Nestorianism by using the singular *Sonship* in reference to Christ, he nevertheless opens the door to it by his belief in Christ's two filial *dimensions*. Long ago, Ambrose and Aquinas refuted the idea in Hilary and Augustine that Christ as man is the adopted Son of God, for sonship belongs to the person and not the natures of Christ (*Summa Theologica*, Complete ed. [Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1948], 4:2141-43). Garner would do well, it seems to me, to jettison his creative theory for a position biblically and historically attested, more accessible, and more preachable (Trumper, *Adoption*, 295–302, and *JETS* 62:1 [March 2019], 204-09).

28   For example, Dan Cruver (Ed.), *Reclaiming Adoption: Missional Living through the Rediscovery of Abba Father* (Adelphi, MD: Cruciform Press, 2011); Michael P. V. Barrett, *Complete in Him: A Guide to Understanding and Enjoying the Gospel*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 165–92; Barton D. Priebe, *Adopted by God: Discover the Life-Transforming Joy of a Neglected Truth* (independently published, 2021).

evidence of the practice of adoption in old covenant times. Similarly, Greek forms of adoption are being discounted since they predate Paul. This leaves Roman adoption, advocated by Allen Mawhinney, Francis Lyall, and Trevor Burke.[29] Alternatively, Scott and Ridderbos observe that while Paul uses a Hellenistic term, he fills it with Old Testament content and applies it to New Testament times (Rom. 9:4 and Gal. 3:23–4:7). Yet, the Old Testament focus need not be pitched against the Roman influence on Paul's use of *huiothesia*. After all, he lived in a triadic world of Hebraic, Greek, and Roman influences, and utilised *huiothesia* solely in epistles written either from Rome (or Roman provinces) or to those in Rome. His purpose was not only to extol God's grace but to unite believing Gentiles and Jews in the same household (Eph. 2:11-22, especially v. 19). It appears, then, that Paul was intentionally vague, filling the Hellenistic term with old covenant content familiar to Jewish believers, while making allusions to the familiar Roman practice of *adoptio* to pique the interest of Gentile believers.

iii) Adoption in systematic theology

Although the recovery of adoption predates the revived trend of writing systematic theologies, it has had little impact yet on their shape or feel. Indeed, systematic theology is, I argue, the last discipline for the recovery to conquer. To quote Scottish church leader Robert Rainy (1826-1906): "It had never been doubted or concealed by any worthy expositor of the ways of God in salvation, that we are children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Adoption is a Christian benefit. But much depends on the place in the mind given to a thought like this, and, especially, much depends on the dogmatic form it assumes, and the virtue allowed it in the system."[30] Thus, we await reforms to systematic theology exceeding those Murray initiated, to afford virtue or space for the metaphorical workings, full scope, and non-clouded exposition of Paul's model of adoption.

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29   See especially Allen Mawhinney, '*υἱοθεσία* in the Pauline epistles: Its Background, Use, and Implications' (Ph.D.: Baylor University, Waco, Tx, 1983), Francis Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons: Legal Metaphors in the Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books [Zondervan], 1984), and Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into Gods Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

30   Robert Rainy, 'Dr. Candlish as a Theologian,' in William Wilson's *Memorials of Robert Smith Candlish* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1880), 615.

The challenge of recovery[31]

Keeping to the English-speaking world, and to evangelicalism and confessional Reformed circles, we may mention at least the following authors of systematic theologies since the late 1980s: James Boice (1986); Wayne Grudem and Morton Smith (1994); Robert Reymond (1998); Robert Culver (2005); Gerald Bray (2012); John Frame (2006 and enlarged in 2013); Michael Horton (2011, abridged in 2013) and Michael Bird (2013); Robert Letham (2019); and Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley (2019-24). Among these there are some signs of greater sensitivity to the relevant biblical data, with Reymond's, Horton's, and Letham's weaving in more salvation-historical considerations, and Bird's refreshing attention to redemptive history, the *ordo salutis*, and to images of salvation in his creative rearrangement of soteriology.[32] Yet, overall, these impressive volumes remain briefer in treating adoption than regeneration, justification, and sanctification; they lack consideration of adoption as a model; and they tend to perpetuate exegetical fallacies of the past, and sometimes subsume adoption under justification.

Why is this? First, because we are still not out of the woods as regards the doctrine's neglect. The New City Catechism (2017), for instance, advertised as an amalgam of post-Reformation catechisms including the Westminster Shorter Catechism, curiously eliminates Question 34, "What is adoption?" Second, the reasoning process of classic systematics is deeply, deeply engrained, and remains 'safe.' Actually, though, it is unsafe, for the best defence of Reformed orthodoxy requires that a high view of Scripture be accompanied by a high use of it. Third, while our evangelical and Reformed systematicians know of the challenge presented by the renaissance in biblical theology and Calvin studies, they may not be so clear on the necessary methodological reforms to systematic theology. Fourth, we are moulded by our history, and to a degree are still wary of endeavours to balance the juridical and relational (familial) content of the faith. Fifth, reforms are hindered by lack of inter-disciplinary cooperation. The defence of Protestant scholasticism is, for instance, the domain of historical, systematic, and

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31   The following sections are unpacked in detail in Trumper, *Adoption*, 98-103, 304-85.

32   Without implying agreement with Bird on all his methodological or theological detail, his rearrangement takes good account of the fact that the biblical elements of soteriology are historical, doctrinal, and metaphorical. He offers a visual of what soteriology may look like when not wedded exclusively to the ordo salutis and its limitations (Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012], 489–605; cf. Trumper, *Adoption*, 325-42).

philosophical theologians, but not of biblical theologians. A back-to-Scripture approach to adoption suggests, then, the need for a more modest defence of logicised systems of theology – one that upholds as ever objective truth, the divineness of Scripture, and its unity, yet factors in its humanness (as per an orthodox doctrine of Scripture), and allows for its distinctively structured models (also known as perspectives).

The influence of recovery

Envision the methodological pluses that systematic theology could gain from the recovery of adoption. First, the contours of adoption could encourage greater salvation-historical contextualisation of all biblical doctrines. Second, the exclusive Pauline use of adoption, encourages the consideration of how the authorial diversity of the New Testament applies to other doctrines. Third, the inability of the ordo salutis construct to accommodate the breadth of Paul's adoption model alerts us to the difficulties of its exclusive use in arranging biblical soteriology. Fourth, in challenging the exclusive use of ordo salutis constructs, the recovery of adoption offers the possibility of re-centering union with Christ soteriologically and experientially.[33] Located belatedly in the WCF (26:1) and penultimately in Murray's *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, we are, in ascending order, justified, sanctified, and adopted in Christ. Such benefits are best depicted not by a line that takes us ever further from Christ, but by a circle enveloping the Christ in whom these benefits are found.[34] Fifth, the incorporation of distinctively structured models supports John Frame's and Vern Poythess' case for multi-perspectivalism.[35]

The benefits of recovery

In addition to the recovery's methodological benefits there are theological benefits. Specifically, the recovery of adoption counters belatedly some of the historical-theological imbalances impacting how Christian, Protestant, and Reformed orthodoxy

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33   For a balanced evaluation of the *ordo salutis* construct, see Sinclair Ferguson's piece 'Ordo Salutis' in *New Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright and J. I. Packer (Consulting Editor), (Leicester, England and Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 480-481. Among the "widespread criticism" of the *ordo salutis*, he notes its heavy reliance on Romans 8:28-30; its distortion of the basic New Testament emphasis on *historia salutis*, and its reductionist approach to the disparate dimensions of salvation. The concern, then, is not for orderly thought about salvation, but for the orderliness to be centred in Christ.

34   For such a depiction, see Trumper, *Adoption*, 355.

35   John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God: A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987); Vern S. Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspective in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books [Zondervan], 1987).

is viewed. First, it addresses the juridical lopsidedness of the Middle Ages and the modern era, finally recapturing the biblical balance of the gospel and effectively answering the Victorian protest for paternal grace.

Second, adoption helps us bridge the respective liberal and conservative emphases on the incarnation and the cross. The former opposes penal atonement for the elect and promotes Universalism, the latter upholds a penal atonement, but where the focus is on the elect we need to keep in view God's general love for our race and Calvin's reminder of Christ's incarnational union with us in our humanity. The core adoption text, Galatians 4:4-6, is very helpful in this regard, for it conveys the gospel as a continuum in which the incarnation makes no sense without Christ's redemptive work, the redemption has no victory without Christ's resurrection, and the resurrection no confirmation without Pentecost. Thus, adoption dispels the impression that the incarnation is a mere prefix to the redemption, and that the redemption is a mere suffix of the incarnation.

Third, with pneumatological union so central to the adoptive act (the *huioi* being placed in the *Huios*), adoption offers to keep together different aspects of the gospel: the objective (what Christ does *for us*) and the subjective (what the Spirit does *in us*). The union thus nullifies the claim that the gospel is a paper fiction, for we are justified, sanctified, and adopted in Christ. Accordingly, union with Christ and its benefits are both critical to the gospel.

Fourth, the recovery of adoption holds out the hope that we may offset western individualism by balancing the individual and the community. Whereas baptism, the *symbolum adoptionis*, grants us entrance into the covenant community and is a sign and seal of adoption (WLC, Ans. 165), the Lord's Supper bespeaks our continued union with Christ within God's household. A similar balance is found among the benefits of the union. Whereas justification is God's declaration of individuals as righteous in his sight, adoption leads on to membership of God's household. The recovery of adoption affirms, then, N.T. Wright's protest against a hyper-individualised justification, while simultaneously negating his corporate redefining of justification as God's declaration of our membership in his covenant family. Once we factor in adoption, his redefinition is both unnecessary and unconvincing – a travesty of both justification and adoption.

Fifth, the recovery would finally answer McLeod Campbell's concern that we do as much justice to the prospective as to the retrospective aspects of the atonement. This concern was brought back to the fore in the latter twentieth century by Jack Miller's Sonship Discipleship Course. Despite its imprecise exegesis, the confusion of adoption from slavery with a supposed adoption from orphanhood (a common misconception in practical and popular theology), and the reduction of the means of sanctification to faith (leading to charges of antinomianism), Sonship was, I believe, our second opportunity from God to recover adoption. It seems no coincidence that McLeod Campbell and Miller, although separated by time and space, both reacted against the retrospective and juridical lopsidedness of Reformed orthodoxy, both understood the need to recover the filial and familial emphases of the New Testament, both were influenced by Luther's Commentary on Galatians, both were correct in principle but poor executioners, and both were opposed without perception of the kernel of truth in their thinking.[36]

Finally, the recovery of adoption has the potential to renew our view of heaven. Too often, we focus on heaven in its intermediate state, when the climax of New Testament hope is the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our salvation, then, pertains not only to our souls but to our bodies. Paul writes that our adoption is consummated when our bodies are redeemed (Rom. 8:22-23). In them, we shall be revealed to the cosmos as God's sons, both free and glorified in Christ – a reality that was rendered certain by the Son's prototypical redemption from death at his resurrection.

Conclusion

Adoption has every right then, both biblically (as a model) and theologically (as a doctrine), to be included among our vast benefits in Christ. Spiritually speaking, we have in adoption union with the Son, access to the Father, and indwelling by the Spirit. We are freed from enslavement, assured of God's love, able to pray, called to obedience, are members of God's household, guaranteed the redemption of our bodies, and are heirs of the redeemed earth to come. Yet, there is also benefit for the Reformed tradition in recognizing adoption to be a vast benefit in Christ. While many newcomers are attracted to the Reformed faith, for two centuries we have bled the defections of those dissatisfied with our unresolved imbalances.

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36   For the unpacking of these commonalities, see Trumper, *When History Teaches Us Nothing*, 33-87.

Thus, we press on to fully recover adoption, offering assurances as we do, that to polish our family silver is not to sell it, nor is to replace worn shoes a departure from the old paths. We therefore continue digging into Scripture, looking up to our triune God, and ensuring that our theology ever passes into praise. It is fitting, then, to end by glorifying God in song:

We praise you God, in nature seen by all!
But, in your Word, re-vealed through Mark and Paul –
Christ, our brother, who's taught us to call:
Abba, Father! Abba, Father!

We praise you Christ, this evil sphere did brave,
Us to redeem, who badly do behave;
Children of wrath, who bound in sin did rave.
Blessèd Redeemer! Blessèd Redeemer!

Adopted now, by Father, God of love,
Placed in the Son, closer than hand in glove
The Spirit sheds abroad through Christ his love.
Wonderful Spirit! Wonderful Spirit!

Bondage now gone, no turning back to fear!
As sons we're free, as siblings drawn near,
From house of death for home of him so dear.
We're brothers and sisters! Brothers and sisters!

In the firstborn, we adopted have hope!
Through his raised life, we live rather than cope,
We're heirs with him, God's great estate to scope.
Come, then, Lord Jesus! Come, then, Lord Jesus!

On that great day, our bodies raised again,
No more sinning, no more pain!
Completely whole, on new earth to proclaim:
Father, Son, Spirit! Father, Son, Spirit![37]

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37   Words, Tim J. R. Trumper, 2017; tune: *Sine Nomine*, Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906.

ADOPTION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

David McKay

Abstract: Although the language of adoption is not used in the OT, and the possible examples of adoption practice are few, the concept of adoption is present and significant. Israel is described by the Lord as his son, as at the time of the Exodus, and the relationship established by the Lord is fundamentally covenantal. The relationship between God and the king of Israel is also stated in terms of an adoptive father/son relationship. The concept of kingship in Israel is thus profoundly different from that common in other nations. The ultimate fulfilment of prophetic references to the king as God's son is found in the person and work of the Messiah, the Son of God incarnate. In the NT context, believers in union with the Son become the adopted children of God and share in a fulness of blessing beyond that experienced by OT believers.

Introduction

Having agreed to write an article on adoption in the Old Testament (OT), it is disconcerting at the outset of research to read the comment of Victor P. Hamilton: "The OT nowhere uses either the vb., adopt, or the nom., adoption. Nor does it contain any laws of adoption, and the evidence for the presence of adoption ceremonies is slim."[1] It would seem that several thousand words will not be needed to express the absence of the subject of adoption from the OT canon.

