

# ADOPTION NOT IN THE BIBLE SALVATION.

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## I. THE INEXTRICABLE CONFUSION IN WHICH THE BELIEVERS IN ADOPTION ARE INVOLVED.

“The fathers regard adoption generally as the magical effect of baptism, and derive many illustrations of it from Roman jurisprudence. . . . The older Lutherans prefer to treat adoption in connection with baptism. . . . The Reformed theologians distinguish theoretically, though not practically, regeneration and adoption. . . . The Westminster Catechism defines adoption as the act of God’s grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God. . . .” (Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*, Part II, Chap. 24, New York edition, p. 269). “Adoption is the second concomitant of justification, and is the act by which we who were alienated, enemies, disinherited, are made sons of God and heirs of eternal glory” (first edition of *Schaff-Herzog Ency*).

If the Baptists of 1646 believed in adoption, they did not mention it in the *Confession* of 1643 or 1646; but in the *Confession* of 1689 they said: “All those who are justified, God vouchsafed 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 of, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of children of God; have his name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness; are enabled to cry Abba Father; are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him, as a father; yet never cast off, but sealed, to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises, as everlasting salvation” (Chap. 12). If adoption does all this for us, what place is there in our salvation left for chapter eleven of the same con-

fession, wherein it says: "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth. . . . by pardoning their sins, and by counting and accepting their persons as righteous"? Or, has an alien sinner all this and yet is dependent on adoption to make him a child of God and to be saved?

The New Hampshire Confession, drawn up about 1832 and now quite generally used as the Confession of American Baptists, avoids the self-contradiction of the *Confession* of 1689 by ignoring adoption. But, as anyone should see, its definition and explanation of regeneration and of the other elements of salvation are so comprehensive that they leave no necessity for adoption or room for it. In the Circular Letter, by Rev. Thomas Ustick, to the Philadelphia Association in 1786, he says: "The adoption into a family imports that previous to that transaction he did not bear the relation of a child in that family; and, therefore, could have no claim to the distinguishing name, peculiar titles, proper estates, or special interests of the family." But, in the name of common sense, all know this cannot be the case of a child that is already born into the family. This letter proceeds: "Spiritual adoption may be defined as the sovereign or authoritative act of God's grace, by which persons are translated into the family of God: and being made children are justly entitled to all the privileges of a divine and everlasting inheritance" (*Min. Phila. Ass.*, pp. 219, 220). But, I reply, inasmuch as God's children are spiritually *born* into His family, and birth involves all this, there is neither necessity nor room for this adoption.

Attempting to justify the lameness of adoption, the writer of this letter virtually repeats what a beloved, scholarly professor in one of our theological seminaries recently said to me: "No single term could answer the end fully expressing the nature of our salvation. Different phrases therefore are used to help our conceptions of those blessings, which are ineffable; and for the

perfect knowledge of which we must await, until the consummation in glory."

But to this, I reply that each term expressing salvation has its separate, distinct meaning and place, and cannot be left out without leaving out the essential element it expresses. For example, what can take the place of *born again*? what can take the place of *justification*? what can take the place of *forgiveness of sin*? Leaving out the new birth we are without either the divine nature or the place in God's family; leaving out forgiveness we are without God's feeling right toward us; leaving out justification, we are without the past life declared righteous by the Great Judge. But our being born again into God's family, justified and forgiven, etc., can be given no additional salvation by adoptions multiplied into infinity. Why confuse the subject of grace by the invention of unnecessary terms; and, then, further confuse it by the invention of apologies for the invented terms? Our own beloved, great theologian and seminary president says: "Faith is the condition of sonship. Adoption is the method of God for introducing sons into his family. . . . So also by adoption we are received into God's family by faith, with all the rights of the household. The act of adoption is, of course, accompanied by the act of regeneration" (*The Chr. Religion in Its Doc. Expression*, p. 407). But, I reply, "By birth, sons, being already introduced into the family as sons with all their rights and privileges, no infinite number of adoptions can render them more so."

