UNDERSTANDING THEOLOGICALLY THE EXPERIENCE

OF THE ADOPTED CHILD IN COUNSELING

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APPROVAL SHEET

UNDERSTANDING THEOLOGICALLY THE EXPERIENCE

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To Jack and Thommie Rogers,

whose choice to adopt me and make me their son

has influenced me greatly to understand this topic

and to my wife, Jenny Rogers,

who has supported, encouraged, and strengthened my walk with God.

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PREFACE

My own life has influenced my interest in the doctrine of adoption and its effect on adoptive families. I was adopted at birth after two months of living in foster care. At around the age of seven I began to question how babies were born and how families were created. My mother bought me a book that explained adoption. I do not remember being confused or even having many questions about it. It seems like I understood what it meant to be adopted: my parents chose to make me their son. Even though being adopted seems to be a situation for ridicule, I do not remember being teased very often. There was one time, however, when a friend of mine made fun of me. But, he made the mistake of making fun of me in front of my mom. Let's just say that he never made fun of me again.

When I was 17 years old, God opened my eyes to see my need for a Savior. It was during those formative years that I began to understand and greatly appreciate what it means to be adopted by God. Our family experiences can help or hinder our understanding of godly truths. By God's grace, my family experience helped me to understand God's adoption of me. I never doubted, growing up, that I was my parents' son. They convinced me and confirmed for me over and over that they loved me, that they cared for me, and that I would always be their son. Both the revelation of the doctrine of adoption found in Scripture and my experience as an adopted child has greatly influenced my interest in the doctrine of adoption and how it informs the adoptive experience for children.

However, not every adopted child's experience is the same. Some experience a home life where they are constantly told they are adopted in a demeaning way and that

that means they are not legitimate children. The adopted child grows up, struggling deeply with his sense of identity. The child misperceives everything about God, about himself, and about his relationships.

Seeing these struggles in my twenty-six years of pastoral work has also influenced my interest in this topic. Walking alongside a number of adoptive families, I have seen parents adopt children for the wrong reasons and parent those adopted children according to the wrong counsel; and experienced the sad and often devastating consequences of doing so. I have seen the struggle of adopted children to know their place in the world; who they are and what purpose they have in life. Some adopted children see their lives as lives that have been rejected, without meaning or purpose. My heart has grieved over such people, desiring for them to understand the beautiful reality of the doctrine of adoption and how a conscious awareness of our adoption in Christ influences and shapes the way we perceive our physical adoption, so that we might understand who we are and what purpose we serve.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Tim J. R. Trumper delineates a historical account of the doctrine of adoption whereby he concurs with the prevailing judgment that little is written on the doctrine. He notes, "over the recent years a small but growing number of Reformed Christians have noted the need for the recovery of adoption…one of the most underrated doctrines of Holy Scripture."[1] However, he concludes that despite greater attention to the need, little has been done. He says, "what appeals there have been have fallen on deaf ears."[2] Trumper discovers that research shows that throughout church history there are six confessions that contain a distinct chapter on adoption. He does note, however, that there may be others hidden away. He concludes that this lack of distinctive statements on adoption may explain why the doctrine has infrequently been discussed. A general perusal of major figures of historical theology confirms what is evident by the creeds and confessions.[3] Simply put, an analysis of the literature shows that not much more has been said about the doctrine of adoption after the Reformation than before.[4]

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[1] Tim J. R. Trumper, "The Theological History of Adoption I: An Account," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 20, no. 1 (2002): 4.

[2] Trumper, "The Theological History of Adoption I," 6.

[3] Trumper, "The Theological History of Adoption I," 14.

[4] Trumper mentions two substantive resources on the doctrine of adoption since the Reformation. See Thomas Houston, *The Adoption of Sons, Its Nature, Spirit, Privileges, and Effects: Practical and Experimental Treatise* (Paisley, Scotland: Alex Gardner, 1872); Robert Alexander Webb, *The Reformed Doctrine of Adoption* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947). Both volumes are out of print. More recent works include: David B. Garner, *Sons in the Son: The Riches and Reach of Adoption in Christ* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017) and Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into God's Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 22, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).

Due, in part, to the lack of attention given to the doctrine of adoption, the experience of adoption has lacked a theological influence. Positively, churches have answered the call the doctrine of adoption places on believers to adopt children as a mean for caring for orphans.[5] However, this has consequently brought even more attention to the glaring need for believers to understand the adoption experience theologically. The effect and influence of the doctrine does not end when believers are convinced of the call to adopt. Simply, the growth in adoptions among believers has created an even greater need to understand the experience of the adoptive parent and adoptive child in counseling theologically.

Thesis

This dissertation argues that parents can positively influence a child's perception of his own adoption experience by modeling for him the doctrine of adoption as an aspect of salvation in Christ. The particular focus within the adoption experience is the adopted child's broken sense of identity in relationship and the fallout in the child's responses in the present situation. This dissertation argues that the doctrine of adoption, dynamically lived out by adoptive parents, gives the framework for bringing restoration to the child's self-perception in relationship. The key element of the doctrine on display in the parent's conduct toward the child is the filial permanence of God as father.

Methodology

This thesis conducts a literature review to show the key themes of the adoption

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[5] The following resources have been influential in mobilizing believers to adopt: Dan Cruver et al., *Reclaiming Adoption: Missional Living through the Rediscovery of Abba Father* (Adelphi, MD: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010); Russell D. Moore, *Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families & Churches* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009); Daniel Bennett, *A Passion for the Fatherless: Developing a God-Centered Ministry to Orphans* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011); Johnny Carr, *Orphan Justice: How to Care for Orphans Beyond Adopting* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2013); Tony Merida and Rick Morton, *Orphanology: Awakening to Gospel-Centered Adoption and Orphan Care* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2011).

experience. I consider these key themes in the frameworks in which they are presented before critically engaging with them from a theological standpoint. Next, I present a biblical theology of adoption, which acknowledges the cultural practice of adoption in the Roman culture of the apostle Paul's day that will inform a proper understanding of his use of υἱοθεσία (adoption). Third, I conduct an analysis of the leading literature on caring for adopted children using David Powlison's three epistemological principles as the framework for evaluating and critiquing.[6] Lastly, I show what relationship the theology of adoption has to adopted children, advancing a theology of the experience of adopted children, especially focusing on one's conscious awareness of adoption and how that informs one's self-perception.

Delimitations

While there has been much social-scientific research conducted in the area of adoption experiences and behaviors this dissertation is limited to the particular aspects of the doctrine of adoption as described in the NT and how it affects the understanding of the adopted child's experience and subsequent behaviors. Specific behaviors due to the adopted child's experience is viewed from a theological framework to determine the problem in the adopted child biblically and offer biblical solutions that are specific to particularly behaviors where there is a consensus among social-scientific research. The intent of this dissertation is to move beyond the theoretical to the actual experiences and behaviors of adopted children without ignoring what helpful observations have been made in social-scientific research.

Karyn Purvis' model was largely forged through her observation of adoptive scenarios and the subsequent trauma, providing a clearer view of neurological effects of

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[6] These three epistemological priorities will be discussed in chapter three and are articulated in David Powlison, "Questions at the Crossroads: The Care of Souls & Modern Psychotherapies," in *Care for the Soul*, ed. Mark R. McMinn and Timothy R. Phillips (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 23-61.

the adoptive experience on adopted children. Thus, the model is used to help parents of adoptive children understand their children and how best to care for them. As engagement with Purvis' model is conducted in this dissertation, the intention is to assess its use in adoptive situations through a theological perspective.

This dissertation is limited to the general adoption experience of the adopted child. Much can be said about the differences between a child who is adopted at one week old and a child adopted at seven years old, or even 14 years old. There are differences between a child who is adopted out of a foster care where there was abuse and a child who was readopted where there was the experience of repeated abandonment. For example, discipline of a child who has been beaten in the past or has been sexually abused is experienced differently from a child who has not. These are important distinctions and this dissertation is limited to understanding theologically the experience of adoption generally, so as to provide a solid framework from which to develop specific strategies to address the varying and distinct circumstances that constitute the adoption experience.

Background on the Doctrine of Adoption

Common among adopted children is their struggle with identity. Their experience is one of abandonment and rejection. By design the family consists of a husband and wife who procreate and give birth to children who together grow up and mature in relation to one another. Due to a disruption in the family for a variety of reasons,[7] children are displaced from their birth parents. This disruption provides an experience for the adopted child whereby his perception of himself is easily distorted. His

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[7] A woman may place her child for adoption for many reasons: because she is not ready to be a mother; she does not want to be a mother; she cannot afford to raise a child; she cannot provide a safe home; she is too young to raise a child; her family is complete; she does not have a good relationship with her child's father and does not want to have a relationship with him; or she does have a good relationship and together they decide that adoption is a good choice. These are samples of the various reasons for which children are placed for adoption.

relationship to those who gave him birth is broken and he is chosen and placed into a relationship with people who are now considered his parents. Every adopted child lives with this reality of being both rejected and displaced. However, that is not the whole story. As the doctrine of adoption so beautifully displays, adopted children also experience being chosen and embraced by parents who welcome them into their families as legitimate members with all the affection, rights and privileges.

The doctrine of adoption, especially its emphasis on a familial union with the triune God helps adoptive families perceive their experience theologically. Regrettably, the majority of adopted children and their parents have inadequate theological understanding about their adoption experience. A survey of the literature shows that the large majority of counsel adoptive families receive is not from a biblical perspective. The vast majority of literature that guides adoptive families relies heavily on empirical studies and people's own explanation of their personal experiences. Such studies can be helpful in gathering observations of common experiences, but the literature shows a heavy reliance on the perspective that people are merely biological beings, focusing almost entirely on neurological realities with scant consideration given to the immaterial soul, the effects of sin, and the redemptive work of Christ. This leaves adoptive parents and adoptive children without resources to turn to help them think theologically about their adoption experience.

Relational attachment, personal identity, and behavior problems are commonly experienced among adoptive families, and the doctrine of adoption underscores the significance of being placed into a permanent familial relationship, accentuates a person's identity as primarily one's union in Christ and promotes the relational responsibilities consistent with being adopted into God's family. Thus, the purpose of this dissertation is to argue that a theological understanding of adoption will help adoptive parents and adoptive children make sense of their adoption experience.

The remainder of this chapter is a brief review of the literature that provides

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the most pertinent information to theologically understand the adoption experience, starting with those resources pertaining to the doctrine of adoption then proceeding to a review of literature that addresses the practical aspects of the adoption experience.

Compared to many theological tenets, as stated earlier, very little is written on the doctrine of adoption. Most authors who have taken up the task make this observation in one way or another. We do find short paragraphs in some systematic theologies,[8] but for a thorough examination of the topic, little can be found. J. I. Packer's famous book, *Knowing God*, is most quoted by authors and preachers who teach on adoption. In that book, Packer invests one chapter on the doctrine of adoption, but his lack of quantity does not minimize the importance he places on the doctrine. Frankly, Packer asserts, "if you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his father."[9] The most substantive resources that take up a thorough study of the doctrine include Trevor Burke and David Garner.[10] These two books will be considered shortly.

Joel Beeke's book, *Heirs with Christ*, introduces the Puritan's teaching on adoption, illustrating how pervasive the doctrine was to their lives and ministry. Although, Beeke's primary purpose is to offer an apologetic for the Puritans, defending the accusation that they wrote little about adoption, he opens up a trove of literary resources on the doctrine and underscores the many years in history that the doctrine has received little attention. Robert Peterson's *Adopted by God: From Wayward Sinners to*

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[8] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996); Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998). The doctrine of adoption is missing from Harnack, Domer, Charles Hodge, Robert J. Breckinridge, W. G. T. Shedd, Thomas Chalmers, George Hill, and William Cunningham. Therefore, these theologians will not be consulted.

[9] J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 226.

[10] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*; Garner, *Sons in the Son*.

Cherished Children and Sinclair Ferguson's *Children of the Living God: Delighting in the Father's House* provide a pastoral perspective on how the doctrine can generally be applied and made practical for the people of God and even how the doctrine can connect a nonbeliever to the gospel. Dan Cruver helpfully aims the doctrine of adoption at the adoption experience as a necessary mean for the church to proclaim the gospel in both word and deed. Once again, noticeably lacking in the literature that discusses the doctrine of adoption in any detail, is the connection the doctrine of adoption has to the experience of adoptive parents and adoptive children. A survey of the literature renders only two resources that seek to connect the doctrine to the adoption experience; one written in 1983 and the other in 2007, both published in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling* (known as the *Journal of Pastoral Practice* in 1983).[11]

As mentioned, one of the more comprehensive treatments is by Trevor Burke. Burke provides a comprehensive treatment of the doctrine of adoption, where he discusses metaphor theory; explores the background to υἱοθεσία;[12] considers the roles of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; examines the moral implications of adoption, and its relationship with honor; and concludes with the consequences for Christian believers as they live in the tension between the "now" and the "not yet" of their adoption into God's new family. He argues that υἱοθεσία has been misunderstood, misrepresented or neglected through scholarly preoccupation with its cultural background. He contends that while the Old and New Testaments speak about the relationship between God and his people in many ways, the Apostle Paul in particular employed a rich vocabulary from which theologians have systematized the doctrine of salvation. Adoption (υἱοθεσία) is no

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[11] Stephen D. Doe, "Setting the Solitary in Families: The Bible and Adoption," *The Journal of Pastoral Practice* 6, no. 3, ed. Jay E. Adams (1983): 51-58; Julie Smith Lowe, "Counseling the Adopted Child," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 25, no. 1 (2007): 37-46.

[12] Υἱοθεσία is the Greek word translated as adoption in Rom 8:15 and 23, Gal 4:5, and Eph 1:5. The simple definition is to legally place a person into a filial position where such a position does not exist naturally.

exception.

Burke's thesis is "if adoption is important and distinct enough from other soteriological terms in the thinking and theology of Paul, then it is worthy of greater consideration. Rather than adoption regarded as on the periphery of Paul's theological agenda, it should occupy a more vital role in our theological reflection and understanding."[13] He examines how adoption has been misunderstood. He states that adoption was mistakenly conflated with justification (by, for example, stalwarts of Reformed theology such as Francis Turretin and Louis Berkhof and contemporary theologians such as Anthony Hoekema) and sometimes subsumed under regeneration (by, for example, Abraham Kuyper). Burke briefly demonstrates that previous scholarship on Pauline adoption has also erred by focusing too much on the background surrounding Paul's use of υἱοθεσία. While the background is undeniably important, this focus has left other vital aspects of Pauline adoption largely overlooked and unexplored. Burke widens the discussion and opens up fresh areas of debate.[14]

Burke examines the features and function of metaphor and argues that adoption is an important soteriological metaphor that adds nuances of meaning that are absent from other salvation metaphors.[15] Furthermore, Burke argues that adoption serves as an organizing soteriological metaphor for Paul. He goes on to explore the origin and background of Paul's adoption metaphor, examining the Old Testament, Greek, and Roman backgrounds.

The core of the book lies in chapters 4-6. Here, Burke exegetes the five Pauline texts where we find adoption (υἱοθεσία) to explore its theological significance. In chapter 4, he focuses on the role of God as Father, looking at Ephesians and Galatians 4:1-7 to

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[13] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 28.

[14] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 30.

[15] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 40.

illuminate Paul's understanding of the fatherhood of God and how it relates to Paul's adoption metaphor. In chapter 5, Burke examines the Christological emphasis of Paul's υἱοθεσία metaphor by looking at occurrences of "Son of God." He argues that the two ideas of the sonship of Jesus and the adoption of believers are at all times related. Every believer is adopted as a child of God through Jesus Christ.[16] The relationship is filial and permanent and is directly connected to one's union in Christ. Burke rightly demonstrates that it is highly difficult to talk about the adoption of believers without talking about their union with Christ.

Burke then turns his attention to the role of the Holy Spirit in the adoption of the believer as a son. He observes that out of the five New Testament occurrences of υἱοθεσία, the Holy Spirit is mentioned in four of them. Additionally, in two of the adoption passages (Gal 4 and Rom 8) the Spirit is set against the earlier backdrop of the Law. According to Burke, this is notable because of the hope expressed in the Old Testament for the Law to be fulfilled in the eschatological bestowal of Spirit and sonship. The hope of what is to come by way of inheritance, a right given to those adopted, is an essential theme in the doctrine.

Additionally, Burke analyzes the relationship between adoption and honor, examining first adoption and honor in antiquity and then looking at those themes in Romans and Galatians. In Romans, Burke argues that Paul's use of adoption as a metaphor is employed to stress the importance of the familial relationship between Jews and Gentiles and their shared honor of being members of the household of God.[17] Demonstrably, the Galatians deviated from the gospel. However, they also failed in their loyalty to their father, to whom honor was due.

Furthermore, Burke considers the eschatological tension of the adoption

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[16] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 124.

[17] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 176.

metaphor between the "already" (Rom 8:15) and the "not yet" (Rom 8:23). "The present era may be one of suffering, an aspect all adopted sons share with the suffering Son of God (Rom. 8:17), but the prospects are brighter and more glorious, for the day will dawn when the consummation of adoption—along with the whole created order—will take place."[18]

Burke concludes with practical life and pastoral implications the doctrine of adoption raises. Since people desire connectedness—the desire to be accepted and to belong, adoption's relational component makes it a doctrine useful to life and ministry.

> The alienation and the need to be connected is where the doctrine of Christian adoption comes in because it serves the purpose of underscoring how God has dealt with the question of our estrangement by taking us from being 'children of disobedience' (Eph 2:2) and placing us as adopted sons and daughters in his family.[19]

The doctrine of adoption teaches people about being wanted and belonging. This is intensely relational for all believers and shapes how adoptive families make sense of their adoption experience, especially for the adoptive child, who has the experience of being removed from one family and placed into another.

Burke shows how rich the metaphor and theology of adoption is for understanding the filial relationship between God and the believer. David Garner adds to that understanding. He provides an examination of the function of adoption in Pauline thought: its relationship to the doctrines of Christ, the Holy Spirit, eschatology, and union with Christ, as well as its primary place among the other benefits of salvation. Garner argues that adoption frames Pauline soteriology and defines the Trinitarian, familial context of redemption in Christ. He contends that if properly understood, the implications of the doctrine of adoption will extend deep and far.[20]

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[18] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 196.

[19] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 196.

[20] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 8.

Believers are adopted sons who are in vital union with Jesus Christ—they are sons in the son. Similar to Burke, Garner addresses the five Pauline instances of υἱοθεσία exegetically (Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5) and synthesizes his exegesis in terms of biblical and systematic theology, showing how the doctrine of adoption fits into the overall doctrine of salvation.

Garner argues that adoption is a comprehensive, rather than a partial, gospel reality. Adoption should not be viewed as one component in salvation, but rather as a doctrine that permeates the entire doctrine of salvation. Believers are united with Christ and that union with Christ is displayed beautifully through the adoption metaphor. Its richness is distinct from justification, sanctification, redemption, and regeneration because to be united with Christ is a filial reality through and through. Salvation is sonship, for "biblical grace is filial grace."[21]

Ephesians 1:5 is Garner's entry point for the discussion before he goes on to explore the background which explains Paul's use of υἱοθεσία. Even though Jews in OT times did not practice adoption and it is absent from Jewish law, Garner concludes that while it is not explicitly a legal act in ancient Israel, there are plenty analogous laws and concepts that are parallel to the Paul's concept of υἱοθεσία.[22] However, he does not rule out a first-century Roman background behind the metaphor.

Using a trinitarian template, Garner deals with Paul's use of υἱοθεσία seeking to determine what role the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit play in adoption. Garner provides a broad study of how the Father initiates one's adoption into the family, the filial relationship accomplished through union with the Son, and the guarantee of the Spirit that bears witness that the believer has come home.

Garner reveals the richness of the doctrine of adoption by showing how it fits

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[21] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 312.

[22] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 43.

the redemptive story of God from beginning to end. God's redemption is the fulfillment of his purposes and promises and he has acted throughout redemptive history, securing the attendant filial hope for the children of God, who, united in the Son, might experience and be secure in the fatherly love of God and his sovereign oversight of all things.[23] Garner asserts that salvation entails such a union with Christ that believers receive all the benefits of salvation instantaneously. Therefore, for Garner, adoption is the procurement of all that is Christ's, shared generously through the filial relationship that occurs with all its privileges and benefits, simultaneously at salvation.

Lastly, while Garner shows the richness of adoption through its thematic connection to redemption history, he also shows the connection adoption has to other systematic theologies. Adoption dynamically converges with Christology, pneumatology, and soteriology.[24] "These mutually interpreting theological categories vividly profile adoption and its integrative role in the application of redemption."[25] To separate them would be to minimize and dilute the richness of the doctrine of adoption. What is most helpful about Garner is that he does not constrict the doctrine of adoption. His concern for its richness is evident. He makes a solid contribution to the study by showing adoption's connection to the OT and God's dealing with his children for all of time and by showing its connection to and permeation of not only the doctrine of salvation in particular, but to other systematic doctrines in general. Garner shares the sentiment of

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[23] Controversially, Garner asserts that the believer's security in sonship is directly related to Christ's shared adoption at the resurrection. Believers cannot receive the adoption as sons unless Christ was first adopted for them: "Christ brings no privilege of eschatological (adoption) to believers if he himself has not attained eschatological sonship (adoption) himself" (*Sons in the* Son, 194). He dedicates a whole chapter to defending this view. This view does not represent the view of this author. The primary texts Garner uses are Rom 1:4 and Heb 7:28. A careful study of those passages will show that neither of those passages teach that Jesus was adopted at the resurrection. Rom 1:4 refers to Christ's accession to the eternal throne and Hebrews 7:28 refers to God's confirming Christ as High Priest.

[24] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 312.

[25] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 312.

John Calvin's last will and testament, "I have no other defence or refuge for salvation than His gratuitous adoption, on which my salvation depends."[26]

Burke and Garner provide a wealth of knowledge about Paul's use of υἱοθεσία—it's meaning, background, and connection to other doctrines. Joel Beeke, on the other hand, offers a historical analysis of the doctrine of adoption as it shaped the way the Puritans, in particular, lived out their Christian experience. He makes a solid contribution by showing how the rich doctrine of adoption shaped the way the Puritans perceived themselves and their circumstances. While his book is a historical analysis of the doctrine; it is filled with practical insight on the heart of adoption. Beeke argues that adoption does more than affect a believer's relationship with God; it also transforms his responsibilities. In other words, a conscious awareness of one's adoption should affect the way he lives. Beeke demonstrates how the Puritans urged the believer to live out his adoption in Christ in ways that should effect change in his relationships—his family, church, and the world. Jesus urges his disciples to conform their desires, thoughts, speech and behavior, being predominantly controlled by the conviction that God is now their father and they are his children. The believer lives his life in relation to his father, remembering that the Father has promised each child his kingdom. Beeke underscores the important role adoption plays in shaping the believer's identity.