It is generally agreed that legal adoption was not provided for by the laws of Israel, although the concept would have been known through contact with surrounding cultures. Some point to certain cases in the OT which might suggest the practice of some kind of adoption, even if not regulated by Israelite law. The 'adoption' of Moses by the daughter of Pharaoh (Exod. 2:10) and that of Ruth's son by her mother-in-law Naomi (Ruth 4:17: "A son has been born to Naomi") may seem to offer examples, but both may be better explained as a form of fostering, and there is no doubt that Ruth's son was legally counted as bearing the name of Boaz' deceased kinsman. We might also note Samuel's being given to Eli, indicative of his being given to the Lord (1

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1   Victor P. Hamilton, 'Adoption', in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. VanGemeren (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997), 4.362.

Sam. 1:27-28; 2:18-21) and David's treating Jonathan's son Mephibosheth as one of his own sons (2 Sam. 9:11). Another possible case is that of Esther (Esth. 2:7). When her parents died, we are told, "Mordecai [her cousin] took her as his own daughter."A further factor against the cases of Moses and Esther being counted as adoption in the Israelite community is that both took place in a foreign culture (Egyptian and Persian respectively).

Other possible examples are equally tentative. Childless Abraham seems to regard Eliezer his steward as his heir in some sense (Gen. 15:2), but no form of adoption is mentioned. Both Sarai (Gen. 16:2) and Rachel (Gen. 30:3) appear to count, or wish to count, the children fathered by Abraham on Hagar and by Jacob on Bilhah as their own children. Two interesting cases are the counting of grandchildren as the children of their grandfather. This occurs with Jacob in relation to Joseph's sons (Gen. 48:5: "Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine") and perhaps with Joseph in relation to the children of Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. 50:23). The outworking of each of these relationships is not described, and the use of the language of adoption to describe them seems unwarranted.

Nevertheless, as William E. Brown states, "The adoption metaphor was not lost to Israel, however."[2] Whilst noting that the evidence for the presence of adoption ceremonies in Israel is slim, Victor Hamilton goes on to say, "Accordingly, the idea of adoption will be expressed by phrases like 'I will be his father, and he will be my son'(2 Sam 7:14) or 'I will take you as my people' (Exod 6:7)."[3]

1. Israel as God's Son

The message of the Lord to Pharaoh, conveyed by Moses before the exodus, was, "Israel is my firstborn son" (Exod. 4:22). It is clear from the wider OT context how this is to be understood. In contrast to the surrounding nations, Israel had no myth of descent from God (or the gods) – such a concept was utterly alien to Israelite thought, rooted as it was in divine revelation. As a consequence, as P. H. Davids points out,

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2   William E. Brown, 'Adoption' in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by Walter Elwell (Carlisle and Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press and Baker Books, 1996), 11.

3   Hamilton, 'Adoption', *NIDOTT*, 4.362.

"Adoption was the obvious category into which this act, as well as the deliverance from slavery in Egypt, would fit."[4] On a very few occasions the verb *yld* is used with reference to God, for example in Deuteronomy 32:18: "You are unmindful of the Rock that bore [or 'fathered'] you." Another example, Psalm 2:7: "You are my Son; today I have begotten you," will be considered in relation to the king and the Messiah at a later point. Neither has implications of physical begetting.

The language of adoption is therefore used to describe the familial relationship of God to his people. Some key texts to note are:

- "Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you" (Deut. 8:5).
- "You are the sons of the Lord your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead" (Deut. 14:1).
- "I said, 'How I would set you among my sons, and give you a pleasant land, a heritage most beautiful of all nations.'" (Jer. 3:19). A certain lifestyle flows from the status of being children of God.

The concept of inheritance is closely bound up with adoption:

- "With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn (Jer. 31:9)."
- "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son" (Hos. 11:1).

The Hosea 11:1 reference is clearly to the events of the exodus from Egypt and this fits well with the statement to Pharaoh already quoted – "Israel is my firstborn son" (Exod. 4:22). In considering the exodus, we must note the use of kinship terminology in connection with the Lord's election of these people to be his children. As R.P. Martin puts it, "evidence of this election is seen primarily in the exodus,"[5] and he cites Hosea 11:1. R.E. Ciampa rightly points out that God's parental relationship with Israel as his son explains the way in which he treated the people in the wilderness (Deut.

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4   P. H. Davids, 'Adoption,' in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids and Carlisle: Baker Academic and Paternoster Press, 2001), 25.

5   R.P. Martin, 'Sonship,' in *New Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Leicester and Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 652.

8:2-5) and also serves as a basis for Israel's obedience (Deut. 14:1-2).[6] The lifestyle of Israel is always bound up with who she is, and can be linked especially with her status as an adopted son of God. Israel is claimed as Yahweh's people and is consequently summoned to live as those who share his holy nature. They are "holy to the Lord your God" (Deut. 14:2).

We should also note Ezekiel 16:1-14, where the Lord paints a vivid picture of finding Jerusalem as an outcast child – "your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite" (Ezek. 16:3). He gives life to the child and provides for her until she becomes a queen (v. 13), richly adorned by the generosity of the Lord. Sadly she proves to be unfaithful and deeply promiscuous. Here is an 'adoption' which does not have a happy ending.

It is important to see the relevance of the theme of covenant to our understanding of adoption in the OT, and the events of the exodus are profoundly covenantal in nature. In considering the Sinai covenant, W.J. Dumbrell notes the use of political imagery in the covenant, but then states, "But when delineating the Sinai relationship we cannot overlook the very important use of kinship terminology and family terms which abound in the Exodus narratives."[7] The family language employed by the prophets to expand on the significance and implications of the Sinai is largely that of marriage (as in Hosea, for example). In the Book of Exodus, however, the theme of sonship by adoption is prominent, beginning with Yahweh's announcement to Pharaoh (Exod. 4:22) which begins the sequence of events that culminates with his liberating his 'firstborn son' from Egyptian bondage.

Following Dumbrell's exposition, we may say that on this foundation we have, "the description of Yahweh's redemptive act of the Exodus as that of Israel's next of kin who steps into the breach and redeems an enslaved relative."[8] The key term in this metaphor is the *gōʾēl*, which might be translated as 'kinsman redeemer'. The tone is set by the Lord's statement to Israel, through Moses, in Exodus 6:6: "I am the Lord and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment."

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6   R.E. Ciampa, 'Adoption,' in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by T. D. Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Leicester and Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 376.

7   W. J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation. An Old Testament Covenantal Theology* (Exeter and Flemington Markets NSW: Paternoster Press and Lancer Books, 1984), 99.

8   Ibid., p.100.

The same language is used in Exodus 15:13: "You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed." The Hebrew verb indicates the returning of what had originally belonged to an individual owner or a family, but which they do not have the power to recover. In OT law the kinsman redeemer might redeem an enslaved relative or ensure the continuation of the family line in the case of a childless widow (as in the situation of Ruth). If this understanding of the role of the kinsman redeemer is applied to Exodus 15, "it is Yahweh who has bound himself to Israel as a self-designated relative, and thus the exodus there is commemorated as God's redemptive act."[9]

With reference to Israel's liberation, God, the kinsman redeemer, acts as a father demanding the return of his son by the nation that has enslaved him. The son who is freed then comes under the power of the redeemer who, in effect, has purchased him. The themes of redemption, deliverance, adoption and covenant membership are thus tied closely together. The former bond slaves in Egypt have now been redeemed to become servants, more than that – sons – of their redeeming God.

A text such as Deuteronomy 32:10-14 describes the redeeming of Israel in terms of a father's tender love: "he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye" (v. 10). The image of an eagle protecting its young, "bearing them up on its pinions" (v. 11), is particularly evocative.

Similar thoughts are expressed in Hosea 11. The Lord's calling his son Israel out of Egypt is rooted in the fact that, "I loved him" (v. 1). The exodus is then expressed in these terms: "I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them (v. 4)." This is fully in harmony with the biblical concept of God's covenant with his people as a bond of redemptive love. Here it is particularly the bond between parent and (adopted) child.

This warm covenant relationship, however, was frequently broken on the side of Israel, as the people forsook the God who had redeemed and adopted them and turned instead to the idols of the surrounding nations, crediting them with the gifts of love which the Lord had lavished on them. Their conduct is painful and incomprehensible.

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9   Ibid., 100.

"The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols" (Hos. 11:2).

The pain of the Father's heart is vividly expressed in Isaiah 1:2: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me." Unlike oxen and donkeys, who know those to whom they belong, "Israel does not know, my people do not understand" (v. 3).

Similarly in Deuteronomy 32:15-18 the theme of ingratitude is prominent and "he forsook God who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation" (v. 15). The Father's anger and jealousy are stirred (v. 16) and their status as God's children is threatened – "they are no longer his children because they are blemished; they are a crooked and twisted generation" (v. 5).

Such ingratitude would result in exile from the land, as the Lord had frequently threatened through the prophets, yet even then all hope was not extinguished. Repentant Israel could count on the Father's tender heart to show mercy and grant forgiveness. That is their plea, for example, in Isaiah 64:6-12. Although "you have hidden your face from us" (v. 7), nevertheless "O Lord, you are our father; we are the clay and you are our potter" (v. 8). This is also expressed vividly in Hosea 11:8: "How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel?... My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender."

The Lord will restore them. When they repent and seek him ("his children shall come trembling from the west"), then "I will return them to their homes" (v11). The same picture of return is found in Isaiah 43:6: "I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth." The Lord in grace will provide them with a blessed future: "With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn." (Jer. 31:9)

2. Israel's King as God's Son

The other important strand in the OT relating to adoption relates to Israel's king. Although the origins of kingship in Israel were inauspicious, growing out of a desire to imitate surrounding nations – "Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:5) – and though the prophet Samuel warned them strongly of the

problems that would arise from having such a ruler (1 Sam. 8:11ff.), these events were not outside the sovereign direction of the Lord. Ultimately, he granted their request by instituting the Davidic monarchy which would provide a paradigm for kingship that had the Royal Messiah in view.

In addition to the description of Israel as a nation being the adopted children of God, the OT also uses adoption as a metaphor to describe God's relationship to the king as his son. As in the case of Israel already noted, there is, of course, no suggestion of physical fathering such as was characteristic of other nations. Interestingly in Luke 3:38, Adam is referred to as "the son of God" and it appears that the sonship of the Davidic kings is similar to the sonship of Adam as created to exercise godly dominion (see also Psalm 8). This we may also link with the position of Christ as the last Adam in 1 Corinthians 15:45, with reference to his kingly rule. The king is God's son by gracious adoption. Among relevant texts are 2 Samuel 7:14, 1 Chronicles 17:13, 22:10, 28:6, and Psalms 2:7 and 89:27. The adoptive nature of the king's sonship is clear, for example, from the Lord's statement in Psalm 89:27: "And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth." Sonship is a status conferred by the ultimate King, the Lord himself.

The context of 2 Samuel 7:14 and 1 Chronicles 17:13 and 22:10 is God's response to David's desire to build a 'house' for worship, worthy of the Lord. The Lord rejects David's plan and instead tells David that he will build a 'house' for David, consisting of a line of kings to rule over the people of God. The framework for this promise is clearly covenantal. As David G. Firth states, "Although the word *bĕrît* (covenant) does not occur here, it is so full of covenantal language that one must conclude that it establishes a covenant with David."[10]

The covenantal promise regarding David's son, Solomon, is "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son" (2 Sam. 7:14, 1 Chron.17:13). Victor Hamilton suggests that the concept of divine adoption of the king may be rooted in covenants of grant, whereby the donor adopts the donee and the grant takes the form of an inheritance.[11] Whether or not that is the case, covenant and adoption are closely interwoven in the OT concept of the Davidic king.

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10   David G. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Nottingham and Downers Grove: Apollos and InterVarsity Press, 2009), 387.
11   Victor P. Hamilton, *NIDOTTE*, 4.363.

God's promise affirms that the father/son relationship between the Lord and the king will be established with David's seed/offspring after his death, and, as Ciampa suggests, in the second part of the promise God indicates that he will fulfil the role of a father in raising his son.[12] In relation to discipline, therefore, God threatens, "When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men," yet the promise continues, "but my steadfast love will not depart from him" (2 Sam. 7:14).

A direct statement of the divine adoption of the king is found in Psalm 2:7: "The LORD said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you.'" In the first instance the Lord is addressing David. At this point in his experience, however, that is to be understood: David has the status of son of God conferred upon him. Many scholars see here some kind of investiture ceremony, by which David and his successors were established as king and, at the same time, as son of God. Alec Motyer suggests that "Psalm 2 may have been a 'coronation psalm', with this assertion of sonship (in an adoption sense) at its heart."[13] Geoffrey W. Grogan deals with this more fully: "The anointed king speaks, telling of God's decree, perhaps an actual document presented to him (cf. 2 Kgs 11:12). At his enthronement ('today') he has been adopted as God's son (cf. 2 Sam 7:14), for his rule is God's gift and he accords him fatherly protection (cf. "watches over" in 1:6)."[14] Derek Kidner also suggests, "The words here may have been spoken as an oracle by a prophet or spoken by the king ('I will tell…') in the coronation rite, as the word today suggests, to mark the moment when the new sovereign formally took up his inheritance and his titles."[15] Although some aspects of this proposed 'coronation ceremony' may be speculative, the core significance of the divine word expressing the Lord's adoption of the king is clear.

3. The Messianic Trajectory

In Romans 1:3-4 Paul describes the Son of God in these terms: "Who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power

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12   R. E. Ciampa, 'Adoption' in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 376.

13   Alec Motyer, *Psalms by the Day. A New Devotional Translation* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2016), 13.

14   Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms: The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids & Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 45.

15   Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, (Leicester: Inter-varsity Press, 1973), 51.

according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord."

