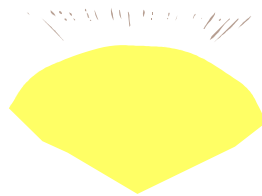


ADOPTION THE FORGOTTEN FACET IN THE JEWEL OF SOTERIOLOGY



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Adoption: The Forgotten Facet in the Jewel of Soteriology

I. What do I mean by Adoption?¹

A. Greek word: υιοθεσια ⇒ used only 5 times in the NT.

(Galatians 4:5; Romans 8:15,25; Romans 9:4; Ephesians 1:5)

- Occurs seldom (never in the LXX²). It is a technical legal term and means adoption, the accepting of a child as one's own.³
- Heidelberg Catechism:
 - ❖ Why is he called God's 'only Son' when we also are God's children?
 - ❖ Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God. We, however, are adopted children of God – adopted by grace through Christ.
- Shorter Catechism question 34:⁴
 - ❖ What is adoption?
 - ❖ Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all privileges, of the sons of God.
- Specifically I mean ⇒ "sonship by adoption"

B. What did the 1st Century believers understand about υιοθεσια?

- Video Clip⁵

¹ I am not referring to "Adoptionism" one of the early church heresies in the 300's that taught that Jesus, as the Son of God, did not actually become totally man.

² "The OT nowhere uses either the verb, adopt, or the noun, adoption.", New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, Vol. 4, pp. 362-63. Ed. William A. VanGemeren. The concept of Adoption, however is not foreign to the Old Testament. (Moses, Esther, and Ezekiel 16:1-13)

³ New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology Vol. 1; Pg. 287. Ed. Colin Brown

⁴ The Baptist Catechism printed by the Charleston Association in 1813 is exactly identical – question 37.

⁵ Clip from the Movie Ben-Hur 1959 Warner Brothers Home Video

C. What does our society today understand about adoption?

- The court, being satisfied, finds that the statements made in the Petition are true and that the needs and welfare of the person proposed to be adopted will be promoted by this adoption ...and _____ Directs that
*_____ the person to be adopted, shall have all the rights of a child and heir of _____, the adopting parents, and shall be subject to all the duties of such child, and shall thereafter assume the name of _____.*⁶

⁶ Actual paragraph from Adoption Papers, Court of Common Pleas of Montgomery County, PA Orphans Division (italics mine)

II. What do I mean by forgotten?
(Neglected is probably a better word, but “Forgotten Facet” sounded better.)

A. Tim Trumper states:⁷

- After a careful perusal of Philip Schaff’s three volumes on *The Creeds of Christendom* it is almost unbelievable to discover that after nearly two thousand years of theological reflection the church has in its possession possibly only six confessions which include a chapter on the doctrine of adoption...The discovery is substantiated by the fact that two of the chapters – in the Savoy Declaration (1658) and the Baptist Confession of Faith (1689) respectively – were derived from a seminal chapter in the mother of seventeenth-century confessions in the English-speaking world – the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647).

- Westminster Confession of Faith -- Chapter XII: Of Adoption:

All those that are justified, God vouchsafes, in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have His name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, and are enabled to cry, Abba Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by Him as by a Father; yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption; and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation.

(Eph 1:5; Rom 8:17; Jer 14:9; Rom 8:15; Eph 3:12; Gal 4:6; Ps 103:13; Proverbs 14:26; Matt 6:30; Heb 12:6; Lam 3:31; Eph 4:30; Heb 6:12; 1 Pet 1:3)⁸

- London Baptist Confession Chapter 12: Of Adoption:

All those that are justified, God vouchsafes, in and for the **SAKE** of his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have His name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, and are enabled to cry, Abba Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by Him as by a Father; yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption; and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation. (emphasis mine)

(Eph 1:5; Gal 4:4,5; John 1:12; Rom 8:17; 2 Cor 6:18; Rev 3:12; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6; Eph 2:18; Ps 103:13; Proverbs 14:26; 1 Pet 5:7; Heb 12:6; Isa 54:8,9; Lam 3:31; Eph 4:30; Heb 1:14; Heb 6:12)

⁷ “The Metaphorical Import of Adoption: A Plea for Realization”; Tim Trumper, New College, University of Edinburgh; pp. 1; date unknown.

⁸ Proof Texts as given in both confessions respectively; not all of them are even related to the topic of adoption.