Dr. A. H. Strong says: "The restoration to favor, viewed as the renewal of broken fellowship, is denominated reconciliation; viewed in its aspect as a renewal of the soul's true relation to God as a father, it is denominated adoption" (*Syst. Theol.*, last ed., p. 857). To this the reply is: Instead of adoption bringing "the soul's renewal to God as a father", the new birth does this. For the new birth not to do it would be as utterly impossible

as for the natural birth not to effect the relation of the natural child to its father. As we shall see further on, the Bible does not so much as hint at any adoption doing it. Andrew Fuller says: "If any sinner be now treated as a child of God, it is as an adopted alien, put among the children of God" (*Fuller's Works*, vol. I, p. 578). But this statement so utterly ignores or overlooks the place and the nature of the new birth that we are left by the new birth still alien sinners, on the road to hell. Equal to Fuller ignoring or overlooking the nature and the place of the new birth, to make room for adoption, is the following, quoted by *Webster's Dictionary* from a Bible dictionary: "The blessing brought by the fullness of Christ in the fullness of time is called adoption."

Robert Hall said: "It was not only justification . . . but adoption into the family of heaven, the privileges for all his believing people" (*Robert Hall's Works*, vol. 3, p. 502). In this, he utterly ignores or overlooks regeneration, the new birth, and forgiveness of sin, in effect, making his imaginary "adoption" stand for them all. Yet, no adoption ever changed the nature of the adopted. Testimonies to the confusion of writers can be easily multiplied. Like the confusion of writers on infant baptism, from its having no place in Christianity, so is the confusion of writers on adoption from its having no place in Christianity.

The confusion is only made worse by those who attempt to clear up the subject by telling us that adoption means that the soul is adopted now, but that the body awaits the resurrection for its adoption! As though the devil and the Lord were partnership owners of the Christian until the resurrection—the devil now owning the body and the Lord the soul! The Bible teaches that the bodies of Christians are now God's temple; and that they ought now to be fully consecrated to His service (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:15; Rom. 12:1). But all adoption advocates are driven logically to the position, from Rom. 8:23, that

God does not now own the body of the Christian; and that until it is adopted at the resurrection He cannot own it. This confusion of believers in adoption but illustrates Solomon's "The legs of the lame are not equal."

## II. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF ADOPTION?

The term adoption is from *adoptio*. Andrews, in his Latin and English lexicon, defines *adoptio* as follows: "A taking or receiving one in the place of a child." There were among ancient and modern nations several kinds of adoption. The advocates of adoption regard the definition in the Encyclopædic Dictionary as the only one suited to our subject. It is in harmony with the definition just taken from Andrew's Lexicon: "The act of taking a stranger into one's family as a son or daughter." Were it not true that Christians are all children of God by the faith that gives them the new birth the meaning of the words, *adopt*, *adoption*, would be very fit terms for our being "adopted sons of God". But as it never hath been heard since the world began that anyone ever adopted his own *born* child there is no possible place for the word adoption here. Adoption gave the adopted child all the privileges of sonship, including inheritance and name; the spiritual birth into God's family brings all that adoption gave or gives into the human family. By no means can the meaning of the word adoption be made to indicate the act by which the Christian has been made a part of the family of God.

## III. MEANING OF THE PASSAGES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IN WHICH THE WORD "ADOPTION" IS FOUND.

The word "adoption" is found in the following passages: "Ye have received the spirit of adoption"; "waiting for our adoption, to-wit, the redemption of our body"; "whose is the adoption"; "that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adop-

tion of sons''; ''foreordained us into the adoption of sons'' (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5).

1. The word translated ''adoption'' does not signify ''adoption''. The word rendered ''adoption'' is *huiothesia*. This word is made of *titheemi* and *huios*. All the lexicons agree that the verb means to ''place, set, lay'', and such like meanings. Not a lexicon defines it to adopt, or by any definition that so much as hints at adoption. In not one of its 95 occurrences in the New Testament is there so much as a hint of adoption. Nowhere in the Septuagint does it so much as hint adoption. So, we can forever dismiss from our minds any thought of adopt or adoption from it. Yet, if ''adoption'' is not revealed in the verb, it is not revealed in the compound, because *titheemi* is the only part of the compound denoting the *action* or the *act*. No scholar will question this statement for a moment.