The transition from Son in humiliation to Son in power is marked by the resurrection in which the Father publicly testifies to the triumph of the Son. As Michael Wilcock puts it: "When now in the end of the ages the line of anointed kings, long since extinct, has burst into life again with the Anointed King, this one is in the deepest sense 'declared with power to be the Son of God'."[16]

The covenant made with David in 2 Samuel 7 had in view David's son Solomon, who would build the 'house' that David had planned to build, and beyond Solomon, successive kings from the line of David. Repeatedly God would fulfil his promise, "I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom" (2 Sam. 7:12). A further aspect of the promise which links kingship to sonship/adoption is found in verse 14: "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son." Each successive king was to be regarded as God's son.

The succession of kings born in the line of David was extinguished at the exile, but the promise of God, far from being extinguished, was brought to a deeper fulfilment. The trajectory of the promise led inexorably to the Messiah, the Son of God by his very nature. The key text in this regard is Psalm 2:7: 'I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you."' It is quoted in Acts 13:33 and in Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5. In Acts 13:32-33 Peter quotes the text in this manner: "And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'"

Derek Kidner's comments, linking Psalm 2:7 to Paul's quotation of the text in Acts 13:33, take us to the heart of the matter: "For any earthly king this form of address could bear only the lightest interpretation, but the New Testament holds us to its full value which excludes the very angels, to leave only one candidate in possession (Heb. 1:5). At Christ's baptism and transfiguration the Father proclaimed Him both Son and Servant in words drawn from this verse and from Isaiah 42:1 (Mt. 3:17; 17:5; 2 Pet. 1:17)."[17]

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16 Michael Wilcock. *The Message of Psalms 1-72* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 24.

17 Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, 50.

Philip Eveson, commenting on Psalm 2, states that, "Jesus is not only God's unique Son, the second Person of the holy Trinity, but in becoming truly human he is appointed to fulfil the promises made to David as well as the ones made to Adam and Eve and Abraham."[18] He sees the reference in Psalm 2 as being to Christ's exaltation to God's throne, from where he exercises universal dominion. He further notes: "We must be careful not to confuse Jesus' sonship as the Messiah which is the main point of this psalm and his eternal sonship as the second Person of the triune God … nevertheless they are intimately connected in that as the Messiah he is God the Son."[19]

Many commentators take the reference to "raising up" in Acts 13:33 as a reference to the resurrection of Christ, and there appears to be support for this in the following verse (v. 34) where Peter continues, "And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way," and proceeds to quote from Isaiah 55:3 and Psalm 16:10.

This approach, however, is not the only one offered by biblical commentators. Another interpretation is offered by the commentator J.A. Alexander, who argues that Psalm 2:7 refers in fact to the eternal sonship of Christ and that the use of "today" is a figurative reference to eternity, just as the Scriptures by other figurative terms "represent things really ineffable in human language".[20] The "raising up" then becomes a reference to the raising up of the incarnation, citing texts such as Acts 2:30, 3:22, 26, 7:36, and also of the resurrection. Alexander concludes, "There is nothing, therefore, inconsistent with the statement that the psalmist here speaks of eternal sonship, either in the passage just referred to, or in Heb. v. 5, where the words are only cited to prove the solemn recognition of Christ's sonship, and his consequent authority, by God himself."[21]

Commentators such as Augustine, Aquinas and Luther argued that, since there is no time in eternity, it is always 'today' and so this verse is a reference to the Father's eternal begetting of the Son.

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18 Philip Eveson, *Psalms: From Suffering to Glory. Volume 1: Psalms 1-72 The Servant-King* (Darlington: EP Books, 2014), 39.

19 Ibid.,40.

20 Joseph Addison Alexander, *The Psalms Translated and Explained*, 1873 edition (Welwyn: Evangelical Press, 1975), 16.

21 Ibid.,17.

This view is reflected in the exegesis of Francis Turretin in his *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, where he argues his case at length.[22] Robert Reymond nevertheless concludes that, "His exegesis, however, is more assertive than probative, more scholastic than biblical."[23] A helpful exposition of Psalm 2 is provided by Christopher Ash, who offers this paraphrase of verse 7: "Today, in your bodily resurrection and ascension to my right hand, I declare and constitute you, who have been Son of God by nature from all eternity, now to be Son of God in power (cf. Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:9-11)."[24] This would appear to do justice to the text in its full NT context.

In Hebrews 1:5, Psalm 2:7 is used as evidence of the unique identity of the Son, in contrast to all created beings. In Hebrews 5:5, the writer is arguing for Christ's appointment as high priest, rather than his taking the office on his own initiative: "So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you.'"

The focus in the Hebrews 5:4-8 is on Christ's submission of himself entirely to his Father in order that he might fulfil his redemptive mission. In particular, the writer reminds his readers of Christ's relationship to the Father. As Raymond Brown expounds the passage, "He waited submissively for the appointment of God to his eternal mission and was thus 'designated' as *a priest for ever*. At this point our writer makes further use of two psalms [2 and 110] to emphasize Christ's eternal Sonship and his continuing priesthood, his relationship with God and his identification with man."[25]

4. New Testament Fulness

The position of Christ the King as the one who fulfils texts such as Psalm 2:7 opens the way for an understanding of the New Testament (NT) perspective on adoption, which entails greater blessing for the people of God.

In 1 Peter 2:9 we are informed that believers are, among other privileges, "a royal priesthood", whilst in Revelation 5:10 we are told that Christ has made his blood-bought people "a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

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22   Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, translated by George Musgrave Giger, edited by James T. Dennison, Jr., (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1992-1997), Third Topic, Question XXIX, 1.294-95.

23   Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd edition (Grand rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1997), 324.

24   Christopher Ash, *The Psalms: A Christ-Centered Commentary*, four volumes (Wheaton: Crossway, 2024), vol.2, 24.

25   Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews* (Leicester and Downers Grove: Inter-varsity Press, 1982), 99.

Believers have a royal status because of their saving union with Christ. That union is described in, for example, Romans 6, as based on our dying and rising with Christ. As Son, Christ is king and priest, and in union with him, his people are kings and priests.

Here is the foundation for the fuller New Testament understanding of the adoption of believers as children of God. Believers die and rise with Christ and that is the bedrock of every aspect of salvation. As Lane Tipton puts it, "Union with Christ is a soteric replication of the structure of the believer's life-experience of what happened antecedently in the life experience of Christ, namely death and resurrection."[26] This entails that believers are justified, adopted and sanctified in Christ.

As far as adoption is concerned, Christ was not adopted as Son – he is Son by nature. Nevertheless, we do see in Romans 1:4 that the resurrection was of great significance for his sonship. Commentators such as John Murray and Thomas Schreiner have argued that the best translation of the verse is not "declared to be the Son of God", but "appointed to be the Son of God".[27] Here is his appointment, in consequence of his redemptive work, as Messianic King, and it is as "Son of God with power" that he is appointed.

United to Christ in the bonds of the Covenant of Grace, believers are constituted as adopted children of God, "and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God" (Shorter Catechism, Q. 34). It would take us too far from the theme of this study to examine the New Testament understanding of adoption in greater detail. We may say, however, that believers now have a deeper grasp of their individual status as children of God, able to cry "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6) in a way not generally experienced by OT believers. It is difficult to discern their precise perception of adoption as children of God, but their awareness seems to have been more of being members of the corporate body of the people of God and less an individual experience. NT believers have an understanding of sonship that manifests the fulness of blessing poured out by the crucified and risen Messiah: "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men" (in fulfilment of Psalm 68:18). Not only is it one of the greatest

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26   Lane G. Tipton, 'Union with Christ and Justification,' in *Justified in Christ: God's Plan for Us in Justification*, edited by K. Scott Oliphint (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2007), 25.

27   See the comments on Romans 1:4 in John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1968 edition (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997) and in Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998).

privileges of believers, it is, as John Murray describes it, "the apex of blessing and privilege".[28]

As is the case with all the fundamental doctrines of the faith, the OT lays the foundations for an understanding of adoption as it relates to the people of God, to the Davidic king and to the Messiah who fulfils all the OT hopes. In the NT the full significance of the doctrine in the light of the redemptive work of Christ can then be expounded. Adoption in the OT is therefore not a negligible subject, but a significant element in the theological formulation of the person and work of the Messianic King.

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28   John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), 170.

PREACHING A COMFORTABLE DOCTRINE: THE DOCTRINE OF ADOPTION

Dan Peters

Abstract: _The Puritan notion of 'a comfortable gospel' (that is, a gospel that minsters comfort to believers) is worthy of consideration by contemporary preachers. The article argues that the doctrine of adoption ought to be a key component of 'comfortable' preaching. The various benefits of preaching adoption are delineated, including its impact on a congregation's holiness and prayerfulness. It is proposed that other, quite specific needs are met when adoption is homiletically prominent: a lifeline is extended to those who have wandered from the faith; and the parents of wanderers also receive valuable help. Attention is given to the benefit the pastor himself yields from prioritising this doctrine in his preaching. Finally, the influence of the seminary on the pulpit is noted, and the implications of that for the preaching of adoption are considered._

Every faithful preacher makes much of atonement through Christ's blood and justification through Christ's obedience. Preached well, these grand themes can be marvellously reassuring and liberating. They can convey a sense of peace and security into the hearts of God's people.

But they can also be expounded in a way that does not reassure and liberate. Some gospel preaching calls to mind the image of a postman. One of the houses on a postman's round may contain a large, aggressive dog. Between him and the dog, however, is a strong front door. Because of that door, the postman walks up the garden path knowing that he is safe: the growling, barking animal on the other side cannot get at him. But it is still not much fun walking up the path! The postman is not inclined to linger in that garden, enjoying its sights and scents. He is on edge there, and is glad when he can leave and move on to the next house.

Atonement and justification can be preached as though they are that front door. They succeed in placing us beyond the reach of divine wrath. They stand firmly in the way of everlasting damnation. The believer, sheltering behind these realities, is encouraged from the pulpit to feel safe and protected. But she is not encouraged to feel deeply and rapturously at ease!

Such preaching might have been diagnosed in the Puritan era as lacking 'comfort'. This was, for the seventeenth-century divines, a point of great importance: the gospel, in their view, is designed to flood the soul with comfort. Walter Marshall, for example, commends "the comfortable doctrine of former Protestants' while giving short shrift to those in his own day who preached 'an uncomfortable gospel".[1] From a similar perspective John Owen describes Christian conversion as "The soul being…brought into…a comfortable persuasion".[2]

Why Gospel Preaching May Lack Comfort

Why is it, then, that some preaching fails to effect that "comfortable persuasion" in believers' hearts? When the gospel is proclaimed, and the saints are not joyfully consoled, what exactly has gone wrong? The preacher may articulate impeccably the mechanics of penal substitution and imputed righteousness. So, what accounts for that missing note of exhilarating comfort?

It may be a failure to communicate the origin of Christ's atoning, justifying work. According to Scripture, the origin is the love of God (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 Jn. 4:10). There is acquittal for sinners because a loving God desired it. It was his gracious initiative that Christ should live, die and rise for our salvation. But when a preacher omits or underplays this point, he may leave a quite different impression upon his hearers: that Christ's work caused God to love us; God's love was secured and won at the cross of Calvary. But love that has to be won is barely worthy of the name. Such 'love' is reluctant and conditional, and affords the believer scant comfort. The gospel is only truly comforting when divine benevolence is presented as the source, not the product, of the Redeemer's mission. Preaching which does not root salvation in the free, irrepressible, unsolicited love of God – however precise its soteriology may otherwise be – breeds joyless insecurity.

But there is a further problem relating to the other 'end' of the gospel. Yes, a preacher can fail to communicate the origin of Christ's work. He can also, however, fail to communicate its terminus. He may stress that, through the cross and resurrection, God is to his people a former enemy now appeased. He may stress that God is to his people

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1   Walter Marshall, *The Gospel-Mystery of Sanctification* (London: Oliphants Ltd., 1954), 107, 109.

2   John Owen, *Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Each Person Distinctly, in Love*, Grace, and Consolation (1657), in The Works of John Owen, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2004), 2:23.

a satisfied judge. And he is right to do so: these are, indeed, significant and welcome benefits accruing from the Saviour's finished work. But they are not its crowning achievement. There is something higher. God is to his people a Father: Christ secured adoption for the elect! And that must be conveyed from the pulpit. If it is not, then the gospel will be preached as coldly juridical rather than as warmly familial. Those who hear will remain (in their thinking) in the clinical setting of the lawcourt, simply relieved their legal problems are over. They will not move with exuberant assurance into the setting of the home. But that is where preaching should leave the believer: seated at God's fireside, so to speak, gazing into the face of a devoted, tender Father.[3]

Preaching Adoption Produces Zealous Congregations

Perhaps, however, some would not agree that preaching should transport the believer to God's fireside. It might be argued that to be so explicit about adoption is unhelpful; that to assert too emphatically that the Christian lives and moves in the atmosphere of family is risky. It makes the gospel excessively comfortable! After all, every preacher desires a congregation that is zealous for holiness: men and women who are resolved to "cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light" (Rom. 13:12). Surely, therefore, he does not want them to feel too much at home in the Father's house! A deep-seated assurance of sonship, the argument might go, is hardly fertile ground for motivated Christian living. It is calculated, instead, to produce complacency; to breed a sense of entitlement rather than an eagerness to serve. Thus, preaching should convey that sins are forgiven and acquittal secure; but it should do so leaving a healthy tension in the air, whereby God is perceived still to be a little distant and reserved. In that way a pastor keeps his congregation driven!

There is a prima facie plausibility to this logic. It appears reasonable that a pastor should temper his preaching of adoption to keep complacency at bay. But such a homiletical strategy is in fact profoundly mistaken. Indeed, it is fundamentally at odds with the methodology of God himself. In this connection a key New Testament text is Romans 8:12-17. Sons of God, that passage teaches, perform mortification: they "put to death the deeds of the body" (v. 13). Furthermore, they do this "by the Spirit" (v.