B. J.I. Packer states in Knowing God:⁹

- It is a strange fact that the truth of adoption has been little regarded in Christian history. Apart from two nineteenth-century books, now little known (R. S. Candlish, *The Fatherhood of God*; R. A. Webb, *The Reformed Doctrine of Adoption*), there is no evangelical writing on it, nor has there been at any time since the Reformation, and any more than there was before.¹⁰

C. Systematic Theology:¹¹

- Charles Hodge ⇒ ½ of one page out of 2,200 total pages (Vol. 3, pp. 64-65).
- Louis Berkof ⇒ One page out of a total 700 pages (pp. 515 – 16).
- John Calvin's *Institutes* ⇒ The topic of adoption is intertwined throughout the *Institutes*, there is no separate section dealing with it sepecifically.
- Lewis Sperry Chafer ⇒ Three pages out of 2,608 total pages (Vol. 3, pp 242 – 43; Vol. 7, pp. 9 – 11).
- Millard Erickson ⇒ Four pages out of 1,253 total pages (pp. 274 – 78).
- Allen Mawhinney states:
 - ❖ The development of the doctrine of adoption in systematic theology is found to be inadequate due to a lack of recognition of the metaphorical nature in Paul's use of $\nu\lambda\omicron\theta\epsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$ and a resulting loss of the breadth of its meaning.¹²

⁹ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 20th anniversary edition (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter Varsity Press, 1993), 228.

¹⁰ As an answer to Packer's call for more writings on the subject, a book was released last month by Robert A. Peterson, *Adopted by God, from Wayward Sinners to Cherished Children*.

¹¹ Not a systematic theology in the formal sense of the term, but John Gill (1699-1771) wrote a work in the 1700's titled A Body of Doctrinal Divinity he deals more extensively with adoption than all of the mentioned systematics combined in Book 2 Chapter 5, and Book 6 Chapter 9. Also Thomas Watson in his A Body of Divinity (first published in 1692) has 9 pages given to adoption. pp. 231-240

¹² Mawhinney, Allen. Yiothesia in the Pauline Epistles: Its Background, Use and Implications, 1982.

III. So why should we care?

A. We are accountable to build on the foundation these men have left us!

- Augustine, Calvin, Luther, the Puritans, Hodge, Chafer, etc.
 - ❖ Great men of God who did much and gave us much.
 - ❖ If it were not for Calvin and Luther we would all be Catholic.
 - ❖ If it were not for the Puritans we would all still be living in England and part of the Church of England (basically Catholic).
 - ❖ Each of these men (and many more) contributed their part in giving us a deeper understanding of God's Word and of God Himself. But each of these men expected that others after them would build on what they had done.
 - ❖ Luke 12:48 ... For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

B. We must "preach the whole counsel of God". Acts 20:27

- Tim Trumper¹³
 - ❖ Given the need for a more precise and thoroughgoing apprehension of adoption, the temporary isolation of the doctrine for the purposes of intensified study is warranted. However, the doctrine must not be left in isolation from other soteriological doctrines, or the unity of both Scriptures and its message would be violated.
 - There are incredible riches of God's grace and the Person of God bound up in the doctrine of Adoption, that we will forever be without if we do not probe the depths of this great teaching.

¹³ "The Metaphorical Import of Adoption: A Plea for Realization"; Tim Trumper, New College, University of Edinburgh; pp. 6; date unknown.

C. “Our” message must impact people where they live.

➤ So where do they live?

- ❖ An estimated 826,000 children were victims of abuse and neglect in 1999. Parents were the perpetrators (one or both) for 91.8 percent and 85.0 percent of victims of neglect and victims of physical abuse, respectively. They were the perpetrators for 50 percent of victims of sexual abuse.¹⁴
- ❖ In 1999 only 68 percent of children under the age of 18 lived in a home with two parents, 23 percent with only a mother, 4 percent with only a father, and 4 percent with no parent.¹⁵

- ❖ “Life With Father Isn’t What it Used to Be”
New York Times; June 17, 2001

Now, with the release of data from the 2000 census, I have learned I am part of a trend. There are 2.2 million single fathers with primary custody of children in the United States. That is a 62 percent rise since 1990.

As the new census returns came in recently, many Americans were shocked and disappointed to learn that nuclear families – man, woman, assorted progeny living under a single roof – now make up less than one-quarter of the households in the United States.

- ❖ However, the secular society is in part seeing the problem faster than we are.