The purpose for Beeke is to present how the Puritans "recognized adoption's far-reaching, transforming power and comfort for the sons and daughters of God."[27] He highlights, like most contemporaries writing on adoption, the lack of material on the doctrine. He puts forth the Puritans as those who collectively contributed much to the study of the doctrine. His first chapter presents evidence of Puritan writings to

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[26] Philip Schaff, *Modern Christianity, The Swiss Reformation,* History of the Christian Church 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1910), 829. Quoted in Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 314.

[27] Joel R. Beeke, *Heirs with Christ: The Puritans on Adoption* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), 14.

substantiate his claim. The bibliographical materials recorded in this chapter amount to more than 1,200 pages of writing on the doctrine of adoption.[28] Beeke provides for the modern researcher a trove of resources to examine in order to comprehend the depth of the doctrine of adoption and specially to appreciate the doctrine's application to life. He is astonished that, seeing how much study has been conducted on Puritan theology and seeing the importance the Puritans placed on the doctrine of adoption, more has not been done to examine the doctrine of adoption.[29]

Beeke goes on to underscore the Puritans' awe and wonder of adoption. They saw adoption as a transformative and valuable doctrine. "Spiritual adoption is the excellency and apex of God's salvation."[30] It is nearly synonymous with union with Christ and should be seen as an "overarching doctrine that embraces the whole of soteriology."[31] So much so is the overarching nature of the doctrine that, according to the Puritans, it is perfectly reasonable to see the adoption metaphor as valid for believers of both testaments.

Beeke also discusses how the Puritans distinguished the adoption from the other facets of soteriology. This is helpful to understanding how the doctrine of adoption is to be applied. Adoption is different from regeneration and the other facets of soteriology and knowing how they differ helps inform the adoption experience. For example, the Puritans taught that adoption is not justification. God forgives people and reconciles them to himself; this is justification. "But adoption is a richer blessing, because it brings us from the courtroom into the family."[32] Justification relates to God as

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[28] Beeke, *Heirs with Christ*, 13.

[29] Beeke, *Heirs with Christ*, 13.

[30] Beeke, *Heirs with Christ*, 17.

[31] Beeke, *Heirs with Christ*, 19.

[32] Beeke, *Heirs with Christ*, 28.

judge, whereas adoption relates to God as father.

Furthermore, Beeke traces the implications of adoption from the individual to his relationships. He rightly states, "The consciousness of personal adoption into God's family influences the entire life of the believer."[33] Therein lies the application to the experience of the adoptive parent and adoptive child. Their conscious awareness of being adopted by God should influence their understanding of the adoption experience. A conscious awareness of adoption transforms the way believers think and live.[34] Children of God must trust the Father for every need, living above fear, anxiety and the vanities of this world. They must show childlike reverence, love, and zeal for the Father. They must submit to the Father in every providence. Do not resist or complain when he disciplines. They must obey and imitate their father and love their brothers and sisters. They must cultivate a steadfast appreciation for their father's adopting grace. They must engage in the work of their father. Lastly, they must rejoice in being in their father's presence, for in heaven this joy and delight will be enjoyed forever. Thus, the child of God experiences peace and comfort coming from the assurance of their filial relationship, God's love, the readiness for duty, liberty in prayer, and victory over Satan. These implications instruct adoptive children how the doctrine of adoption helps them make sense of their unique experience. A believing adopted child is to pursue a conscious sense of his adoption in Christ, particularly living out that consciousness in his relationship to his parents and others.

What Beeke adds to the literature is not only a clarion call to study the doctrine of adoption, but an example of how the Puritans applied the doctrine to life and ministry. He brings to the forefront that the doctrine of adoption does not receive the attention it should and makes a case for why there is much to learn about its depth and practicality

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[33] Beeke, *Heirs with Christ*, 67.

[34] Beeke, *Heirs with Christ*, 93.

from the Puritans. In summary, the Puritans teach believers the importance of viewing life from the perspective that they are adopted, meaning that believers' adoption by God should influence the way they think about their experiences and their behavior. This helps believers better grasp the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the power of gospel holiness, the assurance of faith, the solidity of the Christian family, and the glory of the Christian hope.[35]

Another pertinent addition to the literature is *Reclaiming Adoption: Missional Living through the Rediscovery of Abba Father* by Dan Cruver, along with John Piper, Scotty Smith, Richard D. Phillips, and Jason Kovacs. Collectively, they add more to the biblical perspective of adoption and a theological underpinning to the experience of adoption. They explore Paul's teaching on God's adoption of sinners as a foundational component of missional involvement with the world and juxtapose his teaching with our cultural understanding of the experience of human adoption. They observe, "a proper theological grounding of horizontal adoption within vertical adoption has profound implications for our understanding of both aspects, and therefore; to the extent we can recapture theological balance regarding adoption, the church will be transformed and our witness to the world will be radically redefined."[36]

Cruver and the others provide a much-needed discussion on the doctrine of adoption. They connect how that doctrine should influence what the church and individuals do in response to the call to care for the orphans. This discussion is part of an overall resurgence of adopting, especially in America. Cruver, Russell Moore and others, including parachurch ministries devoted to bringing awareness to adoption and practical helps for adoptive families have grown exponentially in the last decade or so.[37] While

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[35] Packer, *Knowing God*, 198-207.

[36] Cruver et al., *Reclaiming Adoption*, 8.

[37] Ministries such as Together for Adoption (http://togetherforadoption.org), Tapestry Adoption and Foster Care Ministry (http://tapestryministry.org), Christian Alliance for Orphans

this literature necessarily contributes to the call for believers to care for orphans through adoption and underscores the connection of proclaiming the gospel through adoption, it does not provide much to fill the gap of connecting the doctrine of adoption to the actual experience of the adoptive parent or child. Nonetheless, it is useful to the study of the doctrine. Dan Cruver states:

> The ultimate purpose of human adoption by Christians, therefore, is not to give orphans parents, as important as that is. It is to place them in a Christian home that they might be positioned to receive the gospel, so that within that family, the world might witness a representation of God taking in and genuinely loving the helpless, the hopeless, and the despised.[38]

Thus, horizontal adoption illustrates vertical adoption, making the gospel visible to the world.

Cruver accentuates adoption as an eternity past decision. By God's grace, irrespective of our grievous imperfection, God enlarges the circle of communion that has eternally existed between the three persons of the Trinity through adoption. The joyful news of the gospel is that God brings us to share in the loving communion that he forever enjoys with his eternal and natural Son. Cruver states, "through adoption God graciously brings us to participate in the reciprocal love that ever flows between the Father and his Son. Not only is this the very heart of adoption; it is also the very heart of the gospel."[39]

Cruver continues his demonstration of God's great love by comparing believers to that of prodigals. People have gone astray and plundered all of God's good gifts. Thus, God shows his extravagant love by adopting prodigals into his family as his children. This, Cruver argues, is made possible only through the incarnation of Christ. Then, pertinent to people's identity as believers Cruver exposits their union with Christ,

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(http://cafo.org), Orphan Care Alliance (http://orphancarealliance.org), and Bethany Christian Services (http://bethany.org) have also done much to influence believers to adopt and provide needed assistance.

[38] Cruver et al., *Reclaiming Adoption*, 15.

[39] Cruver et al., *Reclaiming Adoption*, 27.

stating, "as a Christian, my primary sense of identity, my controlling sense of identity, is to be found in who Jesus is and who I am in relationship to him. In fact, only when my primary identity is in Christ can my true humanity be preserved."[40] Identity is a common experience of adoptive children. The mere fact that they are adopted gives way to the pervasive thinking they do not truly know their identity. There is a perceived link between human flourishing and knowing one's birth parents. However, the doctrine of adoption links one's identity as united with Christ as the primary cause for human flourishing.

Moreover, Richard D. Phillips expands on believers' union with Christ by underscoring the privileges of adoption, speaking to the important characteristics of relationship attachment. He names four privileges: (1) personal relationship, (2) personal care, (3) discipline and (4) inheritance. Furthermore, Scotty Smith accentuates the freedoms related to adoption. He does this, in part, by portraying the believer's condition prior to adoption. He likens adoption not merely as the removal from an orphanage of loneliness, but from the morgue of hopelessness.[41] He goes on to explain, "the freedom of adoption can be understood from three perspectives: the freedom of legal rights, the freedom of personal delights, and the freedom of a missional life."[42]

Additionally, Jason Kovacs discusses adoption as a visible demonstration of the Gospel and challenges churches to consider encouraging adoption as a witness to their surrounding communities. He briefly discusses the importance of equipping children's ministry, small group ministries and financial ministries for the task of supporting the needs of families within the church who adopt. He contends, "biblically, adoption and orphan care are not primarily something we do because we are infertile or

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[40] Cruver et al., *Reclaiming Adoption*, 49.

[41] Cruver et al., *Reclaiming Adoption*, 69.

[42] Cruver et al., *Reclaiming Adoption*, 70.

want to meet a great need. They are tangible demonstrations and pictures of the gospel—of God's adoption of us—put on display for the world to see and give glory to God."[43] So much more is this manifested in a family where the adoptive parents and adoptive children live out a theological understanding of their experience.

John Piper concludes by discussing the costs associated with adoption and touches on the suffering experienced by many parents who adopt.[44] Cruver and the others provide good clarity about the doctrine of adoption, but similar to how Beeke spoke of the Puritans, make an even more significant contribution by showing how the doctrine should influence believers' thinking and behavior. Again, they do not connect so much to the experience of the adoptive parent and child, but nonetheless, they do provide an example for how to connect theology to life and ministry, which is important to this study.

In summary, this survey of the predominant literature on the doctrine of adoption reveals four particular themes. One, it accentuates adopted believers' identity as primarily their union in Christ. Two, the doctrine of adoption underscores the significance of believers being placed into a permanent filial relationship. Three, there is an "already" and "not yet" aspect of adoption, whereby what believers experience in this life changes upon glorification. And last, it promotes the relational responsibilities of believers consistent with them being adopted into God's family.

Background on the Adoption Experience

The doctrinal themes of relationship, identity, and personal responsibility connect directly to the common experiences of adoptive families. For, a review of the predominant literature[45] on the experience of adoption yields three common themes: (1)

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[43] Cruver et al., *Reclaiming Adoption*, 86.

[44] Cruver et al., *Reclaiming Adoption*, 95.

[45] Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine, *The Connected Child: Bring*

relational attachment, (2) personal identity and (3) behavioral difficulties. However, other than Doe and Lowe,[46] no work has been done to make those connections to a biblical framework; and their work is limited to journal articles. Nothing of significant depth and length has been done. What there is are a number of resources that seek to explain the adoption experience from a mostly secular, empirical, and experiential perspective with limited biblical analysis.

The foremost piece of literature that addresses all three of those common themes of the adoption experience is *The Connected Child.* In 2007, Karyn Purvis and David Cross, research psychologists who specialize in child development, joined with journalist Wendy Lyons Sunshine in *The Connected Child* to offer a new approach[47] they created to help adoptive children.[48] According to Purvis, their book is not a Christian book as such, but Purvis plainly states that the "principles . . . are consistent with

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Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007); James Gladstone and Anne Westhues, "Adoption Disclosure Counseling as Perceived by Adult Adoptees and Biological Relatives," *Child Welfare* 71, no. 4 (1992): 343-55; Betty Jean Lifton, *Lost and Found: The Adoption Experience*, 3rd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); David Sanford and Renee S. Sanford, eds., *Handbook on Thriving as an Adoptive Family: Real-Life Solutions to Common Challenges* (Carol Stream, IL: Focus on the Family, 2008); Nancy Newton Verrier, *The Primal Wound: Understanding the Adopted Child* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 2003); Kara Carnes-Holt and Sue C. Bratton, "The Efficacy of Child Parent Relationship Therapy for Adopted Children With Attachment Disruptions," *Journal of Counseling & Development* 92, no. 3 (2014): 328-37; Sherrie Eldridge, *20 Things Adoptive Parents Need to Succeed* (New York: Delta, 2009); Laura Dennis, ed., *Adoption Therapy: Perspectives from Clients and Clinicians on Processing and Healing Post-Adoption Issues* (Redondo Beach, CA: Entourage Publishing, 2014). The topic of adoption yields no shortage of subtopics. Adoption of infants compared to older children, international adoption compared to domestic adoption, financial issues pertaining to adoption, what agencies to use; the list goes on and on. There are a number of resources that addresses these and many more issues pertinent to the practice of adopting. These resources will not be reviewed or referred to, because they do not pertain to this dissertation. However, one should appreciate the complexity of topics pertaining to adoption.

[46] Doe, "Setting the Solitary in Families"; Lowe, "Counseling the Adopted Child."

[47] Purvis was the Rees-Jones Director and co-founder of the Institute of Child Development at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, TX, and the creator of Trust-Based Relational Intervention, referred to as TBRI. A philosophy for healing harmed children, TBRI centers on earning trust and building deep emotional connections to anchor and empower them.

[48] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 1-2.

Scripture."[49] This section will recognize the contributions of Purvis' approach to the experience of an adoptive child, setting up later chapters to offer a biblical assessment of her findings.

As a researcher, Purvis demonstrates how a child's behavior, neurochemistry and life trajectory can change given the right environment. Many adoptive parents who marvel at her innate ability to playfully connect and see the real heart of a child revere her as a "child whisperer."[50] In just over a decade, the message and teachings of Purvis have increased exponentially to reach an audience spanning the U.S. and more than 25 other countries around the world. Her research and teachings have led to interviews and news coverage in *Newsweek*, *The Chicago Tribune*, The *Dallas Morning News*, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, *KERA Radio*, *Dateline NBC*, *Focus on the Family*, *Parents Magazine*, *Fort Worth Weekly* and countless other media outlets, blogs and webinars. Purvis' book appears to be the seminal work on helping adoptive parents and children understand their adoption experience.

Purvis argues that problems in the adoptive child's life cannot be solved by mere behavior modification.[51] The premise that Purvis and her colleagues operate from is that these adoptive children have been severely offended in relationships.[52] In the most critical time of their lives, adoptive children have experienced a trial at the hands of the very people that should have kept them safe, cherished them, and taught them about

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[49] Karyn Purvis, Michael Monroe, and Amy Monroe, *Created to Connect - A Christian's Guide to the Connected Child* (Empowered to Connect, 2010), 2, accessed August 19, 2019, http://empoweredtoconnect.org/created-to-connect-study-guide/. This is a companion resource developed to elucidate the biblical principles that serve as the foundation for the philosophy and interventions detailed in *The Connected Child.*

[50] This is mentioned in an obituary for Karyn Purvis at http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/dfw/obituary.aspx?pid=179622091, accessed December 27, 2016.

[51] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 3.

[52] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 23.

relationships. Because of this, adoptive children are unique from other children. As a result of their experience, their brains are wired differently from other children. Therefore, a different parenting approach is warranted.

According to Purvis, adoptive children are constantly living life in survival mode.[53] They are stuck in the fight/flight/freeze response and endlessly skeptical of their environment, on guard for anything that can hurt them.[54] They think they are solely responsible for meeting their own needs, rendering them helpless to trust anyone. This is especially true for children who bounce around the foster care system, and some who have gone through disrupted adoptions (the term for adoptions that don't work out), and have been abused. They have no physical memory of being cared for.

Therefore, Purvis argues that the healing cannot start at the behavior level of adoptive children. Rather, it must start at the core, which is the child's felt safety.[55] This is not merely telling a child they are safe, but constantly working on their internal feeling of safety. The adoptive parents constantly investigate, determining a child's triggers, trying to minimize those triggers. The solution is often found in keeping the child's environment as consistent and relaxed as possible. Adoptive parents must expose their adoptive children to new situations at their children's pace. Adoptive parents should emphasize eye contact, a non-threatening voice and demeanor, and lots of play even when correcting. Chiefly, adoptive parents should have a similar mindset that one would have when caring for a newborn. Purvis and the others say that due to a child's experience, a child may be physically age ten or twelve, but have the needs of a toddler.[56] Or be four or five but have the needs of an infant. It will take time to understand this, but

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[53] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 33.

[54] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 48.

[55] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 48.

[56] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 35.

according to the authors, once adoptive parents respond to the child's emotional age and needs, they will build a strong foundation.

To address this adoptive experience of relationship connectedness, personal identity, and behavioral difficulties, Purvis introduces Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) as a technique. The intervention is based on three main principles: (1) connecting, (2) empowering, and (3) correcting. They were developed specifically for adoptive children with extensive trauma histories. However, the intervention has not been implemented in many child welfare agencies due to its novelty. But, as mentioned previously, that has not kept the leading Christian adoption agencies and churches from embracing it.

The first TBRI principle, the connecting principle, states that in order to establish healthy relationships between adoptive children and their new adoptive parents, secure attachment must be formed.[57] Since children who have been abused or neglected in their previous home environments have a tendency to dissociate in response to even mild circumstances, establishing healthy relationships where adoptive parents are attuned to their adoptive children is vital. The connecting principle has two subcomponents: (1) awareness and (2) engagement. The awareness component centers on observing the child, recognizing negative behaviors and the feelings behind them, teaching the child to make and maintain safe eye contact, matching the physical position of the child to connect with them more deeply, keeping appropriate voice and inflection levels so the adoptive child understands what the adoptive parent means, and encouraging the child to process his feelings in the safest way possible. Likewise, the engagement component centers on actively listening to what the child has to say so he can form his own voice, forming nurturing interactions with the adoptive child so he can learn stable relationships for life, and using playful engagement to encourage trust and learning in the child.

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[57] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 16.

Second, the empowering principle follows the connecting principle and centers on addressing the physical and physiological needs of the adoptive child after initial attachment has been established.[58] The two subcomponents are (1) ecology and (2) physiology, with ecology centering on ensuring the child is in a safe environment and physiology centering on keeping the child's internal functioning as balanced as possible. Particularly, ecology looks at establishing felt safety. According to Purvis and the other authors, felt safety is when the adoptive child knows that he is safe in his environment. What this does, is ensure the adoptive child has predictability in his environment at all times. The focus of the physiology subcomponent is on using safe touch, so the adoptive child learns proper adult-child interactions, keeping the adoptive child properly hydrated, and making sure he receives the proper nutrition in his diet to reduce the persistence of hyperarousal responses.

The last of the three TBRI principles is the correcting principle, which aims to reduce the number of maladaptive behaviors displayed by the children and to correct them in a positive way when they do arise.[59] Its two subcomponents are (1) proactive strategies and (2) re-directive strategies. Proactive strategies concentrate on the emotional regulation of the adoptive child, verbally encouraging and praising the adoptive child as much as possible, teaching the adoptive child various life value terms in the form of short phrases to help him learn the core values of healthy relationships, and giving the adoptive child small choices whenever possible to help him learn the value of his own voice. Re-directive strategies are used when the maladaptive behavior has already begun and highlight giving the adoptive child choices for his discipline. This also includes giving the child re-dos, which are chances to act out certain situations again in a more positive way. This represents a chance for the adoptive child once he is calmer and reconnected

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[58] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 20.

[59] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 16.

emotionally with the adoptive parent to re-do the situation. So, if this started by a child throwing a toy instead of putting it away, the child would go back to the exact spot if possible and take the toy and put it away. If the adoptive child speaks unkindly to a sibling then the child would be given the chance to reenact the situation, but with kind words. Purvis and the others contend that by doing the correct actions or saying the right words the adoptive child will imprint on his brain the right behavior. Each of the three principles come together to form TBRI.

Much of what drives the development of TBRI is Purvis' belief that adoptive children need correction and to be taught right from wrong, but that traditional methods of discipline such as timeouts, sending children to their room, doing chores, lecturing, or even spanking will not work.[60] Moreover, according to Purvis, these practices would have the opposite effect, making the trauma worse. For Purvis and the other authors, adoptive children, due to their circumstances, require a different practice of parenting. What they contend is that there is a physical brain difference between adoptive children and children who have not gone through such trauma. Therefore, the circumstances determine a physical change in the child that requires an alternative approach to parenting, different from the parenting approach of those who are born into their families through natural means. Plainly, they contend that this is an effort to rewire the adoptive child's brain.[61]

Furthermore, Purvis argues that when a child is completely out of control most parents default to a timeout. Purvis maintains that this is actually the worst possible thing to do. She says that it takes a child who is in a very distressed emotional state and basically tells him to go calm down and come out when he can be calm and appropriate. Since these adoptive children, according to Purvis, have no ability to regulate their

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[60] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 13-15.

[61] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 9-10.

emotions, they need the relationship with the adoptive parent to help them. The recommendation is for a "time in" in which the adoptive child is told to sit close to an adoptive parent, within three feet.[62] The adoptive parent does not have to be solely focused on the child. In fact, Purvis contends that it is often better for them to do some task while the adoptive child is sitting. It is in this secure atmosphere that the adoptive child can process his emotions with the adoptive parent nearby and knows that no matter how bad things get he will not be sent away.

While *The Connected Child* leads the way in literature on the adoption experience, there are a few other authors that influence the thinking about adoption, especially about the relational connectedness and personal identity of the adopted child. Betty Jean Lifton is known as one of the original voices of what is now identified as the "Adoption Liberation Movement" of the 1970s. Contributing to the importance of an adopted child's self-perception, she advocated for access to birth records based on the adoptee's apparent and sometimes overwhelming need to know his or her origins in order to thrive. The belief is founded upon the idea that an adopted person thrives best when he knows his birth parents. He is incapable of perceiving himself accurately until he knows. Therefore, certain elements of the adoption process, like sealed birth records, hinder an adopted child from thriving, perceiving himself accurately. Thus, Lifton has been a powerful voice for open adoptions.[63]

In 1975, she chronicled her own search for answers about her birth parents in

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[62] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 102.