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3   Sinclair Ferguson discusses – and traces back to Turretin – the failure properly to distinguish adoption from justification and allow the former its full glory (Sinclair B. Ferguson, 'The Reformed Doctrine of Sonship,' in *Some Pastors and Teachers: Reflecting a Biblical Vision of What Every Minister Is Called to Be* [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2023], 580-83).

13): they are "led by the Spirit of God" in the work of killing their sins (v. 14). And Paul is not content to be vague on this point. He goes on to reveal that part of this Spirit-enabling takes place at the psychological level. In order to make us effective sin-killers, the Spirit causes us to think of ourselves in a certain way.

In what way does the Spirit want us to think of ourselves? What is this self-understanding that he gives us – and that serves so well to fuel mortification? Fascinatingly, Paul explores two alternative possibilities. On the one hand, the Spirit could encourage us to see ourselves as lowly serfs. He could create a sense of God as an austere master. He could cultivate within us a neurotic dread of the divine displeasure. That is the first possibility, in which case this divine person would be to us "the spirit of slavery" (v. 15).

The other, very different possibility, however, is that the Spirit encourages us to see ourselves as sons rather than as serfs; that he creates a sense of God as a benevolent Father whose paternal affection constantly envelops us. If that is how he operates, then this divine person is to us "the Spirit of adoption" (v. 15).

Which is it, then? Does the believer experience the first possibility or the second? Paul is emphatic: "You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption" (v. 15)! The apostle continues: "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (v. 16). God's method of producing eager, sin-killing Christians is to impart filial certainty. Herman Witsius gives eloquent expression to this:

> The Spirit of adoption discovers God to the believing soul, as a kind and indulgent Father; and by giving him assurance of the love of God… makes him, with alacrity…willingly obey God, as an affectionate parent…. [The Spirit] inflames the hearts of the children of God, with returns of love; whereby they yield obedience to God, not any longer from a fear of punishment, but from a pure and sincere affection, and a generous reverence for their most beloved Father...[4]

God wants saints who know and feel, unhesitatingly, their membership in his family. For in the divine logic, it is assured sons, not anxious serfs, who will work the hardest at being holy.

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4   Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*, Vol. 1 (Escondido, California: The den Dulk Christian Foundation, 1990), 456-457. Cf. Walter Marshall (employing again his favourite word we highlighted earlier): "A holy life beginneth with comfort, and is maintained by it" (Marshall, op. cit., 108).

And it is therefore incumbent upon every preacher to fall in line with God's strategy. If the internal voice of the Spirit sweetly whispers to the believer, 'You are a cherished child of the heavenly Father,' the external voice she hears from the pulpit should not convey a harsher message. Sermons should work with – not against – the inner witness of the Spirit. If it is by nurturing assurance that the Spirit inclines Christians to live obediently, pastors should pursue that end by the very same means. It is through preaching the doctrine of adoption in all its tender warmth that they will foster truly zealous congregations.

Preaching Adoption Encourages Prayer Amidst Trials

It is worth noting that, as the Spirit assures believers of their adoption, mortification is not the only outcome. Paul, in the same section of Romans 8, mentions another: prayer. Inwardly persuaded by the Spirit that she is an adopted child of God, the Christian cries, "Abba! Father" (v. 15). Both the strength of the verb 'cry' and the exclamatory nature of this petition-less prayer suggest that Paul has in mind a troubled situation. The believer is experiencing a crisis. One pictures a toddler who, during an outing in the local park, has fallen over. Lying prostrate on the ground, he cries out to the man who is walking a few yards ahead. The toddler may understand very little of this big wide world in which he is still such a newcomer, but there is one thing he knows intuitively: he knows that man is his father! And the hurting believer's cry to God proceeds from similar intuitions – intuitions implanted in the heart by the Spirit of adoption.

It is an attractive image: the Christian, buffeted by life's storms, having immediate, child-like recourse to the heavenly Father. But every pastor knows that, sadly, reality does not always conform to this image. It burdens him greatly when he sees members of his congregation battered by trials and not, apparently, looking to God. It breaks his heart, indeed, when, instead of looking to God, they reach for an escapist alternative in some form of addictive behaviour; or they simply sink into despair.

How should he preach to such people? Should he rail against their escapism and their despair? Should he compound the woes of these suffering saints by making them deeply ashamed of their prayerlessness? No! The preacher who takes that approach is not bravely demonstrating tough love. Rather, he is exercising a ministry terribly adrift from that of the Spirit himself. The indwelling Spirit seeks to create such a sense of adoption – such a sense of belonging – that the troubled believer cannot but cry,

'Abba!' And the pastor must take his cue from the Spirit. His role is not to drown out the Spirit's assurances with a thirty-minute rant every Sunday morning. His preaching should reinforce and amplify the internal testimony of the divine Comforter. It should make his wounded hearers unable to stay away a moment longer from their Father, enthused in the midst of their trials to "recline in safety on the paternal indulgence of God".[5]

Samuel Rutherford graced the pulpit of Anwoth in southwest Scotland with that kind of preaching. Here is an extract from a communion sermon he preached there in 1630:

> Ye think nothing of one tear, yet God puts it in His bottle; and nothing of one sigh, but God gathers it in His treasure. If God thought of us as the world does, and as we think of ourselves, oftentimes woeful would our case be; but God has not a pleasanter sight in the world than the face of a child of God. No music delights Him more [than] the sighs and tears, complaints and prayers of His children.[6]

It is difficult to conceive of any saint in Anwoth remaining prayerless when treated to such a compelling homiletical expression of the doctrine of adoption.

Preaching Adoption Offers a Lifeline to Prodigals

Preaching this doctrine, with frequency and warmth, does more than provide a stimulus to mortification and to prayer, important as those activities are. To some it offers a lifeline.

In Jesus' parable concerning the two sons (Lk. 15:11-32), the younger son prematurely receives his inheritance and subsequently proceeds to unravel morally, financially and socially. At the nadir of this downward spiral – desperately hungry, and envious of the pigs he is employed to feed – his situation is truly wretched. But there is then a turning point. And the heart of the turning point is this resolution: "I will arise and go to my father" (v. 18). His words presuppose two basic convictions: that he is a son of the man whose presence and house he had willfully deserted; and that, because he is a son, there remains a way back. It is true that the second conviction is fragile: he harbours a lurking sense his behaviour may have disqualified him now from full-blown filial existence (v. 19). But, though fragile, the conviction is real – and sufficient to propel

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5   John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Associated Publishers and Authors Inc., undated), 2.15.6.

6   Samuel Rutherford, *Fourteen Communion Sermons*, ed. Andrew A. Bonar (Glasgow: Charles Glass & Co., 1877), 259.

him out of the pig farm. He knows he does not have to remain in the far country. He knows he belongs in the father's house and, should he return, there is a place for him there.

Every Christian church has its prodigals – those who have exchanged the Father's house for an alluring world beyond its front door. Their great need is to reach that point of resolution: "I will arise and go to my Father." They will only do this if the doctrine of adoption is deeply ingrained in their souls. Some of these prodigals may still take their places in the pew each Sunday and hear preaching; and those who do not will have heard perhaps years of sermons prior to their downward spiral. If the preaching they hear (or have heard) is emphatic that conversion entails adoption, and that God in Christ has become unconditionally our Father, that will come into its own should repentance ever start to form in their hearts. It will prove the difference between despair and resolve; between the crushing feeling, "I have blown it," and the steely decision, "I will arise and go." Preaching adoption, therefore, is not dryly ticking one particular box in the *ordo salutis*. It is in fact James 5:19-20 in action: a pastor "bring[ing] back a sinner from his wandering" and "sav[ing] his soul from death". It is the extension of a lifeline to badly lapsed believers, enabling them to appreciate that, even for them, God is still approachable.

Preaching Adoption Benefits Parents

A related point is worth mentioning. This preaching of adoption which assures prodigals of God's parental approachableness also yields a welcome by-product: it encourages some hearers to be approachable parents. In many Christian families there are wayward children: teenage and young-adult offspring mired in radically unbiblical lifestyles. Parents may agonise over how these children ought to be treated. Should they be disowned? Should they be made to feel they have burned their bridges?

That is not how God's children are treated! God has the fattened calf on standby for rebel members of his family! If in adoption we receive a Father like that, should we not also be fathers (and mothers) like that?

At the very least that is an implication which parents may well discern when adoption is preached. But a preacher could even include explicitly this particular application of the doctrine. The reformed tradition has bequeathed us many great sermons on

adoption.[7] And there is one by a contemporary preacher which does make the link to Christian parenting. In the concluding section of a sermon entitled 'The Reality of Divine Sonship', Geoff Thomas talks about the younger son in the parable:

> Somewhere in this boy's past it had been implanted indelibly that whenever things went wrong he could call home, and when they went badly wrong, he could always come back; he must always come home. He had not been taught, 'If you disgrace this family then never come back.' He had not been conditioned to this view, 'If you let us down... if you bring shame on our name, then don't bother to return.' He'd been told, 'However low you go, however deep the abyss or appalling the degradation you must always feel you have a father [who] loves you and an open door into his presence. Here you can return.'

Thomas then turns his attention to the mothers and fathers in the congregation exercised regarding their offspring:

> What is true for coming back to God is true for our children coming back to us their parents. …our children must know that…they can still come home;
> if they become drunkards they can still come home;
> if they marry the wrong people they can still come home;
> if they become drug addicts they can still come home;
> if they get Aids they can still come home;
> if they get pregnant they can still come home;
> if they have an abortion they can still come home;
> if they end up in prison they can still come home.
> They must have that assurance.[8]

Whether the connection is made explicit, or simply left implicit, parenting benefits significantly from the preaching of adoption.

Preaching Adoption Enriches Pastoral Ministry

We have noted several ways in which hearers profit from the preaching of adoption. But it is arguable that the preacher himself also profits. More specifically, his pastoral ministry as a whole is enriched by his frequent preaching of adoption. A pastor who

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7   Examples are a nineteenth-century sermon by Hugh Martin entitled 'The Sons of God' (Hugh Martin, *Christ for Us: Sermons of Hugh Martin* [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1998], 225-45), and a twentieth-century one by Martyn Lloyd-Jones on Ephesians 1:5 (https://www.mljtrust.org/sermons/book-of-ephesians/adoption/). Martin's is notable for its emphasis on union with Christ as the ground of adoption; Lloyd-Jones' for its stress on the forensic nature of the concept. Both are as experiential and doxological as a homiletical treatment of this theme ought to be.

8   https://geoffthomas.org/index.php/gtsermons/adopted-as-the-children-of-god/.
The present author was there when the sermon was preached, and recalls vividly the impression made on the congregation by this moving final point of application.

often expounds this doctrine is unlikely either to slip into clerical professionalism or to pursue ecclesiastical celebrity. He will not regard the members of the congregation as his clients or as his devotees. Indeed, he will not regard them as his at all! He will see them as God's adopted children, infinitely precious to the heavenly Father. They may not look like God's children as they reel under the manifold burdens and indignities of a cursed world (1 Jn. 3:2).[9] Despite the internal witness of the Spirit, they may at times struggle to see themselves as God's children. But the pastor will see it. Having insisted fervently and continually from the pulpit, "Beloved, we are God's children!" (1 Jn. 3:2), he cannot but carry that same conviction into every hospital visit and every counselling session. He will see in the weary, battle-scarred faces of believers what is imperceptible to most observers. He will see membership of the divine family. And, recognising their true, filial identity, he will shepherd them with the deepest gentleness and respect.

The Importance of the Seminary

If the advantages of preaching adoption, set out in this article, have weight, then it should be a priority of the church to ensure such preaching occurs in its pulpits. That raises a question: what determines which themes are – and which themes are not – being stressed in preaching? Ideally, every truth contained in the Bible ought to be preached, each with as much or little emphasis as its coverage in Scripture warrants. It would be naïve, however, to suppose that this ideal is normally (or ever, indeed) attained. Every pastor inevitably has his biases. And many of these are formed during his theological training. Our seminaries, therefore, have a considerable role in determining which homiletical emphases take precedence. John Piper is right:

> We cannot overemphasise the importance of our seminaries in shaping the theology and spirit of the churches and denominations and missionary enterprise. The tone of the classrooms and teachers exerts profound effect on the tone of our pulpits. What the teachers are passionate about

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9   Hugh Martin, in his aforementioned sermon, reflects movingly on the present unrecognisableness of the children of God: "A cross lies heavy on our shoulder, rather than a diadem shining on our head. No palm of victory is ours, but the trembling and the toil of weary battle. Diseases grapple with us, having no respect for our adoption. Death at last confronts us as the victims of the loathsome grave, as if we must say unto corruption, not to God, 'Thou art my father,' and call the worm our sister rather than that the Son of God should call us brethren…. Alas, we feel, O wretched men that we are, we feel daily the painful incongruity, the deep apparent contradiction between our high relation to God as his sons and our present state, as if we were the slaves of time and time's mean and sad and vile conditions" (Martin, op. cit., 237-238).

will by and large be the passions of our younger pastors. What they neglect will likely be neglected in the pulpits.[10]

Thus, it is imperative we have seminaries from which men will emerge passionate about adoption. In systematic theology classrooms, it must be taught that adoption is a discrete jewel within the application of redemption, an additional, crowning honour bestowed upon forgiven and justified sinners. In the teaching of historical theology, students must be confronted with the importance of adoption for such luminaries as John Calvin, Robert Candlish and John Murray. In Practical Theology curricula, it must be driven home that there ought to be congruity between the external testimony of the preacher and the internal testimony of the Spirit of adoption.

According to Benjamin Warfield: "Palpably, what [the minister] needs…is just the gospel; and if he is to perform his functions at all, he must know this gospel, know it thoroughly, know it in all its details, and in all its power. It is the business of the seminary to give him this knowledge of the gospel. That is the real purpose of the seminary."[11]

If the seminary succeeds in imparting to him the comfortable gospel revealed in the New Testament and cherished by our finest evangelical forebears – the gospel that terminates in God warmly receiving sinners into his own very family – then the minister will take to his pulpit eager to declare the glorious doctrine of adoption.