2. No scholar will dissent for a moment from the statement that *huios* no more expresses or implies adoption than does the English word ''son'' express or imply it.

3. Therefore, the certain conclusion is, as ''adoption'' is certainly in neither *titheemi* nor *huios*, it cannot be in them when they are compounded. The advocate of ''adoption'', therefore, having no involution of adoption into the evolution of *huiothesia*, can no more get ''adoption'' out of it than the infidel can get our moral nature out of an evolution in the absence of a previous involution. Or, than the sprinkling or pouring can be got out of *baptizo* in the absence of even so much as a hint of them, or of either of them, in its composition. Every scholar will agree to the proposition that the compounding of a word cannot put within it a meaning that none of the elements of the compound contained previously or independently of the compound.

Possibly, there are a few classical passages in which *titheemi* is used in expressing adoption when com-

pounded. But, if so, I have failed to find any example from the lexicons. It seems in a few cases in classical Greek to be used to express adoption; but these are with *pais* in some of its formations. And, even then, the expression itself does not mean adoption, but the adoption is to be inferred from the expression by the subject or its connection. But frequent classical examples of adoption are found expressed by some compound of *poieo* with *huios*, as in *huiopoieomai*, *huiopoieesis*, *huiopoietos*; or, without compounding, in *huion poieisthai tina*. Even could an example or a few examples be found in any Greek that is outside of the New Testament in which *titheemi* in any of its compounds means adoption, or even if compounded in one case with *huion* it would only be the exception to the rule, and could not affect the argument of this article, for such example or examples would only show that the Greek, as other languages, sometimes has been misused—used in violation of its idiom or laws, or in variation from its well settled and common use.

But as we know the teaching of the Bible only by ascertaining the meaning of its words, there is nothing left for us but to conclude that there is no "adoption" in the Bible, but only in its English versions.

4. That "adoption is not in *huiiothesia*, agrees with the truth that our having been born again into the sonship with all its privileges plainly excludes any place or need of our being adopted into them. On the other hand, "adoption" denies that having been born sons entitles men to be recognized as sons, with all the privileges of that recognition.

5. What, then, do the Holy Scriptures that are translated "adoption" mean?

From the composition of *huiiothesia*, it must mean to put or set forth the saved as sons in some way. Young, in his concordance, defines this word as the "placing as a son". The very part of the word in Rom. 4:17 is rendered, "I have made thee". Of those in the church pre-

vious to having been "set", Paul, in 1 Cor. 12:28, says: "And God hath set in the church." In John 2:10, of the previously existing wine, it is said, "did set forth good wine". Remembering that the verb part is thus used in the New Testament, it is scripturally correct to say that we have been made sons; that we have received the spirit of having been made sons; that as sons we await the resurrection of our bodies as glorified bodies, to be manifested as a part of our sonship. It involves no confusion of doctrine or thought. These passages, in which *huiothesia* occurs, all involve the progressive setting forth or *manifestation* of the children of God, beginning with our having—as sons—received the spirit of sonship and completed in the resurrection (Rom. 8:15, 23). The following are some of the statements, confirming *huiothesia* as teaching the "manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19)—the placing of the sons of God plainly before all intelligencies. President Edwards says: "This he calls the manifestation of the children of God, alluding to children's being brought forth to the light when they are born. This was to have its highest fulfillment at the resurrection, when they shall be born from the grave, and manifested in the most public manner in the proper glory of God's children, and shall receive the most public testimonies of God's fatherly love" (*Edwards' Works*, vol. 3, p. 552).

Julius Müller, of the sons of God, says: "In this life they wait for . . . the resurrection, when 'the manifestation of the sons of God' will be realized in all its fullness (Rom. 8:23, 19, 21)" (*Christain Doc. of Sin*, vol. 2, p. 304).