[63] Generally, open adoption refers to any adoption relationship between the adoptive family and birth parents in which identifiable information as well as contact are shared between both parties. Identifiable information may include first and last names, address, phone number, personal email address, and more. Contact may include contact before and after the adoption, including phone calls, emails, and visits. Some open adoptions are more open than others. Some of these adoption relationships do include personal visits agreed upon by both the adoptive family and birth parents, prior to them following the same adoption plan. Other open adoptions may just include periodic phone calls on holidays or birthdays.

her memoir, *Twice Born.*[64] Lifton, who was married to psychoanalyst Robert Jay Lifton, went on to become herself a psychotherapist, and she contributes to the understanding of the nuances of the psychology of adoption. This, she mostly does in her book, *Lost & Found.*[65] She further develops this psychological dimension in her later book, *Journey of the Adopted Self.*[66] Additionally, she has authored several children's books, among many other interdisciplinary contributions that revolve in one way or another around displacement and the search for identity.[67]

In *Twice Born*, Lifton explores her personal transformation as she engages in the search for her origins and her biological parents, *Lost and Found* represents her knowledgeable and critical voice, seeking to make sense of the adoption experience. *Lost and Found* depends largely on the testimonies of dozens of individuals—adoptees, birth parents, adoptive parents, adoption professionals—who shared their stories with Lifton. Lifton seeks to unveil the mysteries of adoption, carefully explaining the many challenges and intricacies of the adoption experience. The theme of the adoption experiences is that they emerge from an era of sealed birth records, which according to Lifton, has done much to disrupt the lives of those who are adopted.

Lifton provides helpful insight into how influential an adopted child's life story is to that child's perception of himself. For many, finding the truth about their story is complicated. Even after the records are pried open, adoptees realize that they are still part of a narrative that becomes, at times, even more complicated. Since 1979, more states

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[64] Betty Jean Lifton, *Twice Born: Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975).

[65] Betty Jean Lifton, *Lost and Found: The Adoption Experience*, 3rd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009).

[66] Betty Jean Lifton, *Journey of the Adopted Self: A Quest for Wholeness* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

[67] Jill R. Deans, "Review of *Lost and Found*," *Adoption & Culture* 2 (2009): 269-72.

allow adult adoptees access to their birth records and some level of openness in adoption is fast becoming standard in both public and private domestic adoption. For many adopted children today, the adoption experience is not met with as much mystery about their life story.

Similar to Purvis, Lifton contributes a wealth of observations made by adopted children, raising the issue of a child's broken sense of identity in relationship and the fallout in the child's responses in the present situation. Lifton uses many literary analogies to illustrate the darkness of the adoptee's life. She states, "even the adopted, themselves, do not always perceive the peril of the darkness within them."[68] Unlike Purvis, though, Lifton equates the brokenness experienced by adopted children to the mere experience of adoption rather than to those that may have troubling circumstances surrounding the adoption. For Lifton, the true perception of one's self is hindered in adoption and that parents must seek to help adopted children perceive themselves accurately through the discovery of their birth parents.

Similar to Lifton and Purvis, Nancy Verrier emphasizes the relational connectedness of the adopted child. And like Lifton, she proposes that the mere adoption experience is traumatic enough to affect the psychological health of the adopted child. Verrier provides insight into the experience of brokenness that does exist among every adopted child. For every adopted child is not connected to or living with the people who gave him birth. The effect that has on adopted children should not be overlooked. Verrier theorizes that severing the connection between the infant and biological mother through adoption causes a "primal wound," which often manifests in a sense of loss or depression, basic mistrust or anxiety, emotional and/or behavioral problems and difficulties in relationships with significant others, which in turn affects the adoptee's sense of self,

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[68] Lifton, *Lost and Found*, 5.

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self-esteem, and self-worth throughout life.[69] Thus, the mere experience of adoption magnifies the adopted child's broken sense of identity in relationship, resulting in a fallout in the child's responses to life.

She purports that the primal wound of an adoptive child is the devastation which the infant feels because of separation from his birth mother.[70] She contends that it is the deep and consequential feeling of abandonment which the adoptive child feels after the adoption and which continues for the rest of his life.[71] The mother of an adoptive child herself, Verrier argues that the newborn baby is already an observing perceptive human being.[72] She claims that the adoption experience can form the personality of the baby in many ways, but primarily the adoptive child either becomes very compliant and withdraws or else acts out and tests the limits of the adoptive parents' patience by being hostile, antagonistic, unappreciative and unaccepting of love which her adoptive parents usually are very willing to bestow.[73]

She believes that the adoptive baby goes through a period of grief or mourning because of the lost relationship with his biological mother. After grieving, the baby becomes numb and seemingly rejects his adoptive parents. This defensive action, which protects the baby's ego from further deterioration forms the personality of the adoptive child as he becomes indifferent and develops a need for control. The infant thus has difficulty with separations and in bonding with the adoptive parents since he feels that he must protect himself against the pain of rejection by rejecting the adoptive parents before

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[69] Verrier, *The Primal Wound*, 21.

[70] Verrier, *The Primal Wound*, 14.

[71] Verrier, *The Primal Wound*, 16.

[72] Verrier, *The Primal Wound*, 5.

[73] Verrier, *The Primal Wound*, 63-64.

he can be rejected for the second time.[74]

  While Verrier emphasize the relational connectedness, she, like Purvis, addresses the consequent behavioral challenges and presents various ways in which acting out can be manifested over time. As an adult, the adoptive child will have difficulty forming attachments and being intimate. He is no different from others who have undergone an early traumatic experience and might have problems with self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy and expectations of rejection, difficulty with separations, and difficulty in maintaining relationships, particularly intimate ones. One possible solution is to reunite the adoptive child with his biological mother, since, as Verrier argues, the adoptive child has an imperative need to search for his birth mother.[75]

  Part III is the largest part of the book. Verrier exposits the emotional effects of adoption and discusses the problems, but when it comes to recommending a form of therapy for the wounded adoptive child, she is silent. She does lament that so few therapists recognize the importance of prenatal and perinatal factors in affecting emotional development.[76] However, her purpose is not to offer solutions as much as it is to add to the understanding of the adoptive child's experience.

  Alternatively, David and Renee Sanford underline practical solutions. They co-edit the *Handbook on Thriving as an Adoptive Family.* Similar to the previous authors, they address the common three themes of relational connectedness, personal identity, and behavioral problems, but do so by providing practical resources and tools for adoptive parents from a more Christian perspective.[77] This anthology covers topics pertinent to families along the adoption continuum, encouraging those considering adoption to count

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[74] Verrier, *The Primal Wound*, 40-43.

[75] Verrier, *The Primal Wound*, 100.

[76] Verrier, *The Primal Wound*, 114-15.

[77] Sanford and Sanford, *Handbook on Thriving as an Adoptive Family*, 2.

the cost and for those who have adopted to understand the variety of issues confronting them or their children. The Sanfords specifically address topics such as attachment, child development, ethnicity, and grief as well as special challenges including trauma, sexual abuse, effects of prenatal exposure to substances, and physical and learning disabilities. They explore intervention options including neuro-feedback, medication, psychotherapy, discipline, sensory integration, and others. This book is from Focus on the Family and integrates secular and non-secular perspectives.

In summary, a review of the literature reveals that the doctrine of adoption has received little treatment. It is difficult to say when enough is ever written about any subject. However, according to the authors in this review, the doctrine of adoption and its practical implications for the believer's life, especially those who live the experience of temporal adoption, requires more treatment. Trevor Burke and David Garner offer the only comprehensive treatments and are both written recently. Beeke reveals that the Puritans wrote about it extensively, weaving it in and out of their writings; they do not provide a comprehensive study, but they do provide for us an example of how the doctrine of adoption affects pastoral ministry, personal conduct and relationships to others. Due to the lack of attention, it is easy to see how connecting the doctrine of adoption to the adoptive parents' and adoptive child's experience is lacking. Most of what has been done connects the doctrine of adoption to the church's responsibility for caring for orphans to proclaim the gospel message.

As previously mentioned, most of the literature that addresses the practical aspect of guiding one's experience of adoption relies heavily on the perspective that people are merely biological and neurological, giving little to no consideration to the immaterial soul of people and the effects of sin and the redemptive work of Christ. Additionally, they rely on empirical studies and people's own explanation of their experiences. This leaves adoptive parents and adoptive children without resources to turn to help them think theologically about their adoption experience. Relational attachment,

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personal identity, and behavior problems are commonly experienced among adoptive families and since the doctrine of adoption underscores the significance of being placed into a permanent familial relationship, accentuates a person's identity as primarily one's union in Christ and promotes the relational responsibilities consistent with being adopted into God's family. It is the purpose of this dissertation to provide a theological understanding of adoption as it pertains to the doctrine of salvation in Christ that will help adoptive parents shape the self-perception of their adopted children and help them make sense of their adoption experience.

CHAPTER 2

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *IMAGO DEI* AND ADOPTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to argue that embracing a theological understanding of adoption as an aspect of the doctrine of salvation in Christ helps adopted children in making sense of their adoption experience. In particular, the doctrine of adoption transforms the self-perception of the adopted child. In a later chapter, practical strategies are discussed for conveying this theological understanding to adoptive children that involve not just teaching, but modeling these truths. The purpose of the next two chapters, however, is to lay down the theological framework first.

Therefore, in this chapter, the purpose is to lay the groundwork for a biblical theology of adoption that may gradually shape an adopted child's self-perception by considering the *imago Dei*. Focus is placed on the importance of the *imago Dei* to comprehending the doctrine of Adoption, and particular attention is given to the implications the *imago Dei* has on the parenting of adopted children.

The *Imago Dei* and the Doctrine of Adoption

Scripture teaches that God in his own free will and predetermined plan, delightfully chose people for himself to be in a permanent filial relationship with him (Eph 1:4). This is due in large part to the essential nature and identity of the person as one created in the image of God. As such, a person is indeed a material being, but is also a spiritual and moral being,[1] possessing a dynamic system of wants, desires, motives, and

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[1] Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 217. For more information on the various ways interpreters have thought about the exact meaning of the image of God in human beings see W. Sibley Towner, "Clones of God: Genesis 1:26-28 and the Image of God in the Hebrew Bible," *Interpretation* 59, no. 4 (October 2005), 343-44.

thoughts that all shape how he perceives and interacts with the world around him.

The doctrine of adoption begins with Adam and Eve. They were created in the image of God as God's children, enjoying an intimate and filial relationship with their heavenly father. Yet with their fall, the image of God in them was marred and their relationship as children of God was lost. Adam and Eve became alienated from the presence of God. They and their subsequent children became the "sons of disobedience" and "children of wrath" (Eph 2:2-3). This is the condition into which all human beings are now born.[2]

Therefore, since man has sinned, he is certainly not as fully like God as was Adam and Eve at creation. Man's moral purity has been lost and his sinful character does not reflect God's holiness. "His intellect is corrupted by falsehood and misunderstanding; his speech no longer continually glorifies God; his relationships are often governed by selfishness rather than love, and so forth."[3] Thus, after the fall, man is still in God's image—he is like God and still represents God—but the image of God in man is distorted.[4] Solomon sums it up when he states that God made man upright, but that man now seeks out many iniquitous schemes (Eccl 7:29). While sin does obscure or distort relationships with God, people, and the way in which man perceives and interprets the world around him, being created in the image of God remains constant.[5] Thus, man constantly interacts with the world and his experiences, longing for relationships and

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[2] For discussions on the fallen condition of man, see Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), 533-664; Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 6 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 229-50, 269-304; John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill and trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 2. 1.1-13; Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 143-233; Charles Hodges, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 122-279; and John Murray, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

[3] Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 444.

[4] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 444.

[5] Towner, "Clones of God," 351-52.

seeking to understand and make sense of his world.

The marred and distorted image of God in man—his fallen condition—is the background to the doctrine of adoption. Without a marred image, without the loss of relationship as a result of sin, and the plunging of mankind into the family of Satan (1 John 3:10; Matt 23:15), there would be no need for adoption as sons through the redemption of Christ (Eph 1:3-10). Herein lies the climax of adoption—the image of God is renewed in his children through union with Christ.[6] Adoption is inextricably connected with the image of God and involves an intimate fellowship with God as father.

In redemptive history, Adam anticipated the permanent filial promises made to him. However, because of his failure, that glorious inheritance, confirmed righteousness, and perfect fellowship with God were lost to him and his progeny.[7] But in the grace of the gospel, union with Christ through adoption grants the filial life that Adam anticipated.[8] This comes by Christ's filial obedience and endurance of the curse. As Garner states, "the attained and attested sonship of the last Adam triumphs in two ways: it conquers the first Adamic curse and corruption while it successfully delivers the first Adamic filial purpose."[9] Adoption through the redeeming work of Christ delivers the permanent filial relationship anticipated by Adam. In essence, the adoption secured by Jesus obtains creation's goal.[10]

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[6] Calvin, *The Institutes*, 3. 6.1.

[7] David B. Garner, *Sons in the Son: The Riches and Reach of Adoption in Christ* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 257.

[8] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 257. Calvin succinctly sums this up as follows: "It cannot be doubted that when Adam lost his first estate he became alienated from God. Wherefore, although we grant that the image of God was not utterly effaced and destroyed in him, it was, however, so corrupted, that any thing which remains is fearful deformity; and, therefore, our deliverance begins with that renovation which we obtain from Christ, who is, therefore, called the second Adam, because he restores us to true and substantial integrity" in Calvin, *The Institutes*, 1. 15.4.

[9] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 257.

[10] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 257.

The *Imago Dei* and Union with Christ

Man was created in the image of God and that image was profoundly marred through Adam's disobedience, which resulted in the loss of the intimate filial relationship for him and his offspring.[11] The first Adam failed to uphold the covenant relationship between him and God.[12] However, the second Adam (Christ) succeeded.[13] Jesus is the perfect image of God (John 1:14; 14:9; 2 Cor 4:4; Phil 2:6; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3) and as such, fulfills all the covenantal requirements. Thus, those who believe, putting all their hope and trust in Christ for salvation, will indeed be saved, for Christ is the remedy and relief from the awful effects of sin.[14] It is because of the believers' union that he experiences adoption. Without one's union with Christ there is not the filial relationship, the permanent relationship, or the privileges and responsibilities of that relationship. As with every other spiritual blessing Christ is preeminent (Col 1:15-23).

This theme is inescapable in the context of the three prominent adoption passages.[15] Union with Christ is the sharing, identifying, and integrating of the believer in Christ. Sharing refers to the partaking in the events of Christ's story: life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Identifying captures the idea of the believer's position, status, and relationship in the realm of Christ and his allegiance to Chris's lordship. Integrating gathers up the corporate dimensions of membership in Christ's body: one family with God as father (Eph 4:4-6).

Union with Christ describes the relationship between reconciled and

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[11] Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 593.

[12] Calvin, *The Institutes*, 1. 15.4.

[13] Calvin, *The Institutes*, 1. 15.4.

[14] Edwards, *The Works*, 144.

[15] Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into God's Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 22, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 100. An exposition of the three prominent passages that use the metaphor of adoption for Christ's salvific work (Gal 4:1-7; Eph 1:3-14; and Rom 8:12-17) is presented in the following chapter.

regenerated man and the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ lives in every believer, and every

believer lives in him (Gal 2:20). This union was planned by God in eternity past (Eph

1:4) and begins at the point of salvation, continues throughout life, and then transforms

into an eternal resurrection in the presence of Christ (Rom 8:37-39; 1 Cor 15:12-58; 2

Tim 1:10; 1 Pet 3:18). It is supernatural, spiritual in nature, and complete. One's self-

perception is shaped by his union with Christ, for the believer's identity is inescapably

interwoven in Christ.[16] This supernatural mutual indwelling of the believer is captured

beautifully by Paul's use of the adoption metaphor, especially as it poignantly speaks to

the initiation of God to willfully and joyfully adopt his children and renews his image in

them.[17]

The *Imago Dei* and its Implications
for Adoptive Parents

Lastly, the *imago Dei* significantly shapes the way parents model a healthy

theological framework for their adopted child and Richard Lints brings a healthy and

important perspective to this discussion. Lints states, "too often theological treatments of

the *imago Dei* have oriented themselves towards accounts of human nature and less

towards human identity."[18] He contends that while theologians have every right to pursue

questions of human nature, the unfortunate consequence is that they then make the *imago

Dei* more conceptual and less practical.[19] He asserts that the image of God narrative (Gen

1–9) occurs in the contexts of a larger story about the relationship between God and man

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[16] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 121.

[17] Calvin, *The Institutes*, 1. 15.4. The next chapter will expound on the rich truths of the believer's adoption as the interwoven experience of his relationship with Christ.

[18] Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and its Inversion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 35.

[19] Lints, *Identity*, 35.

and thus it should not be turned into a "generic account of natural human attributes."[20] The relationship has to do with God's children's existence, their significance and their security. This is their identity in relationship as one created in God's image.[21]

Therefore, human identity is illuminated in the covenantal relationship of bearing the image of God.[22] The believer's significance and security are rooted in the covenantal claim that God is his creator and that his identity is grounded in a distinct relationship to him. Veritably, one only experiences his full humanity when he is properly related to God.[23] That distinct relationship arises because humans represent God in a way that nothing else in the created order represents him.[24] He promises to always be present among his people. He is redemptively present, he is protectively present, he is reconcilingly present, and he is permanently present, providing for his children all that they need. This he does, through his children, to glorify and represent himself to the world, for his children bear his image: that is their identity and that should profoundly shape and influence the way an adopted child perceives and responds to his experience.[25] The identity of the child in relationship to God as created in his image becomes the lens to see the two aspects of the child as created by God and how the adopted child gives expression to this "two-sidedness" of man.[26]

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[20] Lints, *Identity*, 35.

[21] For a brief review of the different views theologians have taken pertaining to the image of God see Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 520-31.

[22] Calvin, *The Institutes*, 3. 3.9.

[23] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 534.

[24] Lints, *Identity*, 36.

[25] This represents the unique relationship God's redeemed have as image bearers. This does not mean that the nonredeemed are not created in the image of God, but that due to sin and their active suppressing of the truth about God (Rom 1), they exchange the glory of God for the glory of the creature, thereby not experiencing this unique relationship. In essence, they reject their identity and seek to define their identity on their own terms.

[26] Hoekema, *God's Image*, 217.

Children Are Material Beings

Traditionally, as Jay Adams denotes, the "two-sidedness" of man refers to man as *dichotomous*,[27] which means "twice-cuttable."[28] However, because *dichotomy* tends to emphasize the disunity of the person, he prefers the term *duplex*. *Duplex* refers to being "twofold," which for Adams expresses more biblically accurate the unity of man.[29] The two elements are "folded" together. Hoekema mentions that some speak of man as *dualistic*, but that that has become ripe with problems, so he prefers the term *psychosomatic unity*.[30] Regardless of what term is used, the point is well made: man is a complex whole with two aspects of being that must be respected and addressed in order to properly understand his perceptions and responses to his life experience. Thus, parents must consider the unified and dual nature of their adopted child as created in the image of God as they seek to help restore their adopted child's broken sense of identity in relationship and the fallout in the child's responses in the present situation.

As created in the image of God, Scripture clearly teaches that man is a material being and a spiritual being; a psychosomatic union. Thus, both characteristics of one's identity rooted in the image of God must be addressed in order to understand how this theological framework should shape an adopted child's perspectives and responses. Scripture teaches that Adam was made "of dust from the ground" (Gen 2:7), thereby attesting to man's material nature. From the beginning man was in harmony and

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[27] For further study on *dichotomy* and *trichotomy* ("thrice-cuttable" typically as body, soul, and spirit) see Jay Edward Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resource Library, 1986), 94-138; Jay Edward Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 437-43; Hoekema, *God's Image*, 204-10; and G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 194-233.

[28] Adams, *Theology*, 110.

[29] Adams, *Theology*, 110.

[30] Hoekema, *God's Image*, 217. Hoekema is not the originator of this phrase. He mentions that John Murray, G. W. Bromiley, and Henry Stob also use that phrase to express the distinctive elements of man while not losing the unity of man.

identified with this world. One could say that man is earthy, from the earth.[31] Thus, man's essential earthiness must be kept in mind at all times when counseling[32] or parenting. According to Adams this means that blaming one's biology for inappropriate or sinful behavior must not be allowed.[33] The adopted child is expected and responsible to function in his body without excusing his bad behavior or even declaring he is incapable of good and appropriate behavior. However, that does not mean that biology does not influence and have an impact on a child's behavior. Man's material self was cursed following man's sin, and both the natural world and sinful flesh now cause problems for the adopted child.

Thus, if a child identifies inappropriateness or sin with the body alone, the parent must inform him of his spiritual and immaterial self that dynamically shapes how he responds to his circumstances. There is more than but not less than the child's biology that is making appropriate behavior difficult. "In fact, it is the sinful inclination of the heart that causes the aggravating habituation of the material body . . . that he struggles with."[34] These impairments never directly cause inappropriate behavior in a child and God's grace, as applied to and made abundantly available to all God's children, gives the adopted child all he needs to perceive and respond to life appropriately (Rom 5:20; 6:14; 2 Cor 9:8; Heb 4:16). Therefore, it is vital for adoptive parents to live out a proper theological understanding of their child as a material being; aware of the influence they have on their child's perspective and response to his experiences.

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[31] Adams, *Theology*, 105.

[32] Adams, *Theology*, 106.

[33] Adams, *Theology*, 106.

[34] Adams, *Theology*, 108.

Children are Spiritual Beings

  Man was made a material being with a robust and sophisticated physiology. However, as one created in the image of God, man's identity is that of more than a material being. Indeed, as Calvin contends, the proper seat of the image of God is in the spiritual being. "Though God's image is displayed in man's outward appearance, it cannot be doubted that the proper seat of the image is in the soul."[35] Thus, the image of God, which is made conspicuous by a person's speech and behavior, is spiritual. Care must be taken not to see man as exclusively one or the other, but a beautiful combination of body and spirit.[36] This helps adoptive parents see their child for who they are and care for their whole being, keeping in balance the inseparable and interwoven relationship between their bodies and their soul.

  As a spiritual being, though, man possesses a dynamic system of wants, desires, motives, and thoughts. Indeed, Adam was formed from the dust of the ground, but it was only when the breath of life was breathed into him that he became a living soul; a spiritual being. Adam as a living soul was not unique. In Genesis 1:21, 24, 30, the same is said about other, non-human living creatures. As Adams rightly observes, the unique point to note about man's creation is the manner in which God brought about this result.[37] He breathed into Adam the breath of life. This was personal and direct, distinct from the rest of creation.

  Distinct from all other creatures, created in the image of God, children are made to relate to God and represent him. As such, they possess the innate God-given ability to reason and respond responsibly to their experiences. Human identity entails intellect and conscience. Children have the ability to perceive their experiences with

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[35] Calvin, *The Institutes*, 1. 15.3.

[36] Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 218–19.