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10   John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications Ltd., 2003), 261.

11   Benjamin B. Warfield, 'The Purpose of the Seminary,' in Selected Shorter Writings, vol. 1, ed. John E. Meeter (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Publishing, 2001), 376.

A FAMILY DISPUTE ABOUT ADOPTION

Malcolm Maclean

Abstract: In 1862, a trust was set up to fund a lectureship in honour of William Cunningham, the recently deceased Principal of the Free Church College in Edinburgh. Two years later, Robert S. Candlish delivered six lectures on the theme of The Fatherhood of God, and a year later, in 1865, they were published for the first time. Over the next five years, four further editions of the lectures appeared. Changes in those editions were caused by responses made to the lectures. Candlish claimed that previously very little attention had been given to the doctrine, but his treatment of the theme ensured that a lot of attention was given to his ideas. This article aims to identify the main features of his lectures and also some of the responses made to him.

There were many competent theologians in nineteenth-century Scotland and some of their works continue to be valued for their insight and clarity. Sometimes they disagreed with one another, and the debates could be fiery at times. The theologians could be professors in university departments or denominational colleges, or they could be preachers and pastors in prominent or out-of-the-way church locations. It would not have been surprising to see discussions about the person of Christ or about the extent of his atonement or about the Holy Spirit and his work. What might not have been expected was a controversy on the doctrine of adoption or who it would involve, although there was a growing interest in some circles in the universal fatherhood of God. The latter detail may have caused some to wonder what R. S. Candlish would say when it was announced that he would give the inaugural Cunningham Lectures, made up of six lectures on the Fatherhood of God. When the series was published, they might wonder what others would say. His book, entitled *The Fatherhood of God*, did lead to replies by several prominent persons from academia and the pastorate.[1]

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1   The book went through five editions, with changes made in editions two to four by Candlish as he responded to various comments. The fifth edition (1870) is the same as the first (1865), and he put all his responses into a separate accompanying volume called *Supplementary Volume to Fifth Edition Containing Reply to Dr. Crawford, with Answers to Other Objections, and Explanatory Notes*, Adam and Charles Black, 1870.

R. S. Candlish – who was he?

Robert Smith Candlish (1806-73) was a prominent Scottish clergyman, recognised as the most influential leader in the Free Church of Scotland after the death of Thomas Chalmers in 1847. His status came about because of his involvement in the affairs of the denomination which, unlike today, was a major feature in the Scottish landscape throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. In addition to his ecclesiastical contributions, he was also the noted pastor of St George's Church in Edinburgh where his preaching was greatly appreciated, as it was wherever he went to expound God's Word.

Candlish published several expository works such as on Genesis (1868) and 1 John (1871),[2] as well as an exposition of 1 Corinthians 15 entitled *Life in a Risen Saviour* (1858), an exposition of Romans 12 called *The Two Great Commandments* (1860), a volume on *Scripture Characters* (1850) and a set of discourses on the Book of Ephesians (1875). Further, he authored several books on important doctrines, including two different books on the atonement (1845 and 1861), a book on the Bible and divine revelation called *Reason and Revelation* (1859), and a volume of lectures opposing the theological outlook of F. D. Maurice (1854). He also provided a lengthy introduction to a republished edition of James Kidd's *Dissertation on the Eternal Sonship of Christ* (1872).

In 1862, Candlish became Principal of New College in Edinburgh after the death of William Cunningham and fulfilled this role while also continuing in his pastorate at St. George's. One of the responses to Cunningham's passing was the setting up of a lecture series called the Cunningham Lectures.[3] It is not surprising, given his fame and capabilities, that Candlish was selected as the first lecturer.

In this paper, I will first summarise Candlish's lectures, then mention some responses made to them, before making some comments in conclusion.

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2   C. H. Spurgeon in his *Commenting and Commentaries* says of the Genesis volume that 'We venture to characterize this as *the* work upon Genesis, so far as lectures can make up an exposition; we have greatly profited by its perusal. It should be in every Biblical library.' He says regarding the 1 John volume that 'We set great store by these lectures. A man hardly needs any thing beyond Candlish. He is devout, candid, prudent, and forcible' (C. H. Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries*, Banner of Truth, rpt. 1969, pp. 49, 195).

3   Candlish, in his opening lecture, says that the setting up of a regular series of lectures had been planned, with William Cunningham as the first lecturer. Obviously, his passing caused a rethink of those plans. The lectures were given in the Assembly Hall of the Free Church, on each Tuesday and Friday, of the first three weeks of March 1864, with the first lecture delivered on the afternoon of Tuesday, 1st March, at 2pm to a large audience.

The lectures

In the first lecture, Candlish, aware that the subject could be approached in several ways, said that his approach would be "to bring out the import and bearing of the Scriptural doctrine respecting the Fatherhood of God, as an influential element in Christian experience."[4] This intention led him first to consider "the relations which God sustains towards his intelligent creatures generally, and the place which the paternal relation holds among them" (p. 5).

1. Man created as a subject and servant

While Candlish was of the view that the Scriptures should be the source of information about those relations, he recognised that ideas connected with the system of rational Theism would need to be considered because of its deductions about how God deals with the human race, and its claim that he acts in certain ways because he is the Father of all. Such a system, according to Candlish, proposes that every intelligent creature is in a threefold relation to God: he is the Creator who sustains them; he is the governor who rules by his law and judges them according to it; and it is possible for them to become his friends, even rising into experiencing his fatherhood.

Candlish accepted that human experience provided evidence for the first two aspects of the relationship between God and his creatures, but he questioned whether there was any evidence for the third. He did not deny that God showed his goodness to humans and dealt kindly with them. Yet if God is their father merely by the act of creation or origination, then he will remain their father no matter what they become, and Candlish regarded such an understanding of divine fatherhood as wrong. Even when it is recognised that humans are made in the image of God, it does not mean that he is their father, because being in his image only means that they have the capacity to understand his will and to recognise their responsibility to obey his will and to receive either rewards for obedience or punishment for disobedience. Because of those realities, it is not possible, said Candlish, for humans to experience the fatherhood of God merely by creation.

Having said that, he did suggest that "It by no means follows that there may not have been from the first indications pointing to the higher relation of fatherhood, and a

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4   R. S. Candlish, *The Fatherhood of God*, Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1870, fifth edition, 5. Other quotations of Candlish in this section come from this volume.

foundation, as it were laid for its subsequent adjustment and development."[5] What were those indications? One was the involvement of the Son of God in the work of creation, and the other was the divine intention to glorify the Son "through the unfolding of his filial oneness with the Father" (p. 19).

Whether those indications were clearly revealed initially to or apprehended by humans cannot be known, but what can be said about them is that they would have realised that God becoming their Father would be an act of grace that would have to be revealed to them by God and not inferred by them from being his creatures. This would be the case even if humans and angels were his sons from their creation. The revealed relation of servants obliged to obey their Creator must remain separate from a paternal relation with him as their Father.

2. Fatherhood of God revealed in Christ

In his second lecture, Candlish focused first on the Trinity and affirmed that "There are in the undivided essence of the Godhead relations, or 'related states;' and these are and must be from everlasting. The one living and true God is revealed, not as God absolute, but as God related; or as God subsisting from the beginning with certain internal relations; in a way, admitting, in some sense, of mutual action and reaction; of a certain reciprocity of loving and being loved" (p. 35). This means that "it is in the Son, as the Son, that the fatherly love of God flows forth in full stream. It flows forth to create and bless the countless multitude of intelligences who are, throughout eternity, to rejoice in calling the highest Father, in and with the Son" (p. 36). This is a reminder that the original paternal relation is eternal, and that it will be displayed in events that will occur in history in the created universe, particularly in the incarnation of the Son.

The divine revelation of the eternal relation will be of benefit to angels as well as to humans. Candlish admitted that the Father, prior to the incarnation of the Son, could have used methods for introducing his Son to the angels so that they would worship him. Even if that had occurred, he was persuaded that the greatest insight they have had into the fatherhood of God "is connected to the incarnation and its accompanying incidents…. Certainly, for all created minds and hearts, the incarnation is the clearest,

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5   It may be that Candlish here was suggesting that the reward held out to Adam if he kept the terms of the Covenant of Works was promotion to a permanent state of sonship to God. That prospect was the opinion of James Henley Thornwell, the American Southern Presbyterian theologian (*Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell*, Vol. 1, Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1871, chapter on 'The Covenant of Works').

brightest, most gracious and glorious exhibition that has ever been given, or may I not add, that ever can be given, of the divine fatherhood" (p. 40). While he did not expand here on what the eternal effects will be on the angels, he did assert previously that "It is that manifestation of it, too, that must ever be most intensely interesting to all holy beings and all saved ones, for its momentous bearing practically on their everlasting state and prospects."[6]

The incarnation did not result in the Son becoming two persons, nor in the one person having two sonships, nor in there now being two expressions of fatherhood towards the Son. For Candlish, this meant "that in the one undivided person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God come in the flesh, humanity enters into that very relation of sonship which, before his coming in the flesh, he sustains to the Father. From thenceforth fatherhood is a relation in which the Supreme God stands, not merely to a divine, but now also to a human being; to one who is as truly man as he is truly God" (p. 36). Candlish was careful to say that he did not mean that the human nature of Jesus became divine. He stressed that Christ's "two natures, being distinct, and continuing to be distinct, may nevertheless, if united in one person, be embraced in one personal relationship" (p. 43).

A second consequence of the incarnation was that the eternal Son became what he had not been previously, a subject and a servant. "The Son in the bosom of the Father, and the subject or servant learning obedience by suffering, is one and the same person. The Son is the suffering and obedient servant. The suffering and obedient servant is the Son" (pp. 54-55).

A third consequence of the incarnation was that the Son became a subject and a servant after sin affected the original relation with God. However, he did not take on a fallen human nature but one that was unaffected by sin, one that was like Adam's before he fell. Yet the incarnation occurred in a fallen environment. He came to take on our liabilities, which meant that he now had "a relation involving guilt to be answered for, and the wrath and curse of God to be endured" (p. 58).

A fourth consequence of the incarnation is that it is permanent. For Candlish, this meant that the two relations of the person of Christ, that of Son of God and that of subject and servant, are indissoluble. Candlish was aware that some may shrink from

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6   This sentence comes from the second edition of his book (p. 74). It is interesting to note that in the fifth edition of his book, which is the one used in this article and which contains the original lecture, Candlish worded this sentence differently: 'It is that manifestation of it, at all events, which must ever be most intensely interesting to the lost family of mankind, for its momentous bearing practically on their everlasting state and prospects' (p. 40).

the idea of permanent service by the Son in the future world. He found support for his interpretation in the words of 1 Corinthians 15:28, about the Son subjecting himself at the consummation of his mediatorial reign.

> Certainly, when he was on earth, our Lord gave no indication of his considering the position of a subject and servant either irksome or degrading. He counted it an honour and a joy to be subject to the Father, and to serve the Father. Why, then, should it be deemed incredible that this should be his honour and his joy for ever? Why should we not hail and welcome the thought that it is this honour and this joy that he is to share with us, when we, having overcome, sit with him in his throne, even as he, having overcome, sits with his Father in his throne?[7]

3. Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament

The third lecture considered to what extent the Fatherhood of God was revealed or known before the incarnation of the Son. During that period, the Fatherhood could only be known by analogy with human fatherhood, and such allusions were made by pagans as well as by Old Testament writers. The example of a pagan use is cited by Paul at the Areopagus concerning the statement of pagan poets who said that humans are God's offspring. Use has been made of that statement to suggest that Paul was affirming some kind of divine fatherhood whereas, according to Candlish, all the apostle was saying is that since humans have a "common source or origin" that is divine, it is irrational for them to worship idols.

Before he considered Old Testament references on possible divine fatherhood, Candlish also referred briefly to the genealogy of Jesus in Luke which in English translations includes the statement that Adam was the son of God. For Candlish, all that is suggested in the genealogy is that Adam came from God and the reference is not an indication of a relationship with him.

The first Old Testament references he reviewed were the statements in Job where unfallen angels are described as sons of God (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; some modern versions have the translations 'angels' or 'heavenly beings'). Candlish connected their possession of this title to them having resisted participation in the prior rebellion of Satan. The occasion of that rebellion tested them as subjects of God, and it is after that test they became sons of God. Candlish does not push here the obvious implication of

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7   Candlish, *The Fatherhood of God,* 161. Those wishing to see how Candlish connects Jesus' reigning eternally as God and serving endlessly with his people can consult Discourse 6 in his *Life in a Risen Saviour* (Adam and Charles Black, 1863, 77-90), where he expounds on this verse from 1 Corinthians 15.

his suggestion, which is that the unfallen angels were like Adam before his test, only subjects and not yet sons. Having passed the test, they became sons of God.

Candlish then reviewed the verse in Genesis where the sons of God are distinguished from the daughters of men (Gen. 6:2, 4).[8] For Candlish, the title 'sons of God' described those of the human race who called on God as distinct from the rest. In a similar way, the children of Israel were distinguished from the Gentiles in several passages that use paternal language in a figurative sense (e.g. Exod. 4:22-23; Jer. 31:9; Isa. 63:6; 64:8), but the title is not used to indicate divine fatherhood of individuals. There is, however, "a Son of God revealed in the Old Testament," but he "is revealed as standing alone and apart" (p. 133). He is mentioned in Psalm 2 (vv. 7, 12), Psalm 89 (vv. 26, 27) and Isaiah 9:6. In addition to these details, we need to note "The very remarkable absence, in the recorded religious experiences and devotional utterances of the Old Testament saints, of the filial element" (p. 135).