Of this manifestation, Tholuck remarks: "We have already the commencement of such state within us. . . . The inward experiences of the Christian even in this life, give him a certainty with respect to the glorification hereafter" (On Rom. 8:23).

In agreement with this, Neander explains the *huio-*



*thesia* as the "self-conscious appropriation of the filial relation of the sons of God".

Matthew Henry comments on Rom. 8:23: "This adoption is that *manifested* before all the world, angels and men."

The explanations of these and other writers of *huiothesia* demonstrate the fact that *adoption* is not in salvation. As we have seen, adoption does not signify "manifestation" of God's sons, but it means to make them sons, with all the privileges of sons, a thing that the new birth does. *Adoption* was put into the word of God by the Vulgate rendering *adoptio filiorum*, and copied by the English translators. Though he came out of Rome, Martin Luther alone, of all the reformers, got the rendering correct, and the late revision of his version lets his rendering stand.<sup>1</sup>

The conclusion of it all is: *huiothesia*, instead of being a usurpation of the new birth, is the setting forth or manifestation of the sons of God, beginning with the receiving of the filial spirit and completed in the manifestation of the sons of God in the resurrection of the mortal body into the condition of a glorified body with the entering into the glory of the blessed Christ in His second coming.

Thus declare the Scriptures: "We wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory" (Philip 2:21). "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the stars forever and forever" (Dan. 12:3). "Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not" (Mal. 3:18). "Behold, now are we children of God, and it is not yet

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 8:15 Luther renders *kindlichen Geist*—filial spirit. Rom. 8:23 Luther renders *Kindshaft*—sonship. Rom. 9:4 he also renders *Kindshaft*—sonship. Gal. 4:5 he renders *Kindshaft*—sonship. Eph. 1:5 he renders *Kinshaft*—sonship. The words *kindlichen* and *Kindshaft* instead of the word "adoption", as in our English versions.

made manifest what we shall be. We know that if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him" (1 John 3:2).

While in our present body, as Christians, we have to "mortify" its "deeds" to keep it "under" and to do this by the large measure of grace that enables us to "present" our "bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God". Compare Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5; 1 Cor. 9:27; Rom. 12:1. In this contest we meet with many shameful but temporary defeats. Thus we are not fully like Him. But when we receive the full *effect* of redemption in the resurrection body, we will have bodies that will be as great a help to the soul as they are now hindrances. Then we will be perfectly like Christ. To the world, and too often to ourselves, we are now like the son, of a great Emperor. He now sleeps with the common soldiers, marches the dusty, hard marches of the common soldier—is so subject to the lot and the discipline of the common soldier that, were you to review the Emperor's troops, you would not know him from the sons of the rude peasantry. But wait till his time comes to be crowned the Emperor! The potentates of earth attend the coronation. Next morning the papers appear with great head lines, column after column, describing and narrating the great day. So the children of God, to a great extent, as the world or common peasantry, bear the hardships, the burdens of this fallen life. To the careless observer, they do not appear different from their comrades. But wait till the resurrection and the coronation day, in comparison with which the grandest of earthly coronation days dwindles into nothing! This is the day when the sons of God "shall shine as the brightness of the stars forever and forever". This is the day of which the apostle speaks when he says: "For the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the setting forth as sons, the deliverance of our bodies" (Rom. 8:22, 23, 19).

CONCLUSION.

1. The subject as presented in this article harmonizes perfectly with regeneration as making us sons, instead of our being sons by adoption.

2. The subject as presented in this article simplifies the matter, avoiding the inextricable confusion of adoption.

3. The subject as presented by this article is sustained by the only New Testament meaning of *huiothesia*, wrongly rendered adoption.

4. The subject as presented in this article restores the new birth to its place in salvation and sets forth the New Testament doctrine of the filial spirit and "manifestation of the sons of God".

5. The subject as presented in this article restores God's children from the non-family or non-blood *kinship*, that is inseparable from the position of an adopted child, to that of the divine *kinship*, family—*birth* nature of one begotten and born into the family, a relation infinitely higher than any adoption can possibly confer.