- ❖ “Dad Plays Role in Improving Son’s Marriage: Study”
New York Times; June 15, 2001

Researchers say boys who bond with their parents – especially their fathers – are more intent as young adults on committing to married life, compared with those who do not.

- ❖ 1997 saw a national conference at the Urban Institute in D.C. on *Social Fatherhood and Parental Involvement: Conceptual, Data, and Policymaking Issues*

- ❖ Workshop Titles: “The Meaning of Fatherhood for Men”, “Nonresident Fathers”

¹⁴ National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), Child Maltreatment; 1999.

¹⁵ www.childstats.gov

➤ Case Study (This couple is going to join your church next Sunday):

Jim, Jane (8 months pregnant), John (2 years old) ⇒ married 4 years.

❖ Jim

- ❖ Grew up in “Christian” home
 - ❖ Dad deacon
 - ❖ Mom S.S. Teacher
- ❖ Dad was very verbally abusive to him, mom & siblings.
- ❖ Dad left home when Jim was 18 and married another woman

❖ Jane

- ❖ Grew up in “Christian” home
 - ❖ Parents went to church, not real involved
- ❖ Dad sexually abused her and her sisters
- ❖ Dad physically abused mom

❖ Jim and Jane dating

- ❖ Jim was verbally abusive to Jane, but not physically
- ❖ Many friends wondered why Jane would marry Jim, but from Jane’s perspective he was better than what she grew up with.

❖ Jim and Jane married

- ❖ Jim is still verbally abusive, but not as bad as his dad was, so he feels like he is doing pretty good.
- ❖ Jane has grown weary with the men in her life and how she has been treated, but she doesn’t know anything else.

❖ NOW THEY ARE PARENTS?!?!

ROMANS 8:14 - 17
4 Privileges of Adoption.

1. The Privilege of the Holy Spirit's Guidance .

14 ὅσοι γὰρ πνεύματι θεοῦ ἄγονται, οὗτοι υἱοὶ θεοῦ εἰσιν.

For as many as (the) Spirit of God guide, (the) sons of God they are.

KJV: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

2. The Privilege of a close personal intimate relationship with the Father – though once a slave.¹⁶

("Abba" -- Used only by Paul to describe a privilege or adoption {here and in Galatians 4:6}, and by Christ Himself when praying in the garden before the crucifixion to His Father! {Mark 14:36})

15 οὐ γὰρ ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα δουλείας πάλιν εἰς φόβον
ἀλλὰ ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα υἰοθεσίας ἐν ᾧ κρᾶζομεν· αββα ὁ πατήρ.

Then by no means you received (the) spirit of subservience again to fear
but you received (the) spirit of adoption by which we are shouting "Abba¹⁷ Father".¹⁸

KJV: For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;
but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

3. The Privilege of assurance of salvation.

16 αὐτὸ τὸ πνεῦμα συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν
ὅτι ἐσμὲν τέκνα θεοῦ.

The very same Spirit testifies in support to (the) spirit of us
that we are children of God.

KJV: The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit,
that we are the children of God:

¹⁶ "He adopted us from slavery: it is mercy to redeem a slave, but it is more to adopt him." Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, 1692 (reprinted by Banner of Truth 1992)

¹⁷ Luther has said: "This is but a little word, and yet notwithstanding it comprehendeth all things. The mouth speaketh not, but the affection of the heart speaketh after this manner. Although I be oppressed with anguish and terror on every side, and seem to be forsaken and utterly cast away from thy presence, yet am I a child, and thou art my Father for Christ's sake: I am beloved because of the Beloved. Wherefore this little word, "Abba", conceived effectually in the heart, passeth all the eloquence...that ever were in the world."

¹⁸ Spurgeon has a wonderful sermon on adoption. Especially dealings with "the cry, Abba". "Adoption – The Spirit and the Cry", A Sermon Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, April 14th, 1878, by C.H. Spurgeon, At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington. (www.spurgeon.org/sermons)

4. The Privilege of an heir to a kingdom.

17 εἰ δὲ τέκνα, καὶ κληρονόμοι· κληρονόμοι μὲν θεοῦ, συγκληρονόμοι δὲ
 Χριστοῦ,
 εἵπερ συμπάσχομεν
 ἵνα καὶ συνδοξασθῶμεν.

If then children, also heirs heirs indeed of God, fellow receivers with Christ,
 if indeed we join in suffering
 in order to also be honored.

KJV: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;
 if so be that we suffer with *him*,
 that we may be also glorified together.

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