Candlish then posed the question, "Does the New Testament afford no materials for helping us in the determination of the question?" He suggested two passages to consider. First, the statement at the close of Hebrews 11: "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:39-40). What is the "better thing" that Old Testament believers did not have? Candlish suggests that the "better thing" is described in Hebrews 12:22-24 where the Old Testament saints ("the spirits of just men made perfect") appear with New Testament believers ("the church of the firstborn"). The New Testament saints are described in filial language, and the 'perfection' ahead for Old Testament believers is participating fully in that sonship. The other New Testament passage is Galatians 3:23–4:7 where Paul "draws a contrast between believers under the law and believers under the gospel." There the Old Testament believers are described as heirs who had not received, to the same degree as New Testament believers, the awareness of the blessings connected to the coming of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit.[9]

For Candlish, the references to divine fatherhood in the Old Testament were analogical, drawn from the experiences of human fathers. A change occurred with the

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8   Most versions translate the phrase as 'sons of God', although commentators are not agreed about who is in mind. Some suggest human descendants of Seth, others suggest fallen angels, and others suggest powerful humans. Candlish only mentions the first suggestion, even as he did in his commentary on Genesis.

9   Candlish, *The Fatherhood of God,* 85-92.

coming of the Son, and God now "means us to look exclusively, or all but exclusively, to the manner of life of his Son Jesus Christ, and to draw our notions of his fatherhood directly from thence…. There is presented before our eyes the actual working out, in human nature and human experience, of the only relation of fatherhood and sonship which God would have us to realise as possible between himself and us. He would be our father, not as we are the fathers of our children, but as he is the father of his Son Jesus Christ" (p. 96).

4. What Jesus taught about the Fatherhood of God

Candlish clarified at the onset of this lecture that he did not deny that God was the Father of his people in Old Testament times; rather he stressed that the relationship was not fully revealed by him until the coming of Christ. Also, he acknowledged that Israel collectively was called God's son; yet that relationship was not the same as the personal relationship of sons that individuals have with the Father.

As far as the teaching of Jesus is concerned, Candlish did not see any evidence that Jesus taught that humans were sons of God by creation; indeed, he says that Jesus 'restricted the term to his disciples' (p. 104). Another feature of Christ's teaching on the subject was the number of times he pointed to his own relationship as the Son of the Father, including how the relationship pre-existed his becoming a man, indicating that although he had become a man he remained the same divine person he had been in eternity.

Regarding the past eternity, Jesus said that the Father had loved him "before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). He also said when speaking to the Father about the disciples that the Father had "loved them as thou hast loved me" (John 17:23). For Candlish, these two verses show that it is the same fatherly love that is known by Jesus and his disciples. Obviously, it is not possible for the disciples to remember that eternal love in the way that the Son can, and also "their power of apprehending and appreciating all that the relation involves must be immeasurably less than his" (p. 136), but that does not mean that the Father's love for his people is not the same kind of love that he has for his Son, or that the Son did not reveal the reality of that love for them after he became incarnate.

Candlish reminds readers that there is only one example of Jesus using the term 'our Father' to refer to God and that is in the Lord's Prayer. Does 'our' here mean Jesus

and his disciples or does it mean a plurality of disciples praying together, but not with Jesus? Candlish accepted that the pronoun 'our' meant Jesus and his disciples, yet he did not believe that, if the other meaning were adopted, his overall argument would be affected adversely. Nevertheless, he "could not imagine Jesus and the apostles living for years together, sitting together at meals, walking together by the way, and yet not praying together" (p. 118). For Candlish, it was a question of Jesus' identification with his people.

Still, for Candlish, it was after his resurrection that Jesus revealed the family nearness between him and his disciples. The first time he referred to them as 'my brothers' (John 20:17) was on his resurrection day when he instructed Mary to "go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Candlish pointed out that here Jesus welcomed "them into his own very relationship of sonship and subjectship combined" (p. 126).

Candlish was aware of the claim that his ideas were absent from the conclusions of the Church Fathers about the person of the Son. They, said he, were concerned about the uncreated origin of the Sonship of Christ. Still, he noted that a statement of Irenaeus could suggest the possibility that some of the Fathers spoke of the possibility of believers coming into a relation of sonship that he was arguing for: "For this cause is the Word man, and he who is Son of God was made Son of man, that man, receiving the Word and accepting adoption, might become the Son of God."[10]

While Candlish argued for Jesus only describing believers as sons of God, he did not want to suggest that Jesus taught that the Father was indifferent to sinners; rather he revealed the Father's interest and care for them in the parable of the prodigal son. The parable makes clear, in Candlish's view, that the Father would have them as sons.

5. Entrance into the relation: the connection of adoption with regeneration and justification

In this lecture, Candlish aimed to explain how believers "should be led to apprehend their sonship – not merely as a relation similar to sonship in a human family, – nor even as a relation similar to his [Christ's] own sonship in the divine family, – but as substantially the same relation" (p. 138).

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10   Candlish, 129. He also refers to Athanasius (pp. xxii-xxiv).

Candlish mentioned that the Holy Spirit provided a human nature for the Son: "His being born through the operation of the Holy Ghost secures that. For it secures to him the possession of a human nature such as, from the very first moment of its existence, is capable of sharing in the filial relation with the divine nature;—a body, soul, spirit, such as the Son of God may worthily take into personal union with himself, continuing still to be the Son."[11]

In this, the humanity of the Son was different from the sinful humanity of those who would become sons of God. They could only become sons by experiencing regeneration by the Holy Spirit and then receiving justification from the Father through Christ's righteousness imputed to them, a divine act which took them out of the state of condemnation for their sins. Yet regeneration and justification did not cause them to be adopted. Rather, adoption occurs because the Father also calls them to be his sons.

Candlish considered briefly the historical failure of theologians to distinguish between justification and adoption. He noted that Turretine "expressly and formerly includes adoption in his exposition of justification. He makes adoption nothing more than another name for the positive elements which all reformed divines held to be embraced in justification."[12] In justification, they are pardoned and accepted by God because the penalty for sin was paid on their behalf by the sufferings of Christ. Instead of confining adoption to an aspect of justification, it should be regarded as an expression of the degree God shows in "the pure fatherly love which he has for his own dear Son; pouring it out upon him so lavishly that it overflows upon all them that are his" (p. 163).

Candlish argued that "the tendency has been to separate adoption somewhat from regeneration on the one side, and on the other side to confound it somewhat too much with justification" (p. 151). He argued that in regeneration believers receive the same nature as the Son in that they are born of God; in justification, they are no longer condemned criminals but righteous subjects, and suitable for recognition as sons.[13] It is in the writings of John, both in his Gospel and his First Letter, where this connection

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11   Candlish, *The Fatherhood of God,* 143.

12   Candlish, *The Fatherhood of God,* 158.

13   'Faith, uniting him to Christ, and making Christ and Christ's righteousness his, secures his being absolved from guilt and accounted righteous. He is now rectus in curia, a free subject, and therefore capable of sonship' (Candlish, p. 150).

becomes clear. An example is the way that John connects the new birth and changed life (1 John 2:29) to the standing of sons in the following verse (1 John 3:1).

6. The privileges and obligations of sonship

In this lecture, Candlish did not provide a list of features commonly given in discussing how believers relate to their heavenly Father, because usually such features are deductions by analogy from how a human father relates to his children. He did not object to such a list, but instead he focused on how Christ is the means of providing the privileges and fulfilling the obligations. Candlish turned to Romans 8 to highlight the privilege of adoption, which is the security it provides for those adopted. As Paul says, it is God's eternal purpose for them to become conformed to the image of the Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. There is not anything that can destroy this relationship, and even as Jesus had peace when facing the troubles of life when he was here, so should those adopted. They can experience the rest, "the Son's own rest, in the ever-present consciousness of his filial fellowship with the Father." And the other detail is 'the Son's own "meekness and lowliness of heart,' as he takes upon him whatever yoke the Father is pleased to lay upon his neck, and bears whatever burden the Father is pleased to lay upon his shoulders." By doing so, the Son was able to sustain "that joint character of the Father's servant and the Father's son, in which he glorifies the Father on the earth, and finishes the work which the Father giveth him to (John xvii.4)."[14] Jesus, the Son of God, is the model for how to enjoy the privileges and fulfil the responsibilities of sonship.

As he closed this lecture, Candlish commented on his series. He hoped that his endeavours would cause others to explore the doctrine because he believed "the subject has not hitherto been adequately treated in the Church". Even the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, while including statements on the doctrine, did not deal adequately with it, especially in that "no information whatever is given, nor is any opinion expressed, as to how the relation of sonship is constituted, or as to what its precise nature is, viewed in the light of the incarnation."

Yet, in his opinion, Question 65 of the Larger Catechism pointed to a way of appreciating the superiority of sonship. The question asked, "What special benefits do the members of the invisible Church enjoy by Christ?" The answer is that they "enjoy

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14   Candlish, *The Fatherhood of God,* 191.

union and communion with him in grace and glory." Candlish suggested that through this answer insights come by distinguishing the differences between justification, sanctification, and adoption:

> 'Justification,' with 'assurance of God's love and peace of conscience' in its train, is participation with Christ in his righteousness, or in his work of obedience and atonement, and is therefore communion with him in grace. 'Sanctification,' including 'increase of grace and perseverance therein to the end,' is our participation with Christ in his holiness or in his holy nature, implying not only the mortification of sin, but the attainment of a higher life, and is therefore communion with him partly in grace and partly in glory. 'Adoption,' carrying in its bosom 'joy in the Holy Ghost,' is our participation with Christ in his sonship, which, even as now realised on earth, and especially as being the crowning blessedness of heaven, is communion with him preeminently and emphatically in glory.[15]

The response to the published lectures ranged from the enthralled to the appalled. Some saw his claims as insightful, giving fresh light on a neglected doctrine. Others regarded them as edging on the heretical, especially in the way he linked the eternal sonship of Jesus and the creaturely sonship of believers. The responders I will mention were among the first to do so, and they knew him personally either through location or denomination. While there were several points on which they could have commented, they focused mainly on two: (1) was it clear from the Bible that Adam was not created as a son of God?; and (2) was it theologically possible to identify the sonship of believers with the sonship of the Son?

Response of Thomas J. Crawford

Thomas Jackson Crawford (1812-75) was Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh and a much-respected conservative theologian in the Church of Scotland. Unlike Candlish, who advocated for a limited atonement, Crawford believed that Jesus died for all, and that his death for all was evidence for saying that all were children of God by creation.[16] In 1866, he published a book entitled *The Fatherhood of God*, based on lectures he gave to his students, in which he dealt with some of the claims made by

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15   Candlish, *The Fatherhood of God,* 197.
16   See Thomas J. Crawford, *The Atonement*, William Blackwood and Sons, 1871.

Candlish about sonship in his lectures.[17] His book contains more than his interactions with Candlish, although it is obvious that he found little in Candlish's new ideas that he could agree with. It is probable that Crawford's decision to interact with Candlish indicates a widespread interest in Candlish's proposals.

Servant and son?

Who was Adam? Regarding Candlish's claim that man was created only as a servant and a subject of God, Crawford could see no reason for not also saying that he was created as a son. Candlish had argued that the two relations of son and subject would be in conflict, but Crawford noted that they would only be in conflict in sinners, but not in God's dealings with humans. Nor did Crawford see any difficulty in describing the heavenly Fatherhood as analogous to human fatherhood.

He admitted that references to divine fatherhood in the Bible usually applied to the household of faith, yet "At the same time, there are not wanting indications, more or less significant, in the Word of God, of a general paternity, which may in some sense be ascribed to Him with reference to all men, as His rational and moral creatures" (p. 33).

The indications number seven and include Malachi's linking of God as Father and Creator (Mal. 2:10), the statement in Hebrews 12:9 that God is "the Father of spirits", of humans being made in the image and likeness of God, the genealogy of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke that says Adam was the son of God (Luke 3:38), Paul's quotation from a pagan poet about humans being God's offspring (Acts 17:26-29), the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 17), and the commandment to love God (Mark 12:30).

Those evidences do not mean that it is possible for an unregenerate person to conclude from them that God is his Father: "It must be admitted, indeed, that fallen and sinful man cannot recognise God as in any sense their Father, to the effect of rendering acceptable homage to Him, or of cherishing true filial confidence and affection towards Him, until they have been regenerated by his grace" (p. 62).

How many sonships can humans know?

In addition to there being a "fatherhood of God in relation to all men as his rational and moral creatures", there are also biblical references that reveal a special relationship of fatherhood between God and his people. This relationship begins when sinners

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17   Thomas J. Crawford, *The Fatherhood of God*, William Blackwood and Sons, 1867, second edition. Other citations from Crawford in this section come from this volume.

are regenerated. It is "a Divine sonship, which is not a common prerogative of all mankind,—a sonship which originates in the special grace of God—is founded on the mediatorial work of the Redeemer—is restricted to those who receive Christ, or believe on His name—and is certified and sealed by the work of the Holy Spirit, producing filial disposition in the heart, and bringing forth the fruits of holiness in the conduct" (p. 166).[18]

For Crawford, this second form of sonship is not a mere restoration of what unfallen Adam had. Rather it is a sonship that originates in God's sovereign grace, is connected to them receiving the benefits of the mediation of Christ, and it is given to those who have faith in Christ. Among the blessings of this second form of sonship is the prospect of glorification with Christ.

This led Crawford to consider whether this sonship "is identical with that of the second person in the Godhead to the Eternal Father". He affirmed that, while the difference between them is immeasurable, attention must be given to verses that indicate the blessings of the second form of sonship include experiences shared with the Son of God, such as being joint heirs with him, and of receiving from him the glory that the Father gave to him. So he concluded that there are "good and sufficient grounds for the persuasion that God's adopted ones have fellowship with their Redeemer in the blessedness and dignity resulting from His sonship, in so far as these may be communicable to created beings; and that at all events the privileges enjoyed by them, in virtue of their union and communion with the Son of God, are incomparably more excellent and exalted than any which our first parents could have experienced in the earthly paradise" (p. 181). It is not obvious how this sonship experience differs from that promoted by Candlish.

How many sonships does Christ have?