[37] Adams, *Theology*, 109.

reason and thought. They are then able to judge the fidelity of those perspectives through their conscience and then determine how best to respond to what they have perceived. When image-bearing is seen as the way a person lives, it leads directly and naturally to the heart of the Scriptures: "faith expressing itself in love" (Gal 5:6).[38] Accordingly, a child's identity as an image-bearer of God expresses itself in acts of faithful obedience worked out by a perspective that is informed by God's Word.

Distorted Perspectives Lead to
Inappropriate Responses

As a spiritual being, man is a moral being. Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 clearly speak to the undeniable connection of perspective and morality possessed by man to respond in appropriate and righteous ways. In Ephesians 4:24, Paul speaks of the renewal of God's likeness by putting on true righteousness and holiness. In Colossians 3:10 he adds the concept of full knowledge to these two items as a part of that renewal of the image. Likewise, these two verses make it clear that God's image in man is so distorted by the fall that man must renew it by having his mind renewed (Eph 4:23). The image of God is seen through the full knowledge, true holiness, and righteousness of God in man, making it clear that this image is moral and intellectual. Consequently, it is only in the believer that the image of God can once more begin to manifest itself. Only the adopted child of God can be morally acceptable to God.

Therefore, the image of God is a truth that implies that God holds man responsible for his behavior. God expresses his will for man and holds him accountable for violating it. This is sin and all have done it. As those created in the image of God, man is therefore held accountable for his sin. Only those who are redeemed are capable of assuming moral obligations to God. "Accompanying the ruin of the image of God was

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[38] Edward T. Welch, "Who Are We? Needs, Longings, and the Image of God in Man," ed. David A. Powlison, *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 13, no. 1 (1994): 34.

the ruin of human capacity for true knowledge, righteousness and holiness."[39] Consequently, it becomes the purpose of adoptive parents to teach and model for their adopted children the importance of their moral responsibility to God as they learn to perceive, judge, and respond appropriately to their experience, keeping in mind the identity of their child as both a material and spiritual being. This reshapes their thinking, their desires, and even retrains the innerworkings of their brain. The material/spiritual makeup of man is so interwoven that the material and spiritual components interact continuously; they cannot be separated without doing "violence to both."[40]

Image of God and the
Need for Counseling

The key to proper perspective and appropriate response to experience is counseling. Considering the fall of man and the subsequent distortion and in particular the broken relationships experienced by adopted children, the need for counseling appears obvious. However, what is vital to a proper theological framework is the fact that the need for counseling did not originate in the fall of man, but at creation. What being created in the image of God does not mean is that man was created knowing how to perceive and respond to the world around him. As Berkhof mentions, man was created perfect, but not complete; holy and righteous, but not as excellent as he could be. Obedience to God's counsel is the design by which man grows.[41]

From the beginning, man has depended upon counseling. He was created as a material and spiritual being whose very existence is dependent upon God to obtain knowledge and wisdom through revelation.[42] Man is not autonomous (Acts 17:28; Rev

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[39] Adams, *Theology*, 121.

[40] Adams, *Theology*, 15.

[41] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 209.

[42] Adams, *Theology*, 1.

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4:11). He needed God's Word from the outset. God's counsel was necessary to inform his perspective and his response to what he observed and experienced. By God's counsel Adam named the animals, cared for the garden, and worked with the trees. This preceded the fall. Man was made to be dependent on God's counsel for all his life, and who was capable of being developed by that counsel.[43]

Man needed counsel "to understand God, creation, himself, his proper relationships to others, his place and functions in creation and his limitations."[44] Man was created perfectly in God's image, but that does not mean that he was ever able to live on his own. For man to think he can go it alone without the counsel of God is the essence of what it means to rebel against God, which is the consequent fall out of the fall. It is this basic rebellion that lies behind, and is the occasion for, an even greater need for counseling. To encourage autonomy would be to generate greater problems and manifold human misery.

Thus, children are made in the image of God as material and spiritual beings who perceive the world around them and respond to their experience accordingly. Their perspectives were designed to be shaped ultimately by and through the agency of their parents. Hence, the godlier and healthier the perspectives taught and modeled for children, the greater the likelihood of them forming godlier and healthier perspectives, resulting in a greater understanding of their experience, which correspondingly manifests through their responses. However, when that design for godly, healthy modeling is uniquely broken through the experience of the loss of their parents, children's perspectives will be uniquely hindered.[45]

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[43] Adams, *Theology*, 3.

[44] Adams, *Theology*, 1.

[45] For further study on the *imago Dei* see John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015); John F. Kilner, "Humanity in God's Image: Is the Image Really Damaged?," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 53, no. 3 (2010): 601-17; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 202-10; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 442-50; Adams, *Theology*, 105-38; Charles

Biblical Parenting Priorities and Goal

        The unique experiences brought about by the fall of man underscore the need for counseling in general, but also the need in particular; such as the need for counseling adopted children how to perceive and respond to their experience. Adoptive parents who wish to take up the unique task of parenting a child with a uniquely hindered perspective of himself, of relationships, and of God himself must approach a child seeking to understand specifically how that child's perspective is skewed, remembering that the skewed perspective of the child involves both the personal sinfulness that all children (and adults) share as well as the specific errors they absorbed from their situation. This means that all discipline and instruction must be conducted with patience and compassion, knowing the difficult state brought about by the adopted child's unique experience of brokenness.

        Parents' duty to shape their child's perspective. Delightfully, though, Scripture is surprisingly straightforward in its teaching about parenting. God's guidelines for parenting are never cryptic or mysterious and not at all complex or cumbersome. Moreover, it is the duty of all believing parents to place themselves under the authority of God's Word and to model God's principles in their families. Every detail of life is a teaching opportunity, and Scripture expressly commands parents to make the most of those opportunities (Deut 6:7), for parents are God's ordained agents for teaching and modeling godly and healthy perspectives and responses to life.

        While this is a rightly intimidating endeavor, it is also a great privilege to live out the great doctrine of adoption, especially as it emphasizes God's affection and grace toward believers to transfer them from the family of the devil to his family as legitimate children of God, experiencing a restored relationship through the work of Christ to

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Lee Feinberg, "The Image of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129, no. 515 (1972): 235-46; Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 11-101; and Berkouwer, *The Image of God*, 8-233.

redeem them, which duly shapes one's perspective and response in a godly and healthy way. Consequently, believers enjoy an intimate relationship with God with the privilege of approaching God and addressing him as father. Naturally, they are made heirs and are gifted with the Holy Spirit, guaranteeing them that they will one day inherit alongside Christ all the spiritual blessings of God. In the meantime, the children of God live secure in their filial relationship with God, severing all ties to their former family with no obligation to live any longer according to the deeds of the flesh, but rather according to the Spirit. God the Father is the initiator, Jesus Christ is the redeemer, and the Holy Spirit is the guarantee. From beginning to end, the adopted relationship is initiated, accomplished, and secured by God himself.

Parents, created in the image of God, must also rely on the counsel of God to perceive rightly and respond to their experience of parenting an adopted child. It is from that outlook that a practical approach to parenting develops. Certain doctrinal guidelines determine how they perceive knowledge, themselves, and their children. The Bible shapes their epistemology. God's revelation is prioritized over their own reason and intuition, and over what might be discovered through empirical studies. This does not mean they discard reason and intuition or avoid what can be learned through empirical studies. It means that they will subject all knowledge to the authority of God and his Word. They recognize their own sinfulness and need for a savior and similarly they recognize this in their children. They see their children as moral agents, created in the image of God, and comprised of material and immaterial. Indeed, they have a biology and neurology, but they also have an immaterial soul that also needs parenting.

In addition to doctrinal guidelines, there are certain practical guidelines that help parents formulate their practice. How are problems defined? How are problems solved? How important is the spiritual component of the child when it comes to behavior? What is the goal of parenting? And, what is their role as parents? Again, these questions are answered as the parents seek wisdom in Scripture, and the answers to these

questions along with the doctrinal guidelines will shape the parents' practice. Parents live out what they believe and as they dynamically live out the doctrine of adoption, they provide the framework for bringing restoration to their adopted child's self-perception and that will naturally affect the way the child perceives his circumstances and responds to them.

Parent's priorities as agents to shape their child's perspective. The task of parenting can be intimidating. Undoubtedly, it is a weighty responsibility. How parents nurture and teach their children will continue to influence them even when they are old (Prov 22:6). Parents place their imprint on their children for life. No wonder so many believing parents are daunted by the task God has given them, and adoption can make it even more daunting. Nonetheless, parenting is meant to be a joy; a rich source of blessing.

Therefore, believing parents have a particular goal in mind: to be a faithful instrument in God's hands for actively bringing up their children according to biblical principles. To be a faithful instrument is based upon two factors: God's view of man and God's directions for parents. Scripture is clear that man was created good, for God says that his creation of man along with the rest of creation is "very good" (Gen 1:31). However, due to the fall (Gen 3) man is now born inherently sinful from birth (Ps 51:5; Eccl 7:20; Isa 53:6; 64:6; Rom 3:10-11, 23; 5:12-14; 7:18). This means that every man's perspective and responses to his experience is stained by sin. Every child's will, mind, affections, emotions, and behavior are affected and tainted by sin. No area or aspect of human nature is untouched by sin and its effects. No child must be taught to lie, be selfish, or do wrong. These all arise naturally from their sinful hearts (Gen 8:21). Every child is wholly fallen and hence wholly in need of redemption. And, the compassion of parents for their adopted children is based on their child's unique experience of adoption, but is very much based on the child's fallen nature. Thus, they must be taught about God,

his nature, his law, his love, and his forgiveness. They must be taught to trust Jesus Christ as their own savior and Lord. This represents the child's greatest need.

Furthermore, due to the dichotomous nature of their children, parents must navigate the inseparable, yet distinguishable, psychosomatic union of their children. This means that parents parent their children with a perspective that their children are responsible for their sins. In doing so, parents consider the impact their children's experiences and biology have to condition their child's perception. Additionally, the immaterial aspect of their child is not overlooked. Scripture teaches that the heart of man is the control center of his life. VanGemeren notes that in the OT, the words לֵב and לֵבָב (translated "heart" and "mind") have a dominant metaphorical use in reference to the center of the entire inner life of a person.[46] In Genesis 8:21 the heart of man is seen as the seat of the intention of man and is described as "evil." In Proverbs, man is told to guard his heart with "all vigilance." He is to mount the strongest of security over what thoughts, desires, or intentions he entertains. Such effort is required, because it is from the heart of man that "flow the springs of life" (Prov 4:23). Likewise, in the NT, the use of heart (καρδία) can refer to the center and source of the whole inner life of man, including his thinking, intentions, and passions.[47] Jesus describes man's own defilement as that which proceeds from the heart of man. Every evil thought and act of unrighteousness proceed from within (Mark 7:21ff). Similarly, James uses the term to describe how the temptation to sin operates. It is not the object per se that tempts one to sin, but the desire and affection one has for the object. Man is "enticed by his own desire" (James 1:14).

Thus, how one perceives, interprets, and eventually responds to his experience resides in his heart and is conditioned by his sinful nature, biology, and experiences.

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[46] Willem VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 74.

[47] W. Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 508.

Therefore, due to its importance, parents must not overlook the heart of their child, considering also the effect the child's biology and experiences have had on him. Believing parents must be concerned about helping their children understand their sin and how it reveals a heart that is deceitful and desperately sick (Jer 17:9). They must see the tragic outcome of sinfulness and then see the remedy through the cross of Christ (Rom 6:23; 2 Cor 5:15; 1 Pet 2:21-25). However, issues of the heart do not cease to exist when a child is saved. Children must learn how to continue addressing the issues of their hearts through confession, repentance, and obedience to God's Word, leading to sanctification and holiness.

Therefore, believing parents must focus on Christ and seek to keep salvation and sanctification in front of their children at all times. Believing parents need to lead their children to continually face up to their own sin and turn to Jesus through faith in his death and resurrection as their only hope (1 Cor 15:3-5). It is only in Christ that the child who has experienced conviction of sin may find hope, forgiveness, salvation, and power to live in a manner which is pleasing to God. And only after regeneration does the indwelling Spirit shape the child and manifest spiritual virtue and the genuine fruit of the Spirit. Since parenting is not just concerned with the child's behavior, but with his salvation and sanctification, then believing parents must understand how to go about reaching that goal.

Parent's methods to help shape their child's perspective. In Ephesians 6:4, Paul says that parents must bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This is the biblical directive that will help parents reach their goal of being faithful, godly parents. Certainly, parents are not infallible, but they are their child's primary God-given authority and source of training. The idea of bringing up a child is to bring them to

maturity, to provide for them, and support them.[48] Parents must take the initiative to work hard with steadfastness to instruct and discipline their children, training them toward Christ-like maturity.[49] As seen earlier, this is one of the great privileges of being in a filial relationship with God. Believing parents systematically train their children, using rules, guidelines, restrictions, rewards, correction, and structure. It is this training that establishes a framework upon which good habits of wise living can be built.

All children are born with the need for counsel. Naivete is an integral component of man's finitude and children are especially vulnerable, making great the need for trustworthy and faithful parents. They lack understanding, are gullible, and many times rush headlong into evil (Prov 1:4; 7:7; 15:5; 22:3). Discipline and correction must be done in such a way that helps a child learn that choices bring consequences. Correction includes opposing their children when their children are doing wrong. It could be described as conflict with a purpose. It is indeed an unpleasant experience, but it is one that must be done out of love for the child, otherwise the child goes his own way unabated, which inherently leads to a life of death rather than life (Prov 14:12). This is carried out with gentleness, humility, and compassion. It is very important for believing parents to remember, though, that discipline is not only for the purpose of shaping a child's behavior. It is also a means by which a parent points a child to his need for Christ. When a child fails to live up to the standards which he has taught, it is an opportunity to explain his need for a Savior.

Instruction is another aspect of active and continuous parenting. Unlike the general term discipline, instruction is more specific. It carries the idea of putting into the

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[48] Georg Bertram, "Παιδεύω, Παιδεία, Παιδευτής, Ἀπαίδευτος, Παιδαγωγός," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 5:596.

[49] Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 748.

mind of someone.[50] Through verbal admonition, encouragement, advice, and warning, parents instruct their children about the character and deeds of God and what he requires of them. God's Word is the tool he gives us to teach our children, and with it we appeal to them when they stray from what is right. This is what makes parenting "of the Lord." Parents teach their children about God's great attributes and what their response to him should be. Believing parents also bring the truth of God's Word to bear in their children's trials, difficulties, and disobedience. Scripture is a powerful tool which convicts the person at the deepest level—the "thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). believing parents appropriately balance between discipline and instruction.

Summarily, as children of God, believing parents dynamically live out the doctrine of adoption by prioritizing their relationships: to Jesus, each other, and their family. They also do so as they seek to please God by being faithful in actively bringing up their children according to biblical principles, helping shape their child's perspective of self, relationships, and experience. This is founded on God's view that all people, including their children, are created in the image of God and marred by sin, and in need of counseling. It is also founded on God's design that they are God's ordained agents to help shape their children's perspectives, and therefore are to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This twofold approach is not for the purpose of merely conforming their children to certain external standards of behavior. Believing parents never neglect the heart of their child. They see their child holistically as one created in the image of God with an immaterial component as well as a material component, sensitive to and aware of the mutual affect these components have on each other. Meaning that parents consider their child's biology and experiences as having

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[50] Johannes Behm and Ernst Würthwein, "Νοέω, Νοῦς, Νόημα, Ἀνόητος, Ἄνοια, Δυσνόητος, Διάνοια, Διανόημα, Ἔννοια, Εὐνοέω, Εὔνοια, Κατανοέω, Μετανοέω, Μετάνοια, Ἀμετανόητος, Προνοέω, Πρόνοια, Ὑπονοέω, Ὑπόνοια, Νουθετέω, Νουθεσία," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:1019.

some effect on their child's heart—his thoughts, desires, and motives. Thus, parents depend on the Lord and his Word at all times in all situations, and with biblical discernment, they willingly utilize other resources that may prove helpful to understand specifically how their adopted child's perspective is skewed and how best to teach and model godly and healthy perspectives. The theology of adoption laid out in the following chapter can help to remedy the errors of perception an adoptive child may suffer from— not merely as simple facts to teach, but as experiential knowledge to model.

CHAPTER 3

VITAL ASPECTS OF THE DOCTRINE OF ADOPTION
AND SELF-PERCEPTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to argue that embracing a theological understanding of adoption as an aspect of the doctrine of salvation in Christ helps adopted children make sense of their adoption experience. In particular, the doctrine of adoption transforms the self-perception of the adopted child. The purpose of this chapter is to continue laying down the theological framework by presenting a biblical theology of adoption that may gradually shape an adopted child's self-perception through the exposition of the three primary texts that address the doctrine of adoption. A background study of adoption in biblical times with an emphasis on the Roman family experience is presented, along with an exegetical study of υἱοθεσία. This is accomplished by analyzing and expositing the three main passages where υἱοθεσία is used: Galatians 4:1-7; Ephesians 1:3-14; and Romans 1:15-17. Certain themes of adoption are developed from these passages: (1) filialness with God; (2) permanent nature of adoption; and (3) the "already" and "not yet" experience of salvation that all hang on the adopted child of God's union with Christ. Additionally, it is argued that the intent of these passages is to help the believer better develop their self-perception, resulting in a better understanding of their experiences and how to respond to them.

Adoption and Filialness with God (Gal 4:1-7)

Paul's use of the metaphor shows up in his letters to the churches in Ephesus, Galatia, and Rome. Where does one begin to understand then the doctrine of adoption? Garner contends that there is some merit to begin with Romans due to the rightful

conclusion that eschatology shapes adoption.[1] The climactic moment of resurrection and the consummation of salvation do indeed determine the present experience of adoptive sonship. Of the five occurrences of υἱοθεσία two of them appear in Romans 8 and the third occurrence exists in Romans 9. However, Garner warns that to begin in Romans eight and nine would cause one to misunderstand the fullest meaning of how Paul uses the word. He concludes that Paul's theological perspective on adoption does not derive first from Israel's redemptively rich sonship, which Paul alludes to in Romans 9, but rather from Adam himself. Much of Garner's argument about the richness of adoption is based on the covenant God makes first with Adam then reaffirms throughout Biblical history.[2] Due to this, Garner contends that starting in Romans, especially chapter 9, would force a "regressive thematic analysis," considering Israel's sonship in advance of or even to the exclusion of Adam's.[3] Considering the basis of Paul's thought in his epistle to the Romans and the context surrounding υἱοθεσία in Ephesians and Galatians, starting in Romans appears to be problematic.

Moreover, the context of Romans 8 has more to do with the way the child of God should perceive his present life due to his filial relationship to God in hope of his future glory in Christ. Romans 8 displays the "already" and "not yet" tension of adopted children of God, which is discussed later in this chapter. Galatians 4 highlights the overall richness of adoption as a filial relationship to God as father with the consequential benefits of connectedness and intimacy, whereby Ephesians 1 emphasizes the permanent quality inherit to adoption due to the predetermined plan of God and his faithfulness to fulfill what he determines to do. Furthermore, as Garner points out, the redemptive and

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[1] David B. Garner, *Sons in the Son: The Riches and Reach of Adoption in Christ* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 12.

[2] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 5.

[3] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 14.

Christological themes entailed by adoption in Ephesians 1 and Galatians 4 supports one of them as the beginning point. Since Pauline's soteriology rests squarely on the person and work of Jesus Christ and the believer's union with Christ through adoption; the Galatians passage, being the most Christological of the two, serves well as an entry point for studying the doctrine of adoption. Another reason to start with Galatians could include the fact that Galatians precedes Ephesians and Romans chronologically, but the filial and Christological emphasis of adoption in Galatians makes it most appropriate.

Connectedness of a Restored Relationship

Again, the purpose in this chapter is to lay down the theological framework before discussing practical strategies for conveying this theological understanding to adoptive children. The first element of that framework is the connectedness of a restored relationship through adoption. The primary message of Paul's letter to the church in Galatia is the message of believers' spiritual freedom, their deliverance by Christ from the bondage of sin and religious legalism. Paul is passionately concerned about the matter of gracious salvation in Christ and about the violent attacks on the gospel being made by the Judaizers (Gal 1:6-7). Of tremendous concern is that the very heart of the gospel is being undermined by false teachers. The gospel of grace was being squashed, and in its place was offered the gospel of works, which is no gospel at all but a distortion of God's truth that leads rather to damnation than salvation. Like the false teachers about whom Paul warned the Ephesian elders, the Judaizers arose from within the church itself, "speaking twisted things" and trying "to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). These false teachers were causing great confusion in the churches and were seriously distorting the gospel of Christ (Gal 1:8). They were teaching that Gentiles must become Jews by circumcision before they could become Christians and that all Christians, Jewish and Gentile alike, were righteous before God only if they remained bound under the Mosaic laws, regulations, and ceremonies.

Thus, the true freedom from sin and bondage coming only through the redeeming work of Christ is the chief theme of Galatians. Paul addresses spiritual freedom, in particular in chapter 4, emphasizing the connectedness of a restored relationship that God's adopted children have with him as father through the redeeming work of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit to confirm the filial relationship. In chapter 4 Paul is continuing an argument that he began in chapter 3 where he proclaims that believers are children of God by promise as a gracious gift and not by the righteous works of the Law. Believers are offspring of Abraham (Gal 3:7, 16) in Christ (3:14, 16, 19, 22, 24, 26-28), and so heirs (3:18) of the promise given to Abraham (3:8-9, 14-22). Within the order of promise, the Law functioned as a temporary restrictive measure until the coming Christ. Paul was thus able to draw out the powerful corollary: to submit now to the rule of the law was to revert back to a previous juncture of God's purpose, and so to return to a more limited and unnecessarily restricted status before God (4:1–11).[4]

Continuing his fundamental argument that salvation is not gained by man's merit or works but solely by God's sovereign grace working through man's faith, Paul further develops the analogy of a child becoming an adult that he began in chapter 3. In chapter 4 he compares the position and privileges of a child to those of a slave, with the figures of child and slave representing life under the Law and the figures of adult and son representing life in Christ. Paul contrasts believers before salvation, when, whether Jew or Gentile, they were under the Law, and after salvation, when they are in Christ. The crucial truths of chapter 4 verses 1-7 are that life under Law is designed by God to be preparation for divine sonship and that trust in his grace brings realization of that sonship.

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[4] James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: A & C Black, 1993), 209-210. In effect, Gal 4:1-7 constitutes a recapitulation of the final section of the preceding argument (3:23-29). See Dunn's chart comparing 3:23-29 with 4:1-7 on page 210.

A disconnected relationship "under the law." Paul emphasizes the disconnected relationship that exists between man and God throughout his writings (Rom 3:9-19, 5:10; 1 Cor 6:9-11; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 2:1-3; Col 3:5-7; Titus 3:3-6). Here he emphasizes that, although God predetermined before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4) who he would adopt, the effective relationship that exists prior to the effectuation of God's purpose to adopt is characterized by a disconnected relationship. Using a legal illustration, which he then goes on to develop and apply in verses 3-7, Paul describes that while a child, the heir (who is the owner of everything) is no different in relation to the family than a slave. Paul was undoubtedly thinking of the *patria potestas* (Latin for "power of a father") in Roman law, the absolute power which the head of the family exercised over his household including all persons and property.[5] Patria potestas differed little from the ownership of slaves. As such, children were not allowed to own anything, but the father might allow a child (as he might a slave) certain property to treat as his own, but in the eye of the law it continued to belong to the father.[6] This equivalency of status between child and slave is one which Paul will draw out in the succeeding verses (4:3, 5, 7, 8-9). Simply put, what Paul is bringing to believers' attention is their lives before faith in Christ, before the actualization of adoption through Christ's redemption. Until the heir attains to the age stipulated by the father, "he is heir de jure (by right) but not as yet de facto (in fact)."[7]

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[5] Dunn, *Galatians*, 210. For further study on "patria potestas" see Edward W. Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience, and the Adopted People of God: Understanding the Pauline Metaphor of Adoption in Romans as Authorial Audience* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), 116-22; R. W. Leage, *Roman Private Law* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 95-127; and H. F. Jolowicz, *Roman Foundations of Modern Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 142-61.

[6] Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience*, 117.

[7] William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Galatians*, in vol. 8 of *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 156.

For the time being the heir is under guardians, to whose care he has been personally entrusted, and under managers (often slaves) to whom the oversight of his estate has been committed. In chapter 3, Paul likens the law to a prison warden (v. 23) and a tutor (v. 24). Now in chapter 4 Paul states that, under law, they are heirs, but because they are under age they are still regarded as minors and that they are no different than a slave. Their relationship with God prior to faith was not what it was to be through adoption. But the significant event that brings this period of supervision to an end is not the maturation of the child but the sovereign act on the part of the Father. This change in the relationship is brought about by the action of the Father, who himself decides to terminate the child's situation and adopts believers into his family.[8]

It is in verse 3 that Paul connects the analogy to believers. Since their position was only known to God believers are likened to heirs (legitimate children of God) who were no different than slaves, "enslaved to the elementary principles of the world." There is much discussion among commentators about whether Paul is referring primarily to his Jewish or Gentile audience.[9] Rather than seeing it as one or the other, Dunn argues for both the separation and inclusion of Jews and Gentiles. He contends that while children would ring true with Jews, enslavement would ring true with Gentiles. He suggests that the "we" (as in 3:23-25) refers primarily to Paul's fellow Christian Jews. However, there

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[8] Trevor J. Burke, *Adopted into God's Family: Exploring a Pauline Metaphor*, New Studies in Biblical Theology, vol. 22, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 86.

[9] See F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982); Dunn, *Galatians*; Henriksen and Kistemaker, *Commentary on Galatians*; Timothy George, *Galatians*, New American Commentary, vol. 30 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994); R. N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 41 (Waco, TX: Word, 1990); Charles Spurgeon, *Galatians*, *Spurgeon Commentary Series*, ed. Elliot Ritzema (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013); J. B. Lightfoot, ed., *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations*, 4th ed., Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament (London: Macmillan and Co., 1874); and R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937). Each contend that knowing the audience to which he is referring sheds light on what Paul means by "elementary principles of the world."

also seems to be a transition in thought (like in 3:14), in which the "we" also has in view all those who have received the adoption and Spirit of sonship, including Gentile Christians. This was possible because Paul had already made the link of child and slave (4:1), so that he could move from the thought of childhood (most appropriate for his fellow Jews) to the thought of enslavement (most appropriate for Gentiles).[10]

Since Paul's audience are believers and that he has already explained the union between Jew and Gentile, it seems unnecessary to put any emphasis on what words might ring true to one group over the other and simply see that Paul is referring to believers composed of both Jews and Gentiles who, living in the current Roman culture, would understand the analogy Paul is using. So that, they would understand that just as a child is governed by rules and regulations, so also before the dawning of the light of the gospel, believers were in bondage to "the elementary principles of the world."[11]

Στοιχεῖον ("elementary principles") refers to the basics of any system. It refers to the basic elements of the world (earth, air, fire, water), basic principles of doctrine (Heb 5:12), fundamentals of learning, and the elementary principles of astronomy.[12] Here, Paul uses the term to refer to the elementary teachings pertaining to rules and regulations, by means of which both Jews and Gentiles attempted to achieve salvation. Paul's concern throughout Galatians is that the believers are abandoning the message of the gospel—salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. There was nothing wrong with the law, but when the people believed that strict observance of the law was the way whereby

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[10] Dunn, *Galatians*, 212.

[11] For a detailed study of this concept see William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*, in vol. 6 of *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 108-10, 130-37.

[12] W. Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 946.

salvation could be achieved, the law became their tyrant, to which they became enslaved.[13] This rung true among the worshipers of pagan deities as well.[14]

What must not be missed, though, is the status, nature, and identity of these believers prior to their conversion. They were not orphans, per se, they were children of another father. Just as the most common practice of Roman adoption was that of one father adopting as his own the son of another father, so too is the case of spiritual adoption. Prior to adoption believers were the children of their father, the devil (Matt 13:38; John 8:44; Eph 2:1-3; 1 John 3:8-10). Believers were separated from Christ and alienated from God. They were far off from God and enemies of God. They had no hope in this world. Adoption changed all that (Eph 2:11-22).

A restored relationship through adoption. But, when the time sovereignly appointed by God came, the children of God were liberated; redeemed and adopted. The time came as set by the Father to bring about the realized relationship. God sent Jesus Christ to effectuate the change and bring about what God had already planned to do. God sending his son ushers in and effectuates his predetermined plan to adopt his children and make them his own. In these verses Paul connects the words "heirs," "children" and "sons," including the interplay between "sons of Abraham" and "sons of God" (3:7, 26). Paul's point is that believers share in the promised sonship of Abraham (3:29) and even greater, they share in Christ's sonship (4:6-7).[15] Furthermore, the ordering of the lines and balance of the clauses indicate that the talk of Christ's divine sonship are intended to

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[13] Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *Galatians*, 157.

[14] Hendriksen and Kistemaker, *Galatians*, 157.

[15] Dunn, *Galatians*, 215.

find its answering emphasis in the talk of receiving adoption, which is brought about through the redemption of Christ at the time appointed by God.[16]

Dunn observes the connection between the clauses that should not be overlooked. Christ "born of woman" is connected to "we might receive adoption," drawing attention to the humanity of Christ and the adoption of ordinary human beings to divine sonship. "Born under law" represents Christ's mission of redemption as humanity's perfect representative to save those "born under law."[17] Jesus met the requirements of the law perfectly and represented humanity perfectly as he died as believers' substitute, paying the ransom to redeem God's children, so that they could receive their God appointed adoption as sons.[18]

Moreover, the richness of this restored relationship is made more explicit by recognizing the purpose of the law, which Lightfoot helpfully spotlights when commenting on this passage. Until the time appointed by God, the law had worked out its educational purpose and now was superseded.[19] The purpose of the law was to deepen the conviction of sin and thus to show the inability of the elementary principles of the world to bring men near to God (Rom 8:3-5).[20] It revealed to mankind the broken and disconnected relationship that exists between man and God and the inability of man to

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[16] Dunn, *Galatians*, 215.

[17] Dunn, *Galatians*, 215-16.

[18] The term for "redeem" is ἐξαγοράζω. It is a synonym of ἀπολύτρωσις, which is the word translated "redemption" in Eph 1:7. This will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

[19] Lightfoot, *Galatians,* 167.

[20] Lightfoot also adds that the comparison of the child implies more than a negative effect of the law. He says there is a moral and spiritual expansion here that in some way rendered the world more capable of apprehending the gospel than it would have been at an earlier age. He asserts that to assume otherwise would rob the metaphor of half its meaning. Like with all metaphors, care must be taken not to expand the meaning beyond the context. Paul's emphasis all along has been on the ineptitude of adherence to the law to save. Rather, the exclusive means of salvation is by the sovereign and gracious act of God to send Christ and adopt children to himself. The child metaphor shows the helpless and disconnected relationship of the people without the sovereign and gracious work of God, which is restored through the sending of Christ to redeem his children (Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 167-168).

restore that relationship without outside help. In this sense the law helps believers explicitly understand the richness of their restored relationship through adoption.

The apex of Paul's point here, though, is the reception of adoption by believers. This is the subject in the forefront of Paul's mind at this point in his argument. This is made apparent by his use of two ἵνα clauses in verse 5. God's purpose was "to redeem" "so that" believers would receive adoption as sons. The end goal of God's activity was to effectuate the filial relationship between him and his children. The sending of God's son and Christ's redemption are immeasurably significant in their own right, but here they are portrayed as means to an end—the adoption of believers.[21] Bruce calls this the "nodal point of salvation-history."[22] Adoption is marked by the coming of Christ and constitutes the sovereignly ordained epoch for the children of God to enter into a restored relationship through Christ with all the rights and privileges of heirship. "It is the polestar of human destiny, the hinge of chronology, the meeting place of the waters of the past and the future."[23] Through adoption believers are delivered from Satan's slavery and by God's amazing grace, are transferred to the Father's sonship.[24] Practical strategies are discussed for conveying this theological understanding to adoptive children in a later chapter.

Jewish background of υἱοθεσία. In the meantime, time must be taken to consider what Paul means when he uses the metaphor υἱοθεσία to convey the salvific experience of the believer. He uses the term υἱοθεσία five times in the NT (Rom 8:15, 23;

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[21] Bruce, *Galatians*, 194.

[22] Bruce, *Galatians*, 194.

[23] Spurgeon, *Galatians*, Gal 4:4.

[24] Joel R. Beeke, "Our Glorious Adoption: Trinitarian Based and Transformed Relationships," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 3, no. 2 (2011): 66.

9:4; Gal 4:5; and Eph 1:5).[25] It is a technical term which literally means "to place as a son."[26] Essential to understanding its meaning is to consider what society Paul had in mind when he used υἱοθεσία. There are two prevalent options to consider. One, Paul had in mind the Jewish society with an emphasis on the covenant promises of God as father and Israel as his child. Two, the Greco-Roman society was what Paul was referring to, emphasizing the legal action whereby the adopted person was released of all rights and obligations of one family and placed into a new family with all its rights and obligations.

Garner supplies a persuasive argument for the importance of recognizing a Jewish understanding of adoption.[27] He contends that biblical covenants render an essential guide to understanding the meaning of υἱοθεσία.[28] Paul recognizes them and appropriates them into the covenant of grace, which is central to Paul's argument in Galatians 3 and 4. Distinctively, Paul organizes much of his understanding of salvation history around the two-Adam covenantal paradigm. The first Adam was created as the first son of God with all the rights and obligations, but failed to appreciate those rights

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[25] Υἱοθεσία does not appear in the LXX.

[26] Υἱοθεσία is a blend word of υἱός ("son") and τίθημι ("to place").

[27] Garner does not disregard the influence or the importance of Roman law toward an accurate understanding of υἱοθεσία. He argues for a fuller and richer appreciation of υἱοθεσία that Paul's Jewish influence brings. Others who support a broader Jewish understanding of adoption include, but are not limited to: Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996); Brendan Byrne, "'Sons of God' - 'Seed of Abraham': A Study of the Idea of the Sonship of God of all Christians in Paul Against the Jewish Background" (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1977); Daniel J. Theron, "'Adoption' in the Pauline Corpus," *Evangelical Quarterly* 28 (1956): 6-14; Martin W. Schoenberg, "Huiothesia: The Word and the Institution," *Scripture* 15 (1963): 115-123; R. Alan Cole, *The Letter of Paul to the Galatians*, 2nd ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989); James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation Into the Background of Yiothesia in the Pauline Corpus*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament, vol. 48 (Heidelberg, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1992); Tim J. R. Trumper, "The Metaphorical Import of Adoption: A Plea for Realisation. I: The Adoption Metaphor in Biblical Usage," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 14 (1996): 129-145; Robert C. Dorman, "A Study of Paul's Use of Hyiothesia: Its Background, Development, and Importance Concerning Spiritual Adoption" (Master's thesis, Covenant Theological Seminary, 1997); and William H. Rossell, "New Testament Adoption: Graeco-Roman or Semitic?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 71 (1952): 233-34.

[28] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 5.

and abide by those obligations. As a result, he forfeited the covenantal blessings and established the historical and theological necessity for the covenantal ministry of the last Adam—Jesus Christ.[29] Jesus ushered in the new covenant and this transition from the old covenant to the new covenant frames Paul's theology. Thus, Paul, in general, was oriented toward a covenant approach to interpreting and explaining biblical truth.[30]

Garner rightfully asserts that to do justice to interpretation, one must appreciate more of the continuity between the OT and NT. For Garner, Romans 9:1-5 is the ultimate example. Here, Paul categorically draws out this OT to NT covenantal development. Paul proclaims the Christ-centeredness of the OT and understands that it anticipates the NT. Reciprocally, the NT draws on and fulfills the OT. Thus, OT adoption anticipates NT adoption and the NT draws on and fulfills the promises of God through the OT. It is therefore the OT events and theology that comprise the context of Paul's writings, especially here in Galatians. Garner summarizes his point,

> Methodological marginalization of this organic intertestamental and covenantal structure will ensure theological misunderstanding and will effectively compromise any proper appreciation for the origin, scope, and meaning of huiothesia in Pauline thought.[31]

His point is well made, for context both near and far it is vital to understanding what Scripture means by what it says.

The filial and Christological themes of adoption speak to the covenantal themes of the OT. Furthermore, υἱοθεσία embodies a pneumatological and soteriological construction for Paul. The point of this, for Garner, is to argue for the robust theological importance of υἱοθεσία, which he fears will be underestimated and overlooked if the Jewish underpinnings of Paul's theology are ignored when interpreting Paul's use of

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[29] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 6.

[30] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 6-7.

[31] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 7.

υἱοθεσία. He contends that only a full appreciation of those Christological and covenantal themes will provoke an apprehension of the robust riches embedded in υἱοθεσία.[32] Thus, while Garner consents to the importance of interpreting υἱοθεσία with the Roman culture in mind, he clearly asserts the need for considering the OT themes as the foundational elements to Paul's teaching.[33]

Paul explicitly draws from and connects the OT to the NT in Galatians. Behind Paul's use of υἱοθεσία is the filial relationship of Israel and God. Moreover, as Garner contends, the connection to Adam's sonship cannot be ignored.[34] To understand what Paul means, the richness of the Christian's adoption must be seen through Israel's sonship and that is more clearly seen through Adam's sonship. Adam is the historical referent of the filial relationship between God and man. In Adam is the promise of the anticipated inheritance associated with the covenant God made with Adam. It is Adam's failure to obey God's covenant that necessitated Christ's redemptive work. This work of Christ was first prophesied in Genesis 3:15 and then repeated throughout the OT. Garner reasons that it is this gospel message throughout the Scriptures and revealed in the person and historical account of Jesus that led to Paul choosing υἱοθεσία as a metaphor to express the richness of God's love and grace through the choosing of people to place in his family.[35] Thus, Paul did not use υἱοθεσία as a legal term, but more as a theological confession.

For Garner, the obdurate attempt to make the Greco-Roman character of υἱοθεσία the primary informing content hinders a more extensive understanding of υἱοθεσία. While there is no doubt that Greco-Roman ideas influence its meaning, more

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[32] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 8.

[33] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 45.

[34] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 45.

[35] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 46.

must be seen through a thorough investigation of how υἱοθεσία interfaces with the OT and the OT theological backdrop should have strong interpretive influence. Not doing so, according to Garner, amounts to unfaithfulness to rightly interpreting all that Paul means by υἱοθεσία.[36] To be clear, Garner does not contend that the Greco-Roman character of υἱοθεσία should be ignored, but rather that to understand the profound nature of the word the theological background of the OT must be thoroughly considered and investigated.

Greco-Roman background of υἱοθεσία. Of vital concern to the meaning of υἱοθεσία is to what extent Paul's use of this familial metaphor is based upon the Greco-Roman society or the Jewish society. In the Greco-Roman world adoption was common and would be known by the majority if not all of the society. Υἱοθεσία is fundamentally a family term. Similar to many cultures today, family was the essential bedrock of the Roman society. The family in Roman society was the primary context of social, religious, political, and economic security and fulfilment.[37] Roman families were hierarchically organized and structured with the paterfamilias situated at the apex of the pyramid.[38] This ensured that those in the family had privileges and responsibilities commensurate with their place within the family. Similar to other organizations, the security and success of the family depended on each person in the family faithfully carrying out their responsibilities according to their status in the family.

The head over the family was the *paterfamilias* and he was primarily responsible for maintaining peace and concord within the family. In all matters the paterfamilias' authority (potestas) was supreme; indeed, the authority of the household head institutionalized in the potestas and exercised by the paterfamilias was so binding in

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[36] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 46-47.

[37] Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience*, 116.

[38] Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience*, 117.

the home that married children were not free to form a household of their own until the paterfamilias died.[39] It is this lifelong authority over children, whether by birth or adoption, and slaves that formed the backbone of Roman society.[40] Generally, the Roman *familia* comprised a husband, wife and their dependents (children, slaves and the slaves' children). Thus, the Roman familia was much bigger and wider than the majority of families today. Due to its importance to society when the family was under threat of extinction, adoption was a lifeline for a family dying out.[41] For example, the paterfamilias of one family whose children did not survive into adulthood would adopt a son from another family to continue the family line.

Thus, adoption was not only a well-known practice but also a valuable asset to society. For, it was not only a safeguard against the termination of a family, but it also provided new opportunities for the adopted child that would otherwise not have existed. Many of the adopted children were already adults. This was due to the fact that the continuance of the family had a greater chance of survival with an adult child than with a young child. The paterfamilias embodied the family and that embodiment continued from one generation to the next in the father and the son. This was so treasured and valuable in Roman society that when there was no son to continue the family then adoption was the solution.

Two methods of adoption were practiced in Rome: *adrogatio* and *adoptio.* In both instances the paterfamilias initiated the process. Adrogatio is the older of the two and was the adoption of a person who was not under the legal power or authority of

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[39] Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience*, 117.

[40] Stephan J. Joubert, "Managing the Household: Paul as *Paterfamilias* of the Christian Household Group in Corinth," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament and its Context,* ed. P. F. Esler (London: Routledge, 1995): 215.

[41] Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience*, 118-19.

another.[42] A preliminary investigation was carried out by the official priests of the state in order to ensure the appropriateness of the arrangement. The priests looked into the facts and into the motives of the parties involved. They had to be satisfied that the arrangement would be beneficial and appropriate for the all the parties involved. For adrogatio affected not only the adopting paterfamilias and the adoptive son, but also the adoptive son's family. While the adoptive son was not under anyone's authority, he himself may in fact have potestas over his own family. Adrogatio would bring that family under the authority of the family adopting with the paterfamilias of that family becoming their new potestas. This might also entail the extinction of the adoptive family altogether. Thus, this was not something to be taken lightly and a thorough investigation was undertaken to ensure the appropriateness of the arrangement.[43] For this reason, adrogatio was reserved for the paterfamilias who had absolutely no offspring to continue his family line and was also restricted to the city of Rome. Due to such restrictions, Burke asserts that Paul did not have the procedure of adrogatio in mind when he used υἱοθεσία.[44]

By contrast, adoptio was the adoption of a son who was under the legal power and authority of another. This was a much more popular and acceptable adoption procedure. Adoptio did not entail the dissolution of another family. There were two stages in this procedure: (1) the severing of the old potestas, and (2) the establishment of the new potestas. This process was a bit tricky and unorthodox. It was carried out by the paterfamilias selling off his offspring into civil bondage (*in mancipio*), thereby making him a slave. If the son was ever released by his new master, he would immediately be placed under the authority of his father who could sell him again. In order to avoid the

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[42] Francis Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons: Legal Metaphors in the Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 84.

[43] Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons*, 84-85.

[44] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family,* 67-68.

son continually bouncing back and forth, a law was laid down in the Twelve Tables (established by the second Decemvirate, c. 450 bc), which stated that when a son was sold three times by his father, his father ceased to have any authority over him.[45] It was from this law that the adoptio procedure was derived. Typically, a father would sell his son to a friend, who would in turn release him. The son would fall back under the authority of his father and the father would sell him to his friend again, who would release him again. After the third time, the father would lose all authority over his son.

At this point, the son would be considered a slave under the authority of his father's friend. The person who is adopting the son would then bring a fictitious claim of ownership against the friend. This was a formal claim, whereby the adopting father was claiming the return of the son on the grounds that he was his son. The friend would not oppose the action. Thus, without any protest, the magistrate would give judgment in favor of the adopting father, who therefore became the adopted child's new paterfamilias. Thereafter the adopted child was wholly subject to the authority and direction of his new paterfamilias.

Adoption changed hereditary succession, and the adopted child's legal position and privileges were the same as that of a legitimate biological son. Adoption in the Roman world brought changes to every area of the adopted child's life. Mainly, adoption constituted a commitment to the new family, along with all its attending privileges and responsibilities. The adopted son took his adoptive father's name and rank. He acquired rights of succession on death in his new family and lost all such rights as he had in his old family. All these privileges and responsibilities were the adoptive son's no matter the method: adrogatio or adoption.

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[45] Thomas Lambert Mears, *The Institutes of Gaius and Justinian, the Twelve Tables, and the CXVIIIth and CXXVIIth, with Introduction and Translation* (London: Stevens and Sons, 1882), 280-82.

Theological conclusion. To understand what Paul means by his use of υἱοθεσία is to understand the theological depth of believers' salvation. Garner's concern for that is to be admired and appreciated. The concern, however, is that in the pursuit to extricate all there is to the filial metaphor, the interpretation may force connections that were not intended by the author. In this case, is connecting υἱοθεσία to the covenants and OT theology forcing a meaning that Paul did not intend?[46] This is not to say that the meaning of the word does not connect to the covenants and OT theology, since all of Scripture speaks with one voice and it is to be expected that the theology in the NT agrees with that of the OT. But, does Paul intend for his readers to connect υἱοθεσία to the covenants and OT, or to the immediate context of the Roman society? Moreover, in the pursuit to understand the metaphor, there must be contentment with its limitations. How much of the metaphor did Paul intend to communicate? For example, the adoption of a child in Roman society did not include any intermediary or a go-between. However, in the NT, spiritual adoption depends on and is effectuated through Jesus Christ.[47] Furthermore, while the issue of the background is important, a strictly legal approach to Paul's adoption term truncates the understanding of the expression and disunites it from its full theological scope.

Paul was a Jew, a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), trained in Judaism and careful to observe the Law (Acts 22:3). Furthermore, he was born outside Palestine, in the Jewish

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[46] William Rossell provides one example of forcing an OT meaning to υἱοθεσία by arguing that the Nuzu archives revealed the concept of adoption in the ANE to Abram's childlessness and his concern for an heir. On that evidence he contends that Paul had Abram's adoption of Eliezer in mind when he employed the familial metaphor. Rossell disregards the immediate context and provides no evidentiary reason to assert that Paul had that particular moment in history as the referent of υἱοθεσία. See Rossell, "New Testament Adoption," 233-34 and Maynard Paul Maidman, *Nuzi Texts and Their Uses as Historical Evidence: Notes*, ed. Theodore J. Lewis and Ann K. Guinan, Writings from the Ancient World, vol. 18 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 10-11, 125-227.

[47] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family,* 70. Burke also adds that there is nothing in any of the backgrounds that corresponds to the eschatological aspect between the "now" and the "not yet" in adoption according to Paul. This concept will be discussed later in this chapter with the exposition of Rom 8:15 and 23.

diaspora, at Tarsus of Cilicia: a Roman citizen by birth (Acts 22:7). Besides his Jewish religious education, he also learned the Greek language and customs in his native Tarsus. Additionally, he is writing to churches situated in the centers of the Roman world, one of them even in Rome itself. Even though a reasonable portion of the membership were also Jewish in origin and training; they likewise were well versed in the language and customs of their native surroundings.[48] With that in mind, there are significant reasons why a Roman background is useful for understanding Paul's use of υἱοθεσία. First, Paul uses his υἱοθεσία only in letters to communities directly under the rule of Roman law (Gal 4:5; Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Eph. 1:5). Ephesus was situated on the west coast of Asia Minor and was a leading city of the Roman Empire. Galatia was a Roman province and in in a political sense came to describe the entire Roman province. And undoubtedly Rome itself would have been familiar with Roman law. Certainly, as Burke calls attention to, it is not without significance that Paul's adoption expression occurs most frequently in his epistle to the church at Rome.[49]

Second, Paul was a Roman citizen and grew up governed by Roman law. This would have governed his relationship with his parents, since Paul's parents were Roman. For, it was required for citizenship to pass to a son that both parents be citizens.[50] When Paul asserts that he is a Roman citizen by birth in Acts 22:28, it necessarily follows that his parents were themselves citizens. It is also possible that his father was a citizen and that his mother had to be given the right to enter into a Roman marriage. This did not prohibit Paul and his family to live out a normal Jewish life, but the Roman law would be the final authority. Roman law would have controlled their rights to property and would

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[48] Schoenberg, "Huiothesia," 120.

[49] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 61.

[50] Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons*, 82.

have been the legal system under which Paul submitted as it pertains to the estate of his father.

Third, adoption in its Roman form was widespread even in other areas throughout the empire, particularly among Roman emperors. Adoption was a means by which succession to power was brought about. Matter of fact, from early first century to the middle of the second century and later, successive Roman emperors adopted men not related to them by blood with the intention that the adopted son would succeed the emperor.[51] Adoption was a type of "salvation" for the imperial line of succession. Julius Caesar adopted Octavian, who is the emperor who issued the decree that all should be registered at the time of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:1). Octavian adopted Tiberius, who adopted Gaius Caligula. Claudius, Gaius' uncle, later adopted Nero, who was a vicious opponent of Christians. Given that the governing leaders of the Roman empire were all in their powerful and prominent positions by way of adoption during the writing of the NT, the readers would very likely be familiar with Roman adoption.

In his discussion about the imperial adoptions, Burke makes a valuable observation about the binding nature of adoption in Roman society. Nero and Claudius' daughter, Octavia, wanted to marry each other. Octavia was not related to Nero by blood but was by adoption. In the eyes of the law they were brother and sister and not allowed to marry each other. Special legislation had to be passed in order to allow Nero to marry Octavia.[52] That Nero was legally considered the same as a natural born son illustrates the absolute nature of the adoption of Nero.[53] Again, the binding nature of adoption, its

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[51] Adoption became crucial to the continuation of the line of the Julio-Claudian emperors: Octavian (Augustus), 27 BC–AD 14; Tiberius, AD 14–37; Gaius (Caligula), AD 37–41; Claudius, AD 41–54; and Nero, AD 54–68. See Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 62 and Velleius Paterculus and Augustus, *Compendium of Roman History*, trans. Frederick W Shipley, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 152 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

[52] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 62.

[53] Roger Bowen, *A Guide to Romans* (London: SPCK, 1978), 218.

acceptance and ramifications were on display at the highest level of Roman government.[54] The significance of this for believers is that all three books where υἱοθεσία is mentioned were written between ad 49 and ad 62, meaning that Paul's readers would have grown up only knowing adoption as the means by which their leaders succeeded one another, providing a fitting illustration of God's adoption of believers to continue his filial lineage.

Fourth, Roman adoption entailed the release from authority and the concept of slavery. Again, the process of adopting a son required the father releasing authority by first selling his son to another as a slave. That had to take place three times before the father's authority was dissolved. After which, the son was technically a slave and was then adopted by his new paterfamilias. In each of the occurrences of υἱοθεσία Paul includes the concept of slavery and redemption in the immediate context. Important to understanding any metaphor is the context in which it used. By creation all people were children of God. But, when sin entered, that relation ceased and all people became children of the devil, enslaved to his thoughts and deceptions, living according to the principles of the world, following after the passions and desires of the body and mind (Eph 2:1-3). This being the state of all, Christ came, that through him believers might again return to the family of God. Though they are by nature strangers and aliens, believers may receive through him the adoption of sons, and be regarded by God as beloved children. Paul expressly assures believers that this privilege is given to all believers without exception.

A significant point here, as made by Charles Simeon, is that what is implied in this privilege by Paul here is both the present and future benefits of this adoption.[55] In

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[54] Jeanne Stevenson Moessner, *The Spirit of Adoption: At Home in God's Family* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 30.

[55] This will be taken up in greater detail later in this chapter through the study of Rom 8:12-17.

this world, instead of having any occasion to dread the wrath of God due to enslavement to sin and the devil, believers may look up with filial confidence to God and expect from him all that care, and love, and mercy which are suited to the relation of a father. Furthermore, in eternity future, believers shall be raised to such dignity and glory as no words can express, no imagination can conceive, being heirs of God. For whatever God or Christ possess either of happiness or glory, shall be possessed by those adopted into God's family.[56] The ultimate contrast to bondage to Satan and the evil spirits is freedom in Christ.[57]

Another reason why a Roman background is to be understood with Paul's use of υἱοθεσία has to do with one of the evidences that is commonly used for a predominately Jewish background. Paul applies adoption to the Israel in Romans 9:4. His use of υἱοθεσία as a metaphor in Romans 9:4 is appropriately applied to the nation of Israel, but does not necessitate a Jewish background to understand its meaning. By adopting the Roman social practice of adoption as the picture the metaphor portrays, it would be theologically appropriate to apply to the nation of Israel a helpful picture of what God has been doing from the beginning of redemption history—taking people by grace out of bondage to their sin as children of the devil and adopting them as his own, creating a filial relationship with him where one did not previously exist. It is appropriate to use a contemporary word to help a mostly Gentile readership understand the richness of Israel's history with God. Furthermore, due to the commonality of Roman adoptions, the metaphor, for Jews living there, would not fall on deaf ears. Lastly, there is nothing in

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[56] Charles Simeon, *Galatians-Ephesians, Horae Homileticae* (London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1833), 17:160-61.

[57] James Montgomery Boice, "Galatians," in vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 472.

the text that demands a Jewish understanding of adoption to articulate the richness of Israel's filial relationship to God.

Sixth, the use of the metaphor is limited by its intended use of the author. While Garner is concerned about truncating the richness of υἱοθεσία by not connecting it to the covenants and OT theology the richness of the metaphor is enhanced by the immediate context and while truncating the meaning is a valid concern, so is expanding the meaning beyond the intention of the author. Salvation history is rich indeed and there are many words to portray the magnitude, beauty, and richness of salvation. So much that there is not one word to explain it all. Every word, every metaphor, is used to explain one facet of a multi-faceted doctrine. While the Puritans weave the believer's adoption into so much of their writings and saw the great importance of believers living with a conscious awareness of their adoption, they nonetheless acknowledged the importance of knowing the distinctions of the various words for the believer's salvation.

The Puritans were clear to delineate what adoption is not.[58] First, adoption is not regeneration. While it might be enticing to treat regeneration and adoption as synonymous, because in regeneration the believer is born from above and adoption seems to be another way of describing the new birth. The Puritans were clear to explain that these are two distinct blessings. Regeneration and adoption deal with two different problems. Accordingly, adoption deals with one's status, taking him from alienation to a beloved child. Regeneration, on the other hand, deals with one's nature, changing the believer from a hater of God to a lover of God.[59]

Adoption, also, is not justification. The Puritans taught that justification is the primary, fundamental blessing of the gospel, meeting the most basic spiritual need, which

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[58] Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 540-41.

[59] More specific distinctions may be seen in Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 540. They provide a chart of distinctions taught by Thomas Manton and Stephen Charnock.

is forgiveness and reconciliation with God. The child of God could not be adopted into God's family without it. However, they contend that adoption is a richer blessing, because it brings the believer from the courtroom into the family. "Justification is conceived of in terms of law, adoption in terms of love. Justification sees God as a judge, adoption as a father."[60] Justification and adoption have much in common. Both are acts rather than a process. Believers do not become adopted by degree just as they are not justified by degree. The glory of God's grace is seen when sinners believe they are made full children of God and remain such. They are immediately declared to be righteous and immediately enjoy all the rights and privileges of becomes God's children, sons and heirs, joint heirs with Christ. Simply put, "justification involves a legal relationship; adoption, a personal relationship.[61]

Lastly, adoption is not sanctification. Sanctification, distinct from adoption, is the living out of the believer's adoption. It is the consistent lifestyle of the child of God who lives out who he is in Christ—a beloved and adopted child of God. The believer is living true to his filial relationship with God. He is true to who is. It is the child of God living with the right self-perception, whereby he lives consciously aware of his status and position in the family of God. "It is a matter of being a good son . . ."[62] "Through sanctification the believer is brought into a fuller experiential awareness of his adoption. He learns to grasp more fully what adoption is, and learns to live out of its wonders."[63]

Paul uses the adoption metaphor to help his readers understand their new status; their experience of salvation. Adoption emphasizes both the broken relationship

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[60] Gordon Cooke, "The Doctrine of Adoption and the Preaching of Jeremiah Burroughs," in *Eternal Light, Adoption, and Livingstone* (London: Congregational Studies Conference papers, 1998), 23.

[61] Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 541.

[62] J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 201.

[63] Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*, 541.

that exists between man and God and the restored relationship between man and God brought about through the redemption of Jesus Christ. That emphasis is meant for the reader to understand better who he is as a result of adoption. He is no longer a child of the devil, enslaved to wickedness and damned to eternity in hell. Rather, he is now a child of the living God, freed from sin and destined for eternity in heaven with God. This is the believer's proper perspective of himself. Therefore, he lives in conscious awareness of his sonship in the Father. Practical strategies for conveying this theological understanding to adoptive children that involve not just teaching, but modeling are discussed later.

Personal and Filial Relationship
with God as Father

Up to this point, Paul has been explaining the transaction that has taken place: the believer's disconnection to God, Christ's redemptive purposes, the cost involved, and the change in status. In verse six Paul speaks more about the glorious consequences of the adoption transaction, "because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"." Through adoption the relationship between the believer and God is restored and reconnected and that new and connected relationship is an intimate one. Again, adoption is more than a legal act and change of status, but it is also a change in relationship. This is the crux of Paul's purpose of using the adoption metaphor and he emphasizes that further in verse 6.

Personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This relationship could not have been made more personal. God sends the Holy Spirit to indwell the adopted child of God, whereby securing and solidifying the filial relationship. All three members of the trinity are at work in adoption. The Father predetermines to adopt and sets the plan in motion, including the timeline. He sends Jesus with the intended purpose to give his life as a ransom for many and actualizes adoption through his redemptive work. God then gifts each believer with his Holy Spirit to confirm the filial relationship for eternity.

With sonship comes the privilege of God's Spirit. So intimate is the connection of adoption that God himself permanently indwells the person, providing a permanent relationship that derives its essence from the nature of God rather than the nature of the child. God is eternal, immutable, and faithful and that is the character of the one who purposes to adopt, to redeem, and to give the Spirit. The receiving of the Spirit is equal to one's adoption as God's son.[64] No slave of the law would have such an intimate relationship.[65] Reconciliation with God was complete without works of law, the gift of the Spirit is the proof of this.[66] Furthermore, the Spirit moves the child of God to claim his adoption and no more live in bondage to the law. Consequently, the child of God should never with fear, but with boldness, claim his sonship, for not to do so would be dishonoring to his father.[67]

While intimacy and security of the relationship is emphasized, Craig Keener offers another feature to God gifting the Holy Spirit to the adopted child.[68] Referring to Roman adoptions, he explains that witnesses were required for the transaction. This, he understands as the role of the Holy Spirit. He contends that since Judaism understood the Spirit as the one who inspired the prophets, it is natural to see the Spirit inspiring believers, speaking to them as he did to the prophets as way of reminding them of their adoption. Keener's use of the Spirit inspiring the prophets as evidence of the Spirit's role as witness in the adoption transaction is logical, but inadequate. However, that does not diminish the merit of his contention that the Spirit in the believer serves as a confirmation

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[64] Bruce, *Galatians*, 198.

[65] Max Anders, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians*, Holman New Testament Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 51.

[66] Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 169.

[67] Spurgeon, *Galatians*, Gal 4:6.

[68] Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 529.

of his adoption. This is addressed in more detail in the next section in reference to Romans 8:14-17.

Filial language of the indwelling Spirit. As a witness, the Holy Spirit is not quiet. The indwelling Holy Spirit is "crying." Κράζω is a colorful word, meaning to utter a loud cry. It is an onomatopoeic word, likened to the croaking of ravens.[69] The Spirit cries undoubting assurance that the adopted child is a legitimate child of God.

> No faint whisper this of an inner consciousness, shy, reticent, because afraid to assure itself of so glorious, so blissful a relation; no hesitating half-hope; it is a strong, unwavering conviction, bold, though humbly bold, to thus address the all-holy Supreme himself.[70]

The "cry" is here attributed to the Spirit himself. It is not without intensity and emotion. For it is in the heart of the adopted child that the Spirit resides, and it is from such depths of the child's soul that the Spirit utters his cry. The cry is as a result of the believer's sonship, and the Spirit's presence makes this cry possible.[71]

Hence, the Spirit cries "Abba! Father!" The experience of adoption is indicated by this particular activity of the Spirit to cry out with emotional depth and sincerity such a filial term.[72] Notably, Paul uses the same phrase in the corresponding passage in his letter to the Roman church (Rom 8:15). However, it is not the Spirit who is crying, but believers. This is discussed more fully in the discussion of Romans 8:14-17 along with a discussion pertaining to the research and debate about the precise meaning of "Abba, Father." For now, it is undeniable that nothing more could solidify the paternal

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[69] Walter Grundmann, "Κράζω, Ἀνακράζω, Κραυγή, Κραυγάζω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 3:898.

[70] H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Galatians*, The Pulpit Commentary (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 186.

[71] Lenski, *Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians*, 207.

[72] Dunn, *Galatians*, 221.

relationship between God the Father than the redemption through Christ and the granting of God's Spirit.

Thus, Paul concludes with such a rich statement about the child of God: "you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God" (Gal 4:7). This is a declarative statement of identity. Effectively, Paul is saying this is who the children of God are. Of importance here is that the readers' grasp their identity not from the world, family, friends, or even themselves, but from God. The believer's identity is an objective, theological declaration made manifest through the foreordained work of God, redemptive work of Christ, and indwelling work of the Holy Spirit.

Adoption as an Eternally Past Decision (Eph 1:3-14)

Paul opens the letter to the Ephesians with the attitude that when children of God rightly understand that God is the source of all their blessings, they will naturally praise Him. This is exactly what Paul does here in the opening verses of Ephesians. After his standard greeting, Paul praises God for all that he is and has as a child of God. When meditating on all that he and other believers have through their adoption by God, considering the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, desire and ability to live for God, ability to know God, and a secure hope in their future inheritance, Paul erupts in praise, "*Blessed* be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 1:3).[73] And the reason for this praise? Paul spends the next 12 verses (vv. 3-14) explaining. Indeed, Paul is so enamored by God's affection and generosity that he gives praise with no clear transition, indicating the praise as the culmination of his knowing God in these ways. Verses 3-14 represent one sentence in the Greek. Paul explains the reason for his exuberant praise without pause or interruption.

Paul understood his identity as adopted by God and the accompanying

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[73] Author emphasis.

blessings, and so he exalts him as a child would a father with devout worship and praise. Before adoption, Paul, like all people, worshipped himself. He walked according to that identity, constantly adjusting to the ebb and flow of the world's wisdom. He was naïve, tossed to and fro by every wind of deceitful doctrine.[74] However, as God's adopted child, Paul now worships the creator God, who never changes. His identity is now rooted in the immovable God and his truth and promises; his steadfast love.[75] As God's adopted child, Paul's affections are for his Father, just as his Father's affections are for him. Paul's heart has been captivated by God and all he is and hopes to be center around his unwavering love for his father.

Those who are adopted in Christ are those who have heard the Gospel, believed the Gospel, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13). Through adoption believers experience the same life-giving power of God that raised Christ from the dead and gave Him victory over all God's enemies (Eph 1:19-23). These blessings give God's children ample reason to rejoice and celebrate, just like Paul, praising God for what they are given through adoption according to God's affection to choose to make them his permanent children, and Paul uses the metaphor of adoption to make this point.

Affection from God as Father

Paul describes the happy benefits to an adopted son as the outflow of the pleasure God takes in adopting him. He exclaims multiple blessings for those who are adopted in Christ and they can all be categorized under the affection God shows his adopted children, the predetermined choice of God to adopt, and the permanence of the

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[74] Paul warns the Ephesian believers against the allurement of worldly wisdom in Eph 4:14. Seeking worldly wisdom would be characteristic of life before adoption. Now, though, as adopted children of God, believers must be trained on the wisdom of God and commit to it as a child would to his father's teaching.

[75] The steadfast love of God is vital to understanding the depth and breadth of the believer's adoption into God's family. This will be discussed in greater detail later on in this chapter.

filial relationship brought about by adoption.

Source of blessings. All the blessings bestowed on the believers come directly from God. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *who has blessed us* in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:3).[76] The word *blessed* is the Greek word εὐλογητός, where the English word, *eulogy*, derives. It means to speak well of someone, to extol them, or to praise them.[77] Such verbal adjectives with the "τος" ending do not refer to one to whom the praying person is giving blessing.[78] Paul is not conferring a blessing to God, rather, he is recognizing God as one who already has the perfect fullness and is worthy of such honor as this. Paul refers to the Father as "blessed" in His very character in a "ceaseless continuance."[79] Another way of explaining it is that the word carries the idea that those who have faith in God, who are the children of God, give Him the glory he deserves without ceasing.[80] And why such exuberant praise for God? Because he is the almighty creator God who is the affectionate source of all the adopted child's blessings.

What should not escape notice is that these blessings are the believers because of their union with Christ through adoption. Paul addresses the believers as those who are "in Christ Jesus," that is, they are what they are by virtue of union with him. Hendriksen does not overstate the case when he makes this comment about this phrase: "This phrase

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[76] Author emphasis.

[77] Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 408.

[78] James E. Rosscup, *An Exposition on Prayer in the Bible: Igniting the Fuel to Flame Our Communication with God* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2008), 2200.

[79] Rosscup, *An Exposition*, 2200.

[80] Rudolf Bultmann and Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, "Εὐλογέω, Εὐλογητός, Εὐλογία, Ἐνευλογέω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 2:764.

may without exaggeration be called the most important one in all the Pauline epistles."[81] It is by virtue of union with Christ that the Ephesians were saints and believers, for in connection with him they receive "every spiritual blessing" (1:3).

Nature of blessings. God's affection toward his children is seen in him as the source of their blessings, but also in the nature of their blessings. The blessings of the adopted children of God are spiritual in nature. What does Paul mean when he uses the word "spiritual" in this sentence? It could mean either of two things. One, it could mean that the blessings come to the children of God by means of the Holy Spirit. Verses 11-14 clearly teach that. Or two, it could mean that the blessings are spiritual rather than material in nature. The phrase "in the heavenly places" suggests that Paul is probably thinking of "spiritual" in the second sense. That is, he is thinking of blessings related to heaven rather than earth and is declaring that these blessings are freely given to his children.[82]

Rosscup expands what Paul might mean. He says "heavenly places" may refer to possessions like privileges and assets in addition to a location. What may possibly be in view is the realm of true riches, a sphere into which God exalts people when they are born again (John 3:1-7). Additionally, it may also entail the quality of a blessed life in terms of privileges or possessions in spiritual wealth functional for life now.[83] Rosscup's expansion is reasonable. In the subsequent verses, Paul clearly states the spiritual blessings given to God's children and makes it a point to include the concept of a future

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[81] William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of Ephesians*, in vol. 7 of *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995), 70. In Ephesians, "in Christ" and its near equivalents occur in 1:1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9-13, 15, 20; 2:5-7, 10, 13, 21, 22; 3:6, 11, 12, 21; 4:1, 21, 32; 5:8; and 6:10, 21, in total some 27 times.

[82] James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resources Library, 1988), 10.

[83] Rosscup, *An Exposition*, 2201.

inheritance, which refers to possessions and places, which Paul clearly teaches is the eternal home for all God's children. There is a life for believers to enjoy more fully in the life of eternity, in a place, the New Jerusalem, as overcomers, sons, heirs (Rev 21:1-22:5; esp. 21:7).[84]

Furthermore, it is certain that those who are adopted by God, will not lack anything pertaining to their souls and eternity. With the inclusive "every," Paul assures the children of God that nothing has been held back. These blessings are complete. Peter O'brien's statement about this phrase is worth quoting. He says, "Everything that Christians have received through God's saving act in Christ is comprehensively summarized in the expression every spiritual blessing."[85] In contrast to earthly blessings, which fade away (Prov 23:4-5; Matt 6:19-20), the "spiritual" and "heavenly" nature of these blessings renders them everlasting and imperishable.

Chosen by God to be His Children

The embrace of a theological understanding of adoption as an aspect of the doctrine of salvation in Christ aids adopted children in making sense of their adoption experience. Adoption emphasizes choice. The self-existing and self-willing God of all creation adopts by independent and unconditional choice people to be his children. That makes a profound difference in a person's life, specially one's perception of their adoption experience, both eternally and temporally. Thus, the reality of this theological truth gradually shapes an adopted child's self-perception. Every aspect of adoption is ordained by God. He is the initiator and the sustainer. Paul's exuberant praise of God alone throughout this opening passage underscores that eternal reality.

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[84] Rosscup, *An Exposition*, 2201.

[85] Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 95.

God is the initiator of adoption. Paul proceeds to proclaim that God not only has an eternal purpose in adopting his children but also takes great delight in doing so (Eph 1:4-5). Paul's use of the preposition κατά, translated "according to," emphasizes that such an action was normal or standard.[86] It is God's nature to be affectionately disposed toward those he chooses to adopt into his family. Ἐκλέγομαι is the middle voice of ἐκλέγω. This is a blend word, blending εκ (out) and λέγω (to select or choose). The word intimates preference and a strong favorable attitude toward what is chosen.[87] Paul says that God himself chooses for himself, giving favor to those he chooses. Elsewhere the NT writers express praise and thanks for God's choosing act (2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2). Once again, Paul emphasizes that the blessings of adoption are not as a result of anything the person has done. The word and its use imply that it is clear that no one is bad enough, wicked enough, or have a horribly evil past, rendering them unable to share in the blessings of adoption. Having a filial relationship with God does not depend on the goodness or likeability of the child. It solely depends on the affection and loving grace of God to choose to adopt someone into his family.

God predetermined to adopt. What is more is that this was done "before the foundation of the world" (Rom 9:11; Acts 13:48; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 2:9). God's choosing was a predetermined decision made in eternity. Hodges' provides a helpful explanation of this concept along with some implications. He explains that people's idea of time arises from the "perception of motion or consciousness of succession."[88] What has been from eternity is said in Scripture to have been before the world was created. Hence the idea is

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[86] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 78-79.

[87] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 360.

[88] Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 30.

that all of creation exists in time and that at some unknown point in eternity past, God chose. Furthermore, there is a sense that as God has existed from all of eternity without a beginning that that likewise includes his purposes and intentions. So, it has always been the intention of God to choose to adopt and the disposition of God to be affectionate toward his adopted children.

Hodges provides two implications that should be considered. One, since God has done everything in time according to a preconceived plan, working all things according to his own will, then from eternity the whole scheme of redemption, with all its details and in all its results, "lay matured in the divine mind."[89] Thus, everything is certain. No plan of God fails and there is no change in purpose.[90] Therefore, the eternity of God's purpose to choose to adopt is strong ground for confidence and comfort for those who are the recipients of his affectionate grace. Two, since this affectionate grace was given before any person existed, before any evil or any good had been done, great humility should be produced in the adopted children of God.[91] Additionally, congruent to the context—a eulogy—the children of God should give thanksgiving, praise, and worship to their heavenly Father who initiated the relationship, bestowing upon his adopted children "*every spiritual* blessing in the *heavenly* places."[92]

Paul considers God's choice to adopt his people to be the clearest indicator of the lavish and extravagant nature of his grace. "In him" reiterates the godwardness of Paul's focus and emphasizes the security of God's choice and purpose. Adopted children are secure in their filial relationship and in their salvation, assuring them of their future

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[89] Hodge, *Ephesians*, 31.

[90] Job 42:2 states this concept clearly: "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted."

[91] Hodge, *Ephesians*, 31.

[92] Author emphasis.

hope, and freeing them from sin. It is through Jesus' death and resurrection that his

choosing was made effective in order to demonstrate his lavish and extravagant love and

grace toward his children. So, like Paul, if one is in Christ—has heard the Gospel, is

believing the Gospel, is sealed by the Holy Spirit—then he can rejoice and praise God

that that is true because God chose him before the foundation of the world. Every adopted

child of God was on God's mind in eternity past and he willfully chose to show his favor

and preference for them.

God delights in adoption. Paul proceeds to proclaim that God not only has an

eternal purpose in adopting his children but also takes great delight in it. The ESV

renders the translation of verse 5b as "according to the *purpose* of his will."[93] The NIV

and NKJV provide a more accurate translation: "in accordance with his *pleasure and*

will" (NIV); and "according to the *good pleasure of his will*."[94] Εὐδοκία does mean

purpose, but it carries with it the idea of favorable disposition and pleasure. A. T.

Robertson disagrees with this. He thinks it best to translate it more in line with βουλην,

which does have a more limited meaning of purpose or reflecting a decision made.[95]

However, there is much evidence to support understanding ευδοκία as the "good

pleasure" of God's will.

Secularly, ευδοκία was used to convey the acceptance of the terms of a

business transaction or contract, and to an enthusiastic agreement to marry someone or a

joyous consent to a decision made.[96] The LXX uses this verb often. Sometimes it means

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[93] Author emphasis.

[94] Author emphasis.

[95] A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Eph 1:5.

[96] See Ceslas Spicq and James D. Ernest, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 99-101 for a more detailed survey.

"to accept"[97] or "consent."[98] The verb is constantly applied to God, to his "will" as a matter of love with the nuance of "take pleasure in."[99] When used to speak of God's relations with humans, God is sovereign, benevolent and beneficent, absolutely free to dispense his favor; it is emphasized that he takes pleasure in doing good to his children.[100]

Turning to the NT, after the baptism of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit, "a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased"" (Matt 3:17, cf. Matt 17:5; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). God's pleasure is the joy of the love that he bears for Jesus. In the epistles, with people as the subject has the sense, "willing to accept," to express a more spontaneous initiative, undertaken gladly.[101] In 2 Corinthians 5:8 Paul expresses his love and hope to "be away from the body and at home with the Lord." "This is much more than a willingness to die; it is a positive desire, a joyful hope."[102] With respect to God, Jesus and Paul use the verb exactly according to its OT meaning as a matter of supreme, gratuitous initiative, of God's benevolent and effective will. With respect to the present passage, God has determined ahead of time that believers should be his adoptive sons by Jesus Christ: "according to his good pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

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[97] See Gen 33:10 and Judg 15:7 as examples.

[98] See Judg 11:17, "he would not consent"; 2 Chr 10:7, "if you will be good to this people"; Esth 4:17, "Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him."

[99] See Pss 40:13, 49:13; 51:21; 147:10-11; 149:4; Jer 2:10, 12; Hag 1:8; Mal 2:17 as examples.

[100] Spicq and Ernest, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, 101-2.

[101] See Rom 15:26-27 – "For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them"; 1 Thess 2:8 – "So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us"; 1 Thess 3:1 – "Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone"; 2 Cor 12:10 – "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities."

[102] Spicq and Ernest, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, 103.

The essence of God's action is captured well by Mark Stibbe. He says, "it pleased him to enfold us in the eternal family of faith. It brought him joy and thrilled his heart. Even though this adoption would not be cost-free, God did not undertake this task by gritting his teeth and clenching his fists. No, it was his pleasure as well as his will."[103] Later, practical ways parents can convey that rich and beautiful truth are discussed.

Permanence of the Filial Relationship
with God as Father

Vital to the theological framework of adoption to help shape an adopted child's self-perception is the permanence of the filial relationship it conveys. Paul's praise directs all the attention rightly to God. Again, every aspect of adoption is ordained by God. Children of God have nothing to do with the formation of this filial relationship. Paul draws the Ephesians' attention toward God and appropriately the character of God. Knowing who it is that is initiating with joy this permanent filial relationship is paramount to understanding the richness of these multiple blessings.

Aseity of God. It makes a difference to know whether the initiator of the relationship is compelled, or any way obligated to do so. In the adoption as the children of God, there is absolutely no outside force that compels God to do this. This magnifies the rich blessing of adoption. Spicq and Ernest make an important point by explaining that Paul's emphasis here is on the *absolute freedom of the divine decision*.[104] Garner says it exquisitely when he says, "*Coerced by none*, the triune God works according to his infinite wisdom and by his own kind initiative to create his redeemed family."[105] "Absolute freedom of the divine decision" and "coerced by none" are noteworthy

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[103] Quoted in Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 78.

[104] Spicq and Ernest, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, 106. Author emphasis.

[105] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 63. Author emphasis.

statements and what they express must not be overlooked. These phrases speak to what theologians call the "aseity of God."[106] The word comes from the Latin phrase "a se," meaning "from or by oneself." In regard to God, the term designates his divine attribute by which he is whatever he is by his own self or of his own self.[107] The main idea is that God depends on nothing other than himself for his existence.

Feinberg provides a helpful explanation of the aseity of God that is worthy of consideration.[108] He explains two ways of understanding the aseity of God. One, the very essence of God's being is within himself; he is self-existent. Thus, no one created him, and he is dependent on nothing but himself to sustain his existence.[109] Additionally, God is independent in his attributes. He depends on nothing other than himself in order to have the inherent attributes he possesses. The second aspect is that aseity expresses God's

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[106] See John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006); Bruce A. Ware, *God's Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004); John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1987); J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), 26-27; Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life*, 95-97; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 160-63; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 41-43; and Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1907), 256-57. Additionally, for an intriguing study on whether God's purpose to glorify himself interferes with his self-existence, see James Beilby, "Divine Aseity, Divine Freedom: A Conceptual Problem for Edwardsian-Calvinism," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 4 (2004): 645-58.

[107] Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1951), 142-43. Van Til says, "The Christian religion says that God is self-contained; that he can say 'I' without needing to relate himself to anything over against himself while doing so," in Cornelius Van Til, *The Protestant Doctrine of Scripture* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1967), 19. In his *Christian Apologetics*, he says, "God is self-sufficient or self-contained in his being. He therefore knows himself and all created existence by a single internal act of intuition" (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003, 7). Van Til quotes from John M. Frame, "Divine Aseity and Apologetics," in *Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Apologetics*, eds. K. Scott Oliphint and Lane G. Tipton (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007), 115-30.

[108] Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 239-43.

[109] Feinberg points out that there are some theologians who express this idea by saying that God is his own cause. However, there are many who dislike using that language, because they believe God is uncaused. They contend that to say that he is caused (even if he is the cause) might somehow give the impression he had to be brought into being.

independence in purposes and choices. His choices and purposes are independent of influences outside himself. This can also be referred to as self-determination. God has absolute self-determination, meaning that his choices depend on his own desires and purposes alone and that he has the ability to effectuate those choices. Feinberg points out that not everyone agrees with that second notion. Those encamped in process theology "staunchly protest that such a God is aloof from his creation, dominates it, and in no way is responsive to it or vulnerable before it."[110] Yet, Scripture reveals God as self-determining as much as he is self-existing. Daniel 4:35 reveals that God acts according to his own purposes and intentions and that nothing can alter what he intends to do. Romans 9:15-16 asserts that God is benevolent toward he chooses to bless and that his benevolence is not coerced or influenced by anyone except himself. Job 42:2 affirms that not only are his intentions self-determined, but that nothing can thwart them. In the present text, Paul declares that adoption is effectuated through the willful and free choice of God as he joyfully determined to do (Eph 1:5, 9; 11). Ps 115:3 clearly summarizes what God reveals about himself, "Our God is in the heavens; *he does all that he pleases*."[111]

In summation, God exists unto himself independent of all external forces and influences. He is not compelled by anyone; he does not need anyone's counsel; he was never created; and he is sustained by nothing other than himself. He cannot not exist. He cannot not know. When he chooses to effectuate his purposes, he is not coerced or compelled and there is nothing outside of him that demands that he actualize or carry out any plan in any particular way except by his own self-determined design and desire. When Paul uses the words "chose," "predestined," and "according to his good pleasure

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[110] Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 240. See also Bruce Ware's *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000).

[111] Author emphasis.

and will" he emphasizes the autonomous and benevolent will of God to act. The object of his affection does not entice him or lure him to act. There is nothing in a person that demands or compels God to act on his behalf. This is done solely and wholly by God's own self-determining, self-existing, and self-dependent will. He has affection for whom he chooses to have affection and to effectuate that affection through adoption.

It cannot be overstated that with absolute freedom of decision, coerced by none, independent of all, and with great pleasure, God adopts and places people into his family. Furthermore, what God has purposed in eternity cannot be thwarted, changed or overturned. God determined the believer's adoption and his desire was sovereignly brought to pass in time.[112] An adopted child's security and confidence in his filial relationship with God is actualized through the autonomous choice of God to initiate and effectuate the permanent filial relationship.

Redemption through Christ's death. Furthermore, the permanence of that relationship is made more certain by the means of God's provision to bring it about. Whereas the terms "chose," "predestined," and "pleasure and purpose" speak to the permanence of the filial relationship through God's self-determination to adopt; "redemption through his blood," "adoption to himself," and "to the praise of his glorious grace" speak to the permanence through God's supreme and divine acts to provide and effectuate believers' permanent filial relationship.

God's first and primary provision is his son, Jesus. Adoption is not possible without Christ. It is centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph 1:7). In this section (vv.1-14) the name or title "Christ" (or its equivalent or a personal pronoun) occurs no fewer than fifteen times. The phrase "in

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[112] Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 79.

Christ" (and its equivalents) appears eleven times.[113] The present tense verb, ἔχομεν ("we have"), indicates that Paul is speaking about redemption applied to the souls of believers, to whom he is writing. Paul has recounted God's predestined plan and purposes and now comes to the present blessing of redemption.

Paul's understanding of adoption is grounded in the person and work of Jesus Christ, God's Son. Thomas Smail warns that if Paul's adoption metaphor is taken out of its christological context people will misinterpret and misunderstand it.[114] Jesus is the redeemer of God's children. "Redemption" (ἀπολύτρωσις) is a blend word combining λυτρόω ("to loose") with the preposition ἀπό ("from"). At its rudimentary form it means "to loose from." Λυτρόω is pregnant with meaning, though, stemming from its three Hebrew equivalents—כֹּפֶר, גָּאַל, and פָּדָה.[115] כֹּפֶר carries with it the notion of "covering." When it is used it signifies a vicarious gift whose value covers a fault. גָּאַל is used with regard to a family member who rescues lives or goods from some form of bondage. This can also refer to redeeming someone from slavery (Lev 25:48). When applied to God it signifies a filial responsibility to redeem his elect. It is God who commits himself to redeem his children.[116] Büchsel underscores the importance of this word when he specifies its implication of assurance and security for the believer.[117] While גָּאַל emphasizes the subject of who redeems (a family member), פָּדָה makes no distinction. It does not matter who pays as long as the price for redemption is paid. Accordingly, the

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[113] O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 91.

[114] Quoted in Burke, *Adopted into God's Family*, 41-42.

[115] Friedrich Büchsel and Otto Procksch, "Λύω, Ἀναλύω, Ἀνάλυσις, Ἐπιλύω, Ἐπίλυσις, Καταλύω, Κατάλυμα, Ἀκατάλυτος, Λύτρον, Ἀντίλυτρον, Λυτρόω, Λύτρωσις, Λυτρωτής, Ἀπολύτρωσις," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) 4:329.

[116] The following passages draw out the comfort for God's people knowing he has obligated himself to redeem his elect (Isa 41:14; 43:14; 44:24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 60:16).

[117] Büchsel and Procksch, "Λύω," 331.

emphasis is on the payment.

Thus, ἀπολύτρωσις means to buy back or make free by payment of a ransom.[118] It was used in connection with manumission of captives or slave. Emancipation from servitude was understood in the first century as accomplished through payment of ransom.[119] It was also used in the sense of a debt to a deity. In this sense, a human sacrifice could be offered to deliver someone. In some cases, people would sacrifice their children in order to appease a god and avert destruction.[120] It is in this sense that Jesus' death has propitiatory value (1 Pet 1:19). People, being incapable of saving themselves from their slavery to darkness and sin (Matt 16:26; Rom 6:17, 20; Col 1:13) are redeemed through the death of Jesus Christ. His death is a ransom payment acceptable to God—an eternal redemption (Heb 9:12). It is forever valid, bringing eternal remission of sins whereby the redeemed belong to God forever.[121]

Barcellos notes four syntactical clusters contained in this verse worth mentioning.[122] All four clusters relate to the application of redemption. The first cluster contains the subject of this section—believers. The subject in the previous section (Eph 1:4–6) was God the Father. The subject in this section and vv. 13–14 is believers. Believers are the recipients of God's provision of Christ's past work and the result of that work—redemption. It is something they have from outside of themselves. God's pre-determined purpose is accomplished and applied by Christ. This is further illustrated by the antecedent to the relative phrase "in him" which begins verse 7. Believers "have

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[118] Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 117.

[119] Spicq and Ernest, *Theological Lexicon*, 425-26.

[120] Spicq and Ernest, *Theological Lexicon*, 428.

[121] Spicq and Ernest, *Theological Lexicon*, 428-29.

[122] Richard C. Barcellos, "Ephesians 1:8-10 In Light of Its Immediate Contextual Meaning and Redemptive-Historical/Canonical Context: God Getting Glory for Himself through the Work of the Redeemer and Reconciler of All Things," *The Reformed Baptist Theological Review* 7, no. 1 (2010): 11-14.

redemption" in a present and ongoing state.

The second cluster refers to the means for the application of redemption—"through his blood." "Blood" is best understood as a metonymy for death.[123] The actualization of believers' adoption was procured at a very great cost. In both the OT and NT blood is symbolic of a life taken violently and sacrificially. There is nothing magical in the blood itself. His blood is the ransom price paid for those God chose from before the foundation of the world (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 1:18-19; Rev 1:5, 5:9).

It is worth mentioning, though, that there is some controversy about whether Paul uses "blood" to denote a price paid.[124] Lincoln argues that while "redemption" and its cognates do retain the sense of liberation through payment both in biblical literature and nonbiblical literature, there are many uses that do not. Many of them are references to deliverance from danger and bondage where no notion of a ransom price is involved. He is right to say that ransom payment must not be insisted upon for all uses of ἀπολύτρωσις and to only insist upon it when it is explicit in the context. Central to his argument is Colossians 1:14 (this is mentioned by the others also).[125] In his mind it is a given that Colossians 1:14 is the source of Ephesians 1:7, so he insists that since the ransom price is not explicit in the Colossians text then it should not be insisted upon in the Ephesians text. Rightfully, he does not insist that "through the blood" is not in the

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[123] A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 25.

[124] Best, Lincoln, Abbot, Armitage and Büchsel and Procksh are among those who oppose the death of Christ as the intended ransom paid for redemption. Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 1998), 131; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 27-28; Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* (New York: Scribner, 1897), 11-13; Robinson J. Armitage, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Macmillan, 1903), 148; Büchsel and Procksch, "Λύω," 354-55.

[125] Büchsel and Procksh contend that other Pauline verses, such as Rom 3:24 and 1 Cor 1:30, do not have in view an act in virtue of which liberation comes ("Λύω," 354-55).

Ephesians text, but that διά ("through") with the genitive is not used to express cost but has instrumental force, meaning that Christ's death was merely an instrument God used to redeem believers. He concedes that the means of redemption was costly, but "this is not the same as insisting that it was actually intended to signify ransom price."[126] While he insists that context must explicitly teach ransom price when ἀπολύτρωσις is used, he appears to ignore context when he explains διά αὐτοῦ τοῦ αἵματος ("through his blood"). What other way is there for Paul to draw out the ransom price meaning of ἀπολύτρωσις then to add to it a means by which it was procured? The context clearly teaches that redemption was paid for by the high cost of Jesus' life. For Jesus himself said, "even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt 20:28). Elsewhere, Paul says Jesus "gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim 2:6). Peter says, "you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet 1:18). And in Revelation, Jesus is spoken of as one slain and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). About Colossians 1:14 it is important to note that in the nearby context (v. 20) is the phrase διά τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ τοῦ σταυρου ("by the blood of his cross"). It is clear that the redemption God obtained for his children was costly: the ransom paid was the very life of his son, Jesus Christ.

The third cluster is an addition to the application of redemption: "the forgiveness of our trespasses" (τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων). That noun phrase τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων is related appositionally to τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν. Forgiveness of sins is one of the many aspects of redemption, which ensures a reconciled relationship with God. Adopted children of God primarily experience liberation from the bondage and penalty of their sins through the forgiveness of their sins. Consequently, believers' sins

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[126] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 27-28.

are no longer held against them because of Christ's redemptive work. Furthermore, through redemption and forgiveness of sin, Christ's righteousness is imputed to the adopted children of God (2 Cor 5:21). Permanency is the key here. Whereas redemption means that the price has been paid to free believers from the bondage of sin, forgiveness means believers will never be held captive again. Believers have been forgiven their entire debt—sins of commission, omission, past, present, and future—so that nothing will (including one's sins) ever separate God's adopted children from the love of God through Jesus Christ (Rom 8:38-39). **"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1).**

Lastly, the fourth cluster has to do with the immeasurable standard of the application of redemption: "according to the riches of his grace" (κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ). The preposition κατὰ ("according to") introduces the standard of the application of redemption. The redemption that adopted believers have is not according to their intrinsic value or goodness, but according to the immeasurable value and wealth of God's grace. The term τὸ πλοῦτος connotes abundance and extravagance. making the notion of grace emphatic, while at the same time giving the impression of the inexhaustible resources of God's giving.[127] "His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning" (Lam 3:22-23). "God's grace is never depleted, always infinite, ever boundless, and eternally inexhaustible!"[128]

Jesus was crucified, died, was buried and rose from the grave according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3-8). On the basis of the efficacy of the death of Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, penalty, power, and one day the very presence of sin. Furthermore, the believer is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Rom 5:8-9; 2 Cor 5:14-15; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18). This

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[127] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 29.

[128] Barcellos, "Ephesians 1:8-10," 14.

extravagant blessing was actualized through the ransom payment of the blood of Christ; his sacrificial and substitutionary death on the cross. He willingly laid down His life for his adopted children as a substitute payment for their sins. Adopted children of God are secure and their relationship is made permanent by Jesus' literal, physical resurrection from the dead. These blessings are lavished upon God's adopted children wholly by God's grace on the basis of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ—the merit of his death, burial, and resurrection—and not on the basis of human merit or works.

Adoption is the "singular goal of redemptive history."[129] God adopts those in Christ through Christ, unveiling his will and purpose to unite all things in Christ (Eph 1:10). God chooses the metaphor of adoption with all its richly relational connotations to express his will and purpose to unite believers with the things on earth and heaven in Christ. This is an astounding reality of the identity of God's children that effects their perception of their life and circumstances and the way they correspondingly respond. God gathers everything to himself and adopting people to be his beloved children is part of that plan.

Promise of inheritance through the Holy Spirit. Finally, the permanent nature of the adoption relationship is seen in the privilege of filial inheritance and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Paul says that adopted children of God are sealed with the Holy Spirit, guaranteeing their future inheritance. To be sealed denotes the idea of being marked with a seal as a means of identification.[130] Using seals is an ancient custom, serving to identify things with a sign, figure, letter, or words, or a combination of these.[131] The seal served as a legal protection and guarantee in a variety of ways, but was

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[129] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 143.

[130] Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 980.

[131] Gottfried Fitzer, "Σφραγίς, Σφραγίζω, Κατασφραγίζω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids:

especially used in relation to property. Any property or possessions could be marked as belonging to a particular person.[132] Paul's use of σφραγίζω ("seal") in the context of God's predetermined plan to adopt his children emphasizes the certainty and reliability of the accomplished adoption. God has made his children his inviolable possession.[133] The Holy Spirit is God's seal, identifying his children as his possession, guaranteeing all the blessings in the heavenly places as their future and promised inheritance. It is good as theirs, because God has placed his seal, identifying them as eternally his. Only one who belongs to God would be marked in this way.[134]

Commenting on this verse, Lincoln views the sealing as going further to also include the stamping of God's holy character.[135] That appears to stretch the metaphor beyond Paul's intended use. The emphasis throughout has been on God's predetermined activity to adopt children as his own for eternity. Paul's emphasis in these verses is on the foundational aspects of what Christ accomplished for believers in his redemptive work, any impression of God's character on believers would only be a secondary element.[136]

Again, sealing with the Holy Spirit confirms God's ownership and protection of his children permanently. It happens at conversion when the Holy Spirit indwells the believer as initiated by God and is grounded on the redemptive work of Christ. Moreover, since believers are God's inviolable property, he will protect them. Thus, believers can enjoy complete security in their permanent and protected relationship with their heavenly father. This conclusion is made more certain by Paul's statements that connect the sealing

Eerdmans, 1971), 7:939.

[132] Fitzer, "Σφραγίς, Σφραγίζω, Κατασφραγίζω," 940-41.

[133] Fitzer, "Σφραγίς, Σφραγίζω, Κατασφραγίζω," 949.

[134] Fitzer, "Σφραγίς, Σφραγίζω, Κατασφραγίζω," 951.

[135] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 307.

[136] Eldon Woodcock, "The Seal of the Holy Spirit," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (1998): 148.

with the Holy Spirit to ἀρραβών ("guarantee").[137]

"Guarantee" refers to a down payment or earnest money given to secure a purchase. Later it came to represent any sort of pledge or earnest.[138] This denotes the idea that the fulfillment of payment was yet to come. In describing the indwelling Holy Spirit as the believer's ἀρραβών Paul intends to convey the consistent idea that the permanence of the filial relationship is founded upon an unsolicited and gracious gift by the completely faithful God, who always fulfills his promises. Woodcock rightly contends that unlike people, who require down payments and pledges to keep all parties accountable to the agreed upon transaction, the undeniably faithful God does not require such a device to discourage him from changing his mind or not taking his obligations seriously.[139] God graciously led Paul to use imagery that would assure believers of the reality of his guarantee.

Although this divine inheritance in Christ is a spectacular and awesome promise from the Lord, it is not the primary purpose of believers' adoption.[140] Adoption, with all of the promises, blessings, and privileges are all bestowed with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory. The great, superseding purpose of God's redemption is rescuing what is his. Paul elsewhere says Christ gave himself for his children to redeem them for his own possession (Titus 2:14; 1 Pet 2:9). As already proclaimed by Paul (vv. 6 and 12), God's goal for adoption and redemption is for the praise of his glory. When adopted children glorify themselves as the recipients of such divine grace, they take away from God what is wholly his.[141] This is wholly realized

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[137] Woodcock, "The Seal of the Holy Spirit," 150.

[138] Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 134.

[139] Woodcock, "The Seal of the Holy Spirit," 153.

[140] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 41.

[141] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 41.

at the consummation of God's redemption and adoption, whereby he perfectly possesses his children and his children perfectly enjoy their spiritual and eternal inheritance.

As the self-existing God, he deposits the Holy Spirit in the hearts of his children, obligating himself to bestow upon them subsequently the full remainder of all the blessings of salvation merited for them by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. This complete and full inheritance is God's gracious gift, not bought with money, or earned by labor, or won by victory. Paul points to the end and purpose of God's gracious activity— his praise and glory. God is the beginning and the end of believers' adoption. Elsewhere Paul says, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the *Holy Spirit within you*, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for *you were bought with a price. So glorify God* in your body" (1 Cor 6:19–20).[142]

The intended purpose of these blessings of adoption is to glorify God. It is an appropriate end, just as it was an appropriate beginning, for adoption is the "singular goal of redemptive history."[143] Paul began in verse 3 with praise, proclaiming the self-determined plan of God to adopt in eternity past (v. 4), the actualization of adoption through the redemptive work of Christ (v. 7), and the future consummation of adoption with a wholly realized inheritance (v. 14). Everything adopted children have in Christ comes from God and returns to God, beginning in his will and ending in his glory. It is God-centered from beginning to end.[144]

Adoption as an "Already" and "Not Yet" Experience of Salvation (Rom 8:12-17)

This dissertation argues that caregivers positively influence a child's perception of his own adoption experience by modeling for him the doctrine of adoption

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[142] Author emphasis.

[143] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 143.

[144] Boice, *Ephesians*, 32.

as an aspect of salvation in Christ. The particular focus within the adoption experience is the adopted child's broken sense of identity in relationship and the fallout in the child's responses in the present situation. This dissertation argues that the doctrine of adoption, dynamically lived out by adoptive parents, gives the framework for bringing restoration to the child's self-perception in relationship. The key element of the doctrine on display in the parent's conduct toward the child is the filial permanence of union with Christ. The study of key texts, such as Galatians 4:1-7 and Ephesians 1:3-14, yields the theological identity that those who are adopted by God have a connected, personal, and filial relationship with God as father characterized by affection and permanence that originates in the eternally past choosing of God.

A third key text is Romans 8:12-17. As with the Galatians and Ephesians' texts, an exegetical study of Romans is necessary to see the meaning and purpose of υἱοθεσία toward the development of the doctrine of adoption in order to show what relationship the theology of adoption has to adopted children, advancing a theology of the experience of adopted children, especially focusing on the adopted child's conscious awareness of adoption and how that informs his self-perception.

Filial Obligation of Adopted
Children to God as Father

Similar to how Paul's uses υἱοθεσία in Galatians and Ephesians, he intends for the metaphor as a descriptor of believers to affect believers' self-perception, which in turn affects their assessment of their circumstances and brings about particular responses to those circumstances. One's theology affects one's perception of self, which in turn affects one's assessment of and response to life's circumstances. This is what Paul contends in much of his writings and in particular to adoption here in Romans 8:12-17.[145]

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[145] See Paul's exhortations in Romans 6. There, he argues for believers to regularly consider who they are as a motivation and guide for how to live one's life. Additionally, consider Ephesians 4, Colossians 3, and Philippians 1 and 2 as clear examples of Paul's consistent message that doctrine affects

Paul is clear that Christ gives life to believers and in these verses, he draws out the implications. Morris states it plainly, "It is important that those who are Christ's live as those who are Christ's."[146] Cranfield adds that the privilege of adoption, by which believers may address the one and only God by the name of Father, naturally leads believers to wholeheartedly think and respond to life's circumstances in a way that is pleasing to God and avoid everything which would displease him.[147]

Before moving forward into the text, it is important to note that there is a rich history of exegetical endeavors surrounding this text. C. M. Kempton Hewitt provides a helpful historical overview of the interpretation of Romans with particular emphasis on Romans 8:12-17.[148] He presents a description of the opinions of major interpreters from as early as Origen[149] to theologians writing around the close of World War I. He stipulates the impossibility of reporting on every theologian who has written on this passage, but through his survey of major works over time, he points out at least twenty-two exegetical problems derived from his review. However, his main purpose is to point out major shifts that have occurred over time in conclusions made by theologians writing at different stages in church history.

He concludes that there exists no real consensus of agreement as to the

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self-perception and self-perception affects the way one lives.

[146] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1988), 311.

[147] C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 1:393.

[148] C. M. Kempton Hewitt, "Life in the Spirit: A Study in the History of Interpretation of Romans 8:12-17" (PhD diss., Durham University, 1969).

[149] Origen's "Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans" is the oldest extant commentary on Romans (ca. 246). His commentary on Romans is one of his longest and most mature works, and the only commentary of Origen available in a coherent form from beginning to end. It was originally composed in Greek in Caesarea, but only fragments of the archetype have survived. Rufinus of Aquileia later translated the work into Latin (ca. 406). See Origen, *Commentary on Romans*, (Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

problems presented. He provides two examples, which are of great importance. One, theologians have contended over to whom believers are obligated in verse 12.[150] This is addressed in the exposition of verse 12. Two, in verse 17 where Paul speaks plainly about the necessity of suffering on the part of believers, there is no agreement as to what the suffering consists of. Neither is there agreement as to how the conditional clause in verse 17 is to be construed.[151] Likewise, this is addressed in the exposition of verse 17.

Hewitt makes a couple more helpful conclusions as it pertains to understanding Romans 8:12-17. In looking back over the centuries of exegesis, Hewitt astutely observes the tenacity of theologians over time to exegete and exposit Scripture for the purpose of interpreting theologically for their own life and the lives of those around them the meaning of God's Word in relation to the church and the world. Hewitt bemoans the subjective observation that many theologians in his day do not have such tenacity.[152] He calls for a revival of such a kind and this author cannot agree more. The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a theological understanding of the doctrine of adoption for the life of an adopted child and how his parents can help parent in such a way as to help their child develop a theological identity, which will affect his perception of his circumstances, specially his adoption circumstance, and beget theologically discerned responses to his circumstances.

Lastly, Hewitt rightly observes that one's understanding of Paul's anthropology is fundamental to the interpretation of this passage.[153] Yet, he appears to contradict his observation when he minimizes the efforts of exegetes to understand the

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[150] Hewitt, "Life in the Spirit," 700-701.

[151] Hewitt, "Life in the Spirit," 701.

[152] Hewitt, "Life in the Spirit," 702.

[153] Hewitt, "Life in the Spirit," 703.

background and technical use of the words "adoption" and "inheritance."[154] Paul's understanding of anthropology is critical to interpreting this passage, which includes the technical use of "adoption" and "inheritance," because those terms are not independent of a biblical anthropology. They imply anthropology. Paul uses those terms due to his supposed anthropology. Believers are adopted because by nature they are children of the devil, enslaved by sin; they have an inheritance in Christ because by nature they are children of wrath destined to experience the full weight of God's just judgment. That said, Hewitt's observation is still very important, especially as it pertains to the systematic revelation of the influence self-perception has on the way people live.

Identity precipitates behavior. Every person has a particular view of self. And again, that view of self affects one's perception of his circumstances and how to respond to those circumstances. Hence, one's view of self informs and shapes one's character, because identity affects behavior and behavior over a period of time shapes one's character. Paul drives this point home here by showing that believers are legitimate and permanent children of God and that their identity in Christ drives how believers behave in response to life's circumstances. Thus, one's identity must be a theological identity. This is an identity that is based solely on the character of God and what he reveals about people in his inerrant and all-sufficient word. In a later chapter, practical strategies for conveying this theological understanding to adoptive children that involve not just teaching, but modeling these truths are discussed. Again, the purpose of this chapter is to lay down the theological framework first.

Adoption into God's family severs obligation to the former relationship.
One might summarize the meaning of what Paul is saying to believers in Romans 8:12-17 as follows: Believers are children of God, made possible by adoption through the work of

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[154] Hewitt, "Life in the Spirit," 704.

Christ and the Holy Spirit. As such, believers enjoy the privileges of the indwelling and empowering Holy Spirit, direct filial communication with God in prayer, and the hope of a future inheritance as a legitimate child of God. This leads to a life without the fear of eternal judgment, for the Holy Spirit transforms those who were once slaves to sin, with its present consequences and the bleak prospect of God's just judgment in the future, to children, who no longer live in fear of God's judgment, because they will inherit God himself, being made righteous by the work of Christ to redeem them, making possible their adoption as God's permanent children. Paul assures believers with the conscious awareness that as children of God they no longer follow a path that leads to death, but rather one that leads to life; guaranteed by the Holy Spirit.[155]

Consequently, said privileges are not without the proper obligations and responsibilities. "So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh" (Rom 8:12). Thomas Schreiner provides helpful insight into the nature of this passage. This is not to be understood strictly as an exhortation by Paul, but a result or consequence of identity.[156] In other words, in light of who a believer is naturally lends itself to a particular way of perceiving life and behaving. It is not to say that an exhortation is not implicit, but unlike Cranfield, who holds to a more explicit exhortation,[157] Schreiner contends that the wording of the text suggests that the conclusion Paul articulates relates to the indicative that believers are no longer debtors to the flesh. Morris concurs, commenting that ἄρα ("so then") as an inferential particle introduces the logical consequences for the change in the believer's identity.[158] Not

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[155] C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed., Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1991), 152.

[156] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 419.

[157] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:394.

[158] Morris, *Romans*, 311.

unlike Schreiner, though, he notes that there is a strong implication of obligation; an implicit exhortation.[159]

Accordingly, this denotes a change in status or better yet, a change in identity. As Paul proclaims in Romans preceding the current passage, the identity of believers has been radically changed. Believers are no longer dead in their trespasses and sins and they are no longer slaves to sin. They are made righteous, they are redeemed, they are children of God, and coheirs with Christ. Chiefly, according to Romans 8:5-11, believers are in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Therefore, believers are no longer in debt or obligated in any way to live according to the flesh, not necessarily by command, but by natural implication. One's identity naturally affects the way one lives his life. Essentially, Paul is shaping the believer's understanding of his theological identity so to affect his perception of life and responses to life's circumstances not by way of explicit command, but by way of logical implication of his theological identity.

Paul begins by explaining that one's identity explicitly implies negatively not living one way and implicitly implies the positive way which the believers would live.[160] "He explains in what sense believers are not debtors to the flesh: they are no longer subject to its tyranny and mastery in terms of their everyday life."[161] Due to the believer's change in identity, he has no obligation to his former family.[162] Prior to his conversion he was a slave to the devil and to his own passions, naturally living life according to the flesh. He concentrated on his self, his human life in and for itself, apart from God.[163]

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[159] Morris, *Romans,* 311.

[160] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:393.

[161] Schreiner, *Romans*, 419.

[162] Prior to one's conversion, as noted earlier, believers are the children of the devil, sons of disobedience, and children of wrath (John 8:44; Eph 2:1-3).

[163] Barrett, *Romans*, 152.

Such a life, as Paul specifies, can only have one end, namely death.

Putting an end to such a deadly life is a matter of occupying oneself with the right perception of self. Paul makes this plain earlier in his letter, "so you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:11). Similar to the present passage, Paul draws a logical conclusion to the theological fact that believers are in Christ and share in both his death and resurrection. Thus, one must "consider" this theological reality: believers are dead to sin and alive to God. And that consideration naturally leads to a particular way of living, which is described in verses 12 and following as a life no longer obedient to selfish passions, but rather life whereby the believer is preoccupied with pleasing God through righteous living.

The word λογίζομαι ("consider") means to reckon, consider, ponder, or be preoccupied in thought about.[164] It is an imperative, present, middle form, meaning that Paul is commanding believers to an ongoing preoccupation within their own minds with their theological identity. This verse flows naturally from the theology stated in the indicatives prior to this verse and offers a logical transition from theology to practice. Again, one's theology affects one's life. Paul is clear about the close relationship between theology and one's perception of self, life's circumstances, and one's responses to those circumstances. He moves seamlessly from the indicatives of the believer's theological identity to the imperative and implications pertaining to his theological identity.

"Consider" is a key verb of action. As children of God, believers identify, consider, think upon themselves as dead to sin, no longer obligated to live accordingly. Why? Because this is who God reveals believers to be. He determines and declares the believer's identity. As with any other body of information, believers discern truth from error according to the Word of God, and one's identity is certainly not the exception. What will believers believe about themselves? Where will they turn to determine their

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[164] Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 598.

self-perception? What are the natural implications from their self-perception?

In Romans 8, Paul likewise argues for one's theological identity to affect the way one lives. If the indwelling Spirit has given life, which he has, then believers cannot conceivably live according to the flesh, since that way leads to death. The logical question is how can a child of God possess life and pursue death simultaneously? Such an inconsistency between a believer's theological identity and how he behaves is "unthinkable, even ludicrous."[165] Therefore, the child of God is no longer obligated to his former relationship as a child of the devil; determining his identity and self-perception by the patterns and ideologies of the world, living accordingly to those worldly precepts.

Adoption into God's family naturally obliges believers to God. To whom then is the believer obligated? As noted earlier, this has been a contentious exegetical question that cannot be ignored. Paul plainly and explicitly states that believers are not obligated to live according to the flesh, and by way of implication, especially given the flow of argument in the verses that follow, believers are obligated to live according to the Spirit.[166] Are they obligated to the Spirit, to Jesus, or to God as their father? Given the context, singling one out from the others seems inappropriate and dangerous of misrepresenting the nature of God as a triune God—one God, existing as three persons. This is the robust nature of Paul's argument. Believers have an obligation to the triune God. Why? Because of some legal requirement? No. Because of the filial relationship that now exists between believer and God.

Therefore, as Paul argues in verse 12, as a result of God's grace to redeem and regenerate the believer, he has now an obligation to live in accordance to his filial

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[165] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 227.

[166] James Montgomery Boice, *Romans: The Reign of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 2:824.

relationship with God.[167] Paul teaches believers about their identity in Christ and their subsequent obligation to live a particular way; to respond to life's circumstances in a way that is pleasing to their father. Paul makes theological declarations about the believer's identity in Christ to promote and provoke believers to perceive and respond to life in a particular way that is commensurate with who they are declared to be. Believers are motivated by their filial relationship with God, which is a natural consequence of their new identity.

Paul argues that Christians have an obligation to live according to the Holy Spirit, rather than according to the sinful nature. Boice helpfully articulates the three reasons Paul gives for this. Due to the believer's new identity: (1) he has been delivered from the wrath of God against him for his sin and been brought into an entirely new realm, the sphere of God's rule in Christ; (2) he has been given a new nature, being made alive to spiritual things to which he was previously dead; and (3) he has been assured of an entirely new destiny in which not only will he live with God forever, but even his physical body will be resurrected.[168] Additionally, the Holy Spirit assures believers of these realities, producing peace and confidence rather than fear.

Moreover, these are benefits God has given. Believers have not done them for themselves. Likewise, believers are not obligated to live in a particular way to earn those benefits. It is not that some meritorious achievement is required, it is because the two identities (child of the devil and child of God) are incompatible.[169] This is important to note. The believer's new identity and status deems the deeds of the flesh—flesh itself—incompatible with who he is as an adopted child of God now indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

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[167] Boice contends that "therefore" ("so then" in the ESV) is perhaps the most important word in verses 12 and 13. See Boice, *Romans,* 2:823.

[168] Boice, *Romans*, 2:824.

[169] Morris, *Romans*, 312.

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Believers are never earning the right or meriting this status. It is the believer's definite status that deems such living incompatible with what believers already possess and who they already are. Thus, Paul relies on motivations drawn from the filial relationship believers have been granted through adoption not on motivations drawn from a desire to earn God's benefits. But, says Paul, because God has granted believers these benefits then they have an obligation "to live like God has lived."[170] Paul gives a description of the believer: his status, his present experience, his character, and his hope of a future and then draws on the believer's theological identity to present him with a solemn obligation.[171] Negatively, believers are not obligated to the flesh; to live according to the patterns of the world, or according to their passions. Rather, they are obligated to live by the Spirit, putting to death "the deeds of the body." It would simply be unnatural for the adopted child of God to do otherwise. Boice summarizes this bluntly when he concludes that if one lives like he is not a child of God, dominated by his sinful nature rather than living according to the Holy Spirit, he will perish like he is not a child of God, because he is not a child of God.[172] One life simply excludes the other. "There is a living that is death and there is a putting to death that is life."[173]

What then is "putting to death that is life" that the children of God are naturally obligated to do? Putting to death the deeds of the body means killing them off, getting rid of them altogether.[174] The verb θανατόω is in the present tense, denoting a continuous activity on the part of the believer. It is not something that the believer can do once and for all and be done with. It is a daily obligation. This is natural considering that the

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[170] Boice, *Romans*, 2:824.

[171] Boice, *Romans*, 2:824.

[172] Boice, *Romans*, 2:826.

[173] Morris, *Romans*, 312.

[174] Morris, *Romans*, 312.

identity of the believer is permanent and so just as the state of the believer as a child of God never ends, so then neither does the obligation to put to death the deeds of the body. Since the believer is no longer obligated to his former relational status then the deeds that accompanied such a life must be killed.

This life represents the present reality of the adopted child of God and by implication is a life of strain and struggle. As Schreiner notes, θανατόω reveals that the desires to carry out the deeds of the body are so exceedingly strong that the overcoming of them is best described as putting to death that which is longing to burst forth into life.[175] Furthermore, this activity is only successful by means of the Holy Spirit. Believers will only conquer sinful passions by relying on and trusting in the Spirit to provide the strength to resist the passions that wage war within them.[176] The strain and struggle implied appears to be one aspect of suffering in this present life that the adopted child is obligated to experience. This is developed more when verse 17 is considered.

What then does the strain and struggle look like? What is the child of God to do to put to death the deeds of the body? Stott provides a helpful explanation.[177] First, putting to death the deeds of the body is neither masochism nor asceticism. The believer neither takes pleasure in inflicting pain upon himself, nor is he resenting and rejecting that people have natural bodily appetites. Rather, believers have clear-sighted recognition of evil as evil, which leads to a decisive repudiation of it that putting it to death is the most logical response. This means that every use of one's body (eyes, ears, mouth