Crawford responded to Candlish's assertion – that "There are not two sonships belonging to Christ, but only one; for the relation of sonship, being strictly personal, must be one, as the person is one. There are not, there cannot be, two distinct relations of fatherhood and sonship subsisting between God and the Incarnate Word, one proper to His divine, the other to His human nature" – by disagreeing with him. Crawford argued that if "it be one of the properties or relations of man, as an intelligent and

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18   Crawford, 166.

moral creature, formed after the divine image, and dependent on the divine care, *to be a son of God*, then must this human property or relation, as well as all others which do not involve anything sinful, be attributed, in respect to His human nature, to our Immanuel."

What would this mean for the person of Christ? "What we ascribe to Christ is, *two distinct relations to God* – one proper to His divine nature and the other proper to His human nature. We apply to them both, indeed, the same human analogy of sonship, because we can find no better analogy to represent them. But we are not to be held on that accounts as affirming that they are *identical*. On the contrary, we believed them to be in many respects greatly dissimilar. The one is a divine, while the other is a human sonship…. It is not therefore a divided sonship which we ascribe to Him; but two distinct sonships, differing very materially, although from the poverty of language we are obliged to call them by the same name."[19] Crawford was aware that his assertion could be regarded as breaking the unity of Christ's person. His answer to that assertion was that he was maintaining the fullness of each nature in the person of Christ, although that answer does not deal with the point of the assertion.

His answer, however, enabled Crawford to agree with Candlish's observation that "Our Lord led His disciples to form their conceptions of what it is to have God for their Father from what they saw and heard of His own filial intercourse with God." Yet, for Crawford, "This filial intercourse, however, as I have formerly shown, is not to be regarded as a manifestation of the monogenetic sonship of His divine nature, communicated to and shared in by His humanity. It is rather to be regarded as a manifestation of that human sonship in its highest type and most consummate excellence, which, in common with all other human qualities and relations, the eternal Son of God assumed when He became incarnate."

Response of Hugh Martin

Hugh Martin (1822-1885) was a minister in the Free Church of Scotland and a profound theological scholar. He considered Candlish's book in a lengthy review of almost seventy pages in the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*.[20] He recognised that

19   Crawford, 218-19.

20   Hugh Martin, 'Candlish's Cunningham Lectures,' *The British and Foreign and Evangelical Review*, Number 14, 1865, 720-87. Candlish said of Martin's review, "I feel bound specially to notice the article in the British and Foreign Evangelical Review, October 1865. The author of that article is evidently very competent

the volume was a criticism of the Broad Church view of the universal fatherhood of God. Yet he also saw the book "as a contribution in the discussion of positive Christian doctrine that we think it eminently valuable" (p. 721).

Martin agreed with Candlish that the doctrine of adoption historically had not been satisfactorily dealt with in Reformed or Puritan writings, or in British, European and American theological works and journals. He was aware of articles and sermons on adoption by various writers and preachers, but expanding the theology of adoption had not been a major focus for such. One exception was Calvin who, Martin claims, "held the positive doctrine of Dr Candlish's lectures, and would have formulated the same views had the subject been formally placed before him" (p. 725).

For Martin, the substance of Candlish's volume was two propositions: "I. On the platform of nature or mere creation, there is between God and man no relation of proper Fatherhood and Sonship. II. On the platform of sovereign redeeming grace, the Sonship which believers enjoy is through communion with the Man Christ Jesus in his Sonship" (p. 728).

Martin said of those propositions, "we most cordially concur."[21] To read his explanation of the second point is to experience mind-stretching doctrinal understanding of the human nature of the eternal Son as he now fulfils the roles given to him by divine covenant. And there is not space in this paper, or in my mind, to cover adequately Martin's insights. But here are some details of his response.

Is man a son by creation?

Martin agreed with Candlish that Adam, while created as a servant of God, was not a son of God by creation and among his arguments were the following:

(1) One matter to consider is what is included in the claim that Christianity is primarily remedial. For some, it means that salvation is a recovery of what was lost at the fall, including the recovery of Adamic sonship. Christianity, however, is more

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to deal with the theological and ecclesiastical aspects of this question, viewed in the light of church history and church controversies. I do not profess to go so deeply into the subject as he does, and I do not know that I could endorse all that he says. But I congratulate the Church on his advocacy of what I hold to be an important view of the gospel of Christ. And if there is to be any further discussion of the subject, I consider him to be eminently a fit person to take a leading part in it" (Candlish, *The Fatherhood of God*, xxviii).

21   Martin did not accept every detail in Candlish's book: "Dr Candlish, in maintaining them, may have here or there used an expression which we are not prepared to endorse, and presented an argument the validity of which we would not undertake to vindicate. But he has, we believe, as successfully maintained, as he has sagaciously asserted, these very distinct and intelligible positions"'Candlish's Cunningham Lectures,'728.

than remedial. What it offers requires the Incarnation to have occurred. It includes the giving of eternal life, the life that is in the Son, rather than the life possessed by unfallen Adam. Salvation is not just a recovery of what Adam lost by his fall.

(2) What about arguments based on the genealogy recorded by Luke, the parable of the prodigal son, and the quotation by Paul at the Areopagus? Martin argued that Luke's purpose was only to show that Adam's origin was divine, that Paul merely used a pagan quotation because it contained truth that suited his argument with his hearers, and that the parable of the prodigal son is actually about two sons, one of whom had the inheritance without repentance, and so is not a description of divine adoption.[22] So those biblical references were not concerned with a divine sonship by creation.

(3) Martin also asked why the devil did not mention sonship when tempting Adam in the Garden of Eden. Satan was prepared to tempt the last Adam about his sonship. But his not tempting the first Adam in this manner suggests that he did not have that relation with God (p. 744).

Do believers participate in Christ's sonship?

Martin was surprised that Candlish was criticised for this claim. In Martin's assessment, it was also the view of Calvin whose writings he quoted in support of Candlish's teaching:

- "This gives us good reason for growing confidence, that we may venture more freely to call God our Father, because his only Son, in order that we might have a Father in common with him, chose to be our Brother" (Calvin on Luke 1:35).
- "To this name (only-begotten Son) Christ has a right, because he is by nature the only Son of God; and he communicates this honour to us by adoption, when we are ingrafted unto his body" (Calvin on John 3:16).
- "For what he possesses as his own by nature, he imparts to us by adoption, when we are ingrafted by faith into his body and become his members" (Calvin on John 8:36).[23]

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22   Martin's opinion of these three common arguments for a sonship by creation was that 'The arguments drawn from the parable of the prodigal son; from Paul's quotation at Athens of a heathen poet; and from Luke's genealogical table; are not worthy of the slightest serious attention'. 'Candlish's Cunningham Lectures,' 742.

23   Martin, 'Candlish's Cunningham Lectures,' 752.

Candlish's arguments had led to the criticism that he was deifying finite creatures by connecting adoption with Christ's eternal sonship. Martin did not think Candlish had done so.

Martin argued for the centrality of the Incarnation in helping to understand the sonship of Christ. The Incarnation brought no change to his eternal Sonship, but it did 'modulate it into a new aspect, manifesting its communicability and mediating its communication' (p. 759). Therefore, in approaching this subject we should keep in mind what it meant for Jesus, the eternal Son, to have a human nature permanently: "It is, then, the one only eternal Sonship which the Son, as the man Christ Jesus, possesses and enjoys. And if the Incarnation teaches anything concerning this glorious and ever blessed relation, it teaches that it is capable of being embraced in a thoroughly, an intensely human consciousness; of being apprehended and understood by a human intellect; of having its obligations imposed upon, and accepted by, a human conscience and a human will; and of having its endearments of love and confidence unspeakable enshrined and enjoyed in a human heart."

Martin continues: "It is of the Sonship as thus specificated into a new aspect by the incarnation, that we affirm its participation by believers. And surely no one will deny that this new aspect, history, and experience of it, in the complex but undivided person of the Son, points at least in the direction of what we have affirmed, namely, that the incarnation manifests the communicability, and mediates the communication, of the Sonship."[24]

Martin also highlighted the union of believers with Christ. This union "is accomplished by the Spirit of the Son, in what is specifically a work of regeneration; and secondly, that it provides for, and gives entrance on, communion with the Son." The outcome is that "the Mystical union between believers and Christ, effected by the Spirit, as the Spirit of the Son, and the Spirit of regeneration, and securing communion and community in all interests, possessions, and relationships, between the Head and the members, carrying with it the relative or relational grace of adoption, actually accomplishes the communication" (p. 759). We have fellowship in the Son and with the Son and through the Son forever.

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24   Martin, 'Candlish's Cunningham Lectures,' 766.

Conclusion

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this theological debate, and I will make three. The first I would mention is how the debate between Candlish and Crawford is a good example of how to conduct such debates. They did it in public, through their lectures and books on the topic, which they adjusted in subsequent editions, in order to make clearer their statements in response to what had been said by the other. Where they agreed, they cordially mentioned it; when they disagreed, each retained his respect for the other.

A second conclusion concerns Candlish's and Martin's desire that the publication of Candlish's volume would lead to further developments in understanding the doctrine of adoption, especially in its connection to the eternal sonship of Christ. This does not seem to have happened. One reason, of course, could be the complexity of trying to explain it. Yet although subjective, one can sense in the minds of Candlish and Martin a wonder of the glory of the divine as they verbally travel further into the consequences of the Incarnation, and that's a good way to explore all our theological convictions.

A third conclusion is the importance of appreciating the astonishing details of God's plan for his creatures. Whether or not we had the status of sons of God in Adam, we now have a greater sonship, the full revelation of which the whole creation is anticipating (Rom. 8:19-23). We need to remember the capacity of the human nature of the eternal Son through whom, by the Holy Spirit, we can experience to some extent, even in our earthly journey to the Father's house, the wonder of family membership. Union with Christ is a wonderful doctrine, but it is more than a doctrine. It is a real experience now, and it will be a fuller experience yet when we shall see him as he is.

BOOK REVIEWS

Philip H. Eveson: *Baptised with Heavenly Power.*
Christian Focus Publications, 2025. 421 pages. £17.99.

Philip H. Eveson is well known to many readers of Affinity. For many years he was Principal of the London Theological Seminary (LTS), and has written several books, including commentaries on Genesis, Leviticus, Psalms, and Chronicles. His life has been influenced by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (MLJ) from his early days, having first heard him preach when a young boy, having later attended the Westminster Fellowship, and due to MLJ's involvement in the establishment of LTS, now renamed London Seminary. In addition, Eveson's involvement in the training of ministers, as well as his preaching and pastoral work, has required him to consider and discuss the matters raised in this book over many years. He displays a great familiarity with MLJ's output. In short, it would be hard to find a person better equipped to write such a volume.

The book came into being in response to concerns raised in South Korea that MLJ's teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and in the Church placed him outside the Reformed camp. It is to the blessing of the wider church that the results of Eveson's work have been published by Christian Focus Publications and distributed more widely.

MLJ (1899-1981) was an enormously influential preacher and Christian leader in the UK and around the world. He left a successful medical career and pastored two churches, first in a small South Wales town between the wars, and subsequently in Westminster Chapel, London from 1939 to 1968. Regarded by many as the greatest preacher they ever heard, and by some as one of the greatest preachers since the Reformation, his personal influence, and the influence of his books around the world, has been considerable and looks set to continue.

In learning from MLJ, it is important to recognise that he was a preacher. In addition to his recorded sermons, his published works almost without exception are in the form of sermons. As such, they do not present definitive, well-rounded, treatments of their subjects. They were addressed to the specific context of the occasion, and they

present various stylistic factors that must be borne in mind such as hyperbole and overstatement. Eveson navigates this issue well.

Similarly, Eveson does a good job of bringing to our attention developments in MLJ's thinking in the relevant areas.

The book is divided into four sections, which will be addressed in turn.

Part One: Theological Background

Here Eveson establishes MLJ's clear Reformed credentials, detailing his Reformed soteriology and strong ecclesiology. While accused of being variously an Arminian and a hyper-Calvinist, he was in reality a convinced Calvinist who held to the free offer of the gospel. MLJ moved from an infant baptist to a credo-Baptist position, but did not insist on immersion as a necessary mode. Similarly, he steered between a memorialist and a high sacramentarian view of baptism by holding that it signifies, seals and exhibits grace, this exhibition not being mechanical, but "by assuring and confirming to those who participate what they already believe and know." He had a strong concern for Church purity, and his approach to Church unity was thus anti-ecumenical. He believed that true Church unity must be based on the gospel, and so was to be broader than the confines of Calvinism.

His indebtedness was to the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist tradition, informed by the mainstream evangelical Puritans. This Reformed position stressed the end of theology to be the personal knowledge of God and emphasised evangelistic preaching and assurance of salvation. MLJ regarded Calvinism and Methodism as being complementary, Calvinism preventing Methodism declining into mysticism, and Methodism preventing Calvinism from becoming intellectual, scholastic and harsh, neglecting prayer. He saw a healthy advance in the Methodist period, with its greater emphasis on revival and the direct witness of the Spirit.

As recurs throughout the book, MLJ had a grand vision based on a broad understanding of Scripture and the history of the Church. He was never tempted to follow contemporary fads which failed to live up to the standards of spirituality and godliness of his Methodist precursors. His desire was to see God at work in similar ways in his own day. This experiential emphasis dominates his thinking: "Calvinism of necessity leads to an emphasis on the action and activity of God the Holy Spirit. The whole emphasis is on what God does to us."

Part Two: The Theology of the Holy Spirit

This section is the one most likely to attract attention, but it is vital that MLJ's teaching on this subject is seen in the context of his overall position. Eveson details MLJ's view of water baptism, and its sealing function. He then moves on to consider the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as similarly serving a sealing function – authenticating the believer to himself in assurance, and authenticating the believer to others in witness.

This baptism is presented as a pouring out of the Holy Spirit by the ascended Christ upon his people and is something separate from and subsequent to regeneration. This baptism can be repeated, as seen in Acts 4. As regards terminology, where 'baptism' is used the primary focus is on power to witness. Where 'sealing' and 'earnest' are used, the primary focus is on assurance, with 'sealing' assuring us that we are the inheritors, and the 'earnest' assuring us of the inheritance itself, a foretaste of future glory rather than merely a pledge.

There is some intriguing discussion of the differing views of MLJ and John Stott, who published his *Baptism and Fullness* while MLJ was preaching on John 1, during which series he gave his final extended treatment of the issue. Matters addressed include:

- the role of agency: in regeneration the Holy Spirit is the agent (the one who baptises), and this is seen in 1 Corinthians 12:13, whereas in post-conversion baptism of the Spirit the Lord Jesus Christ is the agent. MLJ takes 1 Corinthians 12:13, Romans 6:3-4 and Ephesians 4:4 to refer to the spiritual reality which water baptism signifies;
- the unique and repeatable elements of Pentecost. While MLJ saw Pentecost as having a unique place in salvation-history, he also stressed the repeatable elements of assurance and power for witness by the pouring out of the Spirit by the ascended Christ. In this context, there is an interesting discussion of the beginnings of the New Testament Church, and the significance of John 20:22-23;
- the role of narrative passages such as Acts. Whereas Stott held that these passages should not govern doctrine and practice, but should be regarded as illustrative, MLJ held that such passages did have a part in establishing doctrine and were indicative of the general experience of the Churches to whom the epistles were written. He cites Galatians 3:2 to show that receiving the Spirit, a phrase used a number of times in Acts, was the Galatians' common experience;

- the different uses of 'filling' with the Spirit in the New Testament, its general sense being to be under the influence and power of the Spirit.

The overall picture given is one that is consistent with the Reformed tradition of many Puritans and the Calvinistic Methodists. It is noticeable that, during those periods, difference of interpretation of the relevant biblical passages were accepted among brothers without acrimony or accusation. Sadly, that has not always been true in recent decades. Accusations of MLJ advocating a 'Christ plus' teaching, or being a Pentecostalist or crypto-Charismatic have not been either helpful or fair. MLJ's distinction from Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement of his period are identified in the book. As for the 'Christ plus' accusation, it fails to appreciate the role of the Holy Spirit in the application of redemption. MLJ's position was not that we need more than Christ, but that we need more of Christ. There are such things as growing in grace, having more assurance, and preaching that is more powerful, and these things come as the Holy Spirit communicates to us more of the Lord Jesus Christ himself and what he himself has secured for us. In fact, this experiential element, that the salvation of Christ and fellowship with God must be experienced, is really the issue at the heart of the whole book, and at the heart of MLJ's ministry.

Regarding assurance of salvation, MLJ saw assurance as deriving from a number of sources: believing the promises, the tests of life and having the Spirit. He regarded the highest form of assurance as deriving from the direct witness of the Spirit as identified in Romans 5:5 and 8:16. Rather than being a recipe for wild, unsustainable claims, MLJ noted that while this direct assurance does not result from deduction from the Scriptures, it is normally "a result of the Spirit illuminating certain statements of Scripture." He "brings them to me with power and they speak with me, and I am certain of them."

Claims have been made that MLJ interpreted Scripture in the light of his own experience and that of certain other historical figures. But such an argument is a double-edged sword – it could equally be claimed that his critics are doing the same. It is much better to avoid such accusations and to humble ourselves before Scripture, and the God of Scripture, recognising that our experience of God is limited. It is certainly true that MLJ used historical examples to illustrate what he believed to be the teaching of Scripture – at a time when he believed that Spiritual experience was at a low ebb, he

wanted his hearers to know that what he was teaching was not something novel. But he also regularly warned against interpreting Scripture in the light of experience. Rather, Scripture must judge and inform our experience – surely that is still true of us today.

Part Three: Revival and the Holy Spirit

MLJ's viewed revival not as an organised evangelistic campaign, but as "a great outpouring of the Spirit," "a revivification, a re-enlivening of the Church herself," from which outsiders derive benefits. It is a manifestation of the glory of God who is present in power. He believed that prayer for revival was necessary, and that hindrances to revival, including unbelief, defective orthodoxy, spiritual inertia and fear of the supernatural should be removed. He saw a concern for revival as a natural implication of Calvinism, "The true Calvinist is concerned about revival. Why? Because he is concerned about the glory of God."

The challenge here is a very contemporary one. Is revival something we should seek for the glory of God, the good of the church and the good of our unbelieving neighbours? Or is it acceptable to be satisfied with the situation where little of the glory of God is experienced and few of our neighbours are impacted by the holiness and the love of God in Jesus Christ? If we are Calvinists – who believe in the sovereignty of God and the indispensable necessity of the power of the Holy Spirit to communicate to believers the benefits of Christ and to bring unbelievers to new birth – then surely we are praying for divine power already. Revival is that power being poured out abundantly.

Eveson addresses the claim that MLJ was obsessed with revival by showing the place it occupied in his ministry – his focus was on fundamental gospel truths and the glory of God – revival was a necessary, but not imbalanced part of his vision of the success of the gospel in the world. As Iain H. Murray pointed out, "Revival was a subject which did not occupy a separate place in MLJ's thinking and preaching, rather it was closely related to his whole understanding of the work of God in bringing men to salvation and assurance."

Part Four: Preaching and the Holy Spirit

This chapter covers a lot of ground regarding MLJ's views of sermon preparation, the nature of expository preaching, the centrality of preaching in the purposes of God and the need for the power of the Holy Spirit to make preaching effective. It is a fascinating read given MLJ's stature and influence as a preacher.

Preaching is "the primary task of the Church and of the Christian minister" to both build up and establish Christians, and to evangelise unbelievers. It "should be governed by theology for it begins with God and it ends with God. A preacher is sent by God, comes from God, is a spokesman for God, and seeks to bring people to humble themselves before God."

Familiarity with the Bible is essential, as is a conviction of the authority and trustworthiness of Scripture. Reason and scholarship are to be servants, not masters, and character and the Holy Spirit's equipping are far more important in a preacher than formal qualifications.

MLJ emphasised the importance of hard study and prayer in sermon preparation, and freedom, zeal and a sense of urgency in delivery. A sermon is "a particular message that leads to a particular end" and application and exhortation are essential parts.

Eveson touches on recent debates regarding the relationship between Word and Spirit and shows how MLJ believed that the Word of God is not effectual independently of the Holy Spirit. Its hearers do not have an innate ability to experience its power – it is the Holy Spirit who uses the Word of God to accomplish his purposes: "All the riches of God's grace in Christ, come to us by the power of the Holy Spirit through the word of the Gospel. That is how God does it." As such this divine power must not be taken for granted. Given this high view of preaching in the purposes of God MLJ comments that true preaching is "God acting", and so "if there is no power, it is not preaching."

This high view of preaching is a challenge to us when our Church calendars are in danger of being filled with many other things. Do we have confidence in preaching as God's appointed means for edification and evangelism? Do we recognise our utter dependence on God to bless the means he has given? The 'means of grace' are important – they are ordained by God. But without the 'grace of the means,' God blessing them by his Spirit, they will inevitably be ineffective.

The book has two valuable appendices: an address delivered by MLJ on 'Evan Roberts and the 1904 Revival', delivered in 1974, which shows MLJ's ability to appreciate the character of true revival while at the same time being aware of the dangers of imbalance and excess. The second appendix is journal entries from 1930-31 which provide an insight to MLJ's struggles and discipleship during a period when the church he was pastoring was experiencing remarkable growth.

Conclusion

This book does not present a critical reworking of MLJ's teaching. Its purpose is to present his position fairly and identify its biblical undergirdings. In this it succeeds admirably, and so is a resource to be welcomed. and pondered. As Sinclair B. Ferguson notes in his foreword, "Agreement in essentials, and recognition of the genuineness of spiritual experience even if interpreted differently, should, as Philip Eveson indicates, go a long way to the peaceful maintenance of the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3)." It contains a great challenge regarding our own fellowship with God and our experience of his presence and power. The Lord has more to give than we have yet received. If this book humbles us and drives us to prayer, its author will be well rewarded.

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Tim J.R. Trumper: *Adoption: A Road to Retrieval.*
From His Fullness Ministries, 2022. 528 pages. £33.99.

Scotland is a land of mountains. Hundreds of peaks stretch high above the landscape. But Scotland is also a land of rain. The result is that, all too frequently, the highest points of her mountains are hidden from view, obscured by cloud. Such imagery might be said to depict the doctrine of adoption in the history of the Christian church. For Scottish theologian John Murray, this doctrine is the mountaintop in the Christian theology of salvation; to be a child of God is "surely the apex of grace and privilege." But, as many have observed, the soteriological heights of adoption have often been obscured and overlooked throughout church history. Recognising this risk of neglect, it is very welcome to see the recent publication of *Adoption: A Road to Retrieval*, by Tim J. R. Trumper.

The work is divided into three parts: The Theological History of Adoption, The Metaphorical Import of Adoption, and The Biblical Exposition of Adoption. Across these, the author's expressed aims include providing a comprehensive theological history of adoption, presenting a rigorous investigation of the Scriptural teaching concerning adoption, and offering a fresh approach to the wider study of Systematic Theology.

Part One

Part One, the Theological History of Adoption, offers an immensely thorough review of how Adoption has been approached in the history of the church. The reader is taken from the Early Church right through to present-day authors. The section on the ante- and post-Nicene Fathers in particular, is a very rich resource. A brief survey of the Middle Ages is offered, followed by a more detailed look at Reformation and post-Reformation theologians. Attention is given to Calvin who, after the Apostle Paul, is said to be the church's theologian of adoption *par excellence*.

However, despite such highlights, the main thesis of the historical survey is that the doctrine of adoption has suffered from increasing neglect in the history of the church up to the nineteenth century. Luther is identified as a one who failed to give adequate attention to the doctrine, but particularly culpability is attached to post-Reformation theologians, such as Francis Turretin. It is suggested that in both Creeds and in works of systematics, the doctrine of adoption is either overlooked entirely or frequently

absorbed into discussions about justification. The result, it is claimed, is a lopsided understanding of soteriology among Reformed theologians.

The last two centuries, however, have seen a recovery of interest in adoption. Trumper highlights some key discussions in the nineteenth century, particularly in Scotland, before noting the valuable contributions of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, James I. Packer, Sinclair Ferguson, and others for drawing adoption back into focus as the twentieth century progressed.

Of particular value in Part One is a section where the author persuasively demonstrates that a clearer understanding of the doctrine of adoption offers an important counter to the claims of the New Perspective understanding of justification. The author engages with N.T. Wright's argument that Justification brings the believer into the covenant family and perceptively highlights that inclusion in God's family does not come through a redefinition of Justification, but through a clearer recognition of the significance of adoption.

Part Two

Part Two examines the Metaphorical Import of Adoption. This begins with an examination of New Testament terminology, especially υἱοθεσία, arguing that this should be understood as a 'adoption' or as 'adoption as sons', rather than as 'sonship'. Next, the author calls for the disentanglement of Johannine teaching on the new birth from Pauline teaching on adoption. Such clarification is helpful, although some readers may feel that the dividing line between Paul and John is drawn just a little too sharply. There is also discussion of how adoption functions as a metaphor, or in the terminology preferred by the author, as a model to convey doctrinal truth. This is followed by a wider analysis of the background to Paul's use of the term. Attention is given to both the Greco-Roman background and to connections with the Old Testament.

Part Three

Finally, Part Three explores the Biblical Exposition of Adoption. Here the study broadens and explores connections between adoption and other areas of systematic theology before going to offer reflections on how to approach the discipline of systematics itself. Hesitation is expressed in relation to traditional articulations of the *Ordo Salutis*, and while the author does not call for it to be jettisoned, he suggests that typical understandings of the *Ordo Salutis* need to be supplemented with other

frameworks in order to give a more appropriate place to adoption. This leads on to wider discussions on methodology, nomenclature, and a proposed 'revamping of systematics'. Trumper prefers the label 'Biblical Dogmatics', by which he means the formulation of theological doctrines in a manner that is both subordinate to the authority of Scripture and more sensitive to redemptive history and biblical imagery, alongside the more logical emphases of traditional systematics. Such a shift in approach, it is argued, will facilitate a more thorough retrieval of the doctrine of adoption.

Overall, the work is very comprehensive, readable and stimulating. The research and detail is impressive, and, throughout the book, helpful diagrams are included which effectively clarify points. Most of all, the author's enthusiasm for his topic is infectious.

On occasion, however, the argumentation of the book runs the risk of attempting too much. While the overall thesis that adoption has suffered neglect after the Reformation is generally well presented, some of the arguments feel stretched. For example, in examining the Westminster Confession, comparison is made between the comparatively short Chapter 12 on adoption with the much longer preceding chapter on justification. The length of Chapter 11 is said to evidence mature reflection, which by implication is seen as lacking from the chapter on adoption. But such argumentation is risky, for among the shorter chapters in the Westminster Confession are those on God and the Trinity (Ch 2), Saving Faith (Ch 14), and the Sacraments (Ch 27). Despite the brevity of these chapters in comparison to others, it is surely impossible to argue that these topics had not received mature reflection.

Moreover, Part Three, which explores wider questions of methodology, while very stimulating, is nevertheless in danger of trying to do too much. Some readers may feel that proposing a 'revamp of systematics' distracts attention away from adoption rather than clarifying understanding of the doctrine. Others may hesitate at the author's sharp critique of those who regard adoption as a consequence of justification, particularly when the overall movement of Paul's teaching in both Romans and Galatians moves from justification into adoption. While Part Three offers much fascinating food for thought, perhaps a more focussed discussion on how to preach adoption and how to apply its implications in contexts of pastoral care would have been a more valuable area to examine.

Alongside the stimulating contributions of the author, one of the most valuable aspects of the book is that it now serves as a treasure trove of golden quotations from theologians across church history. Whether or not every reader will embrace the wider suggestions for approaching systematics, it is certainly the case that all will benefit from the immensely thorough research that has gone into this work.

The author has provided the church with a deeply valuable resource that will no doubt help contribute to a clearer view of adoption. With such a thorough and stimulating book in hand, the mountaintop of the believer's privilege and preciousness in and through Christ will come much more clearly into view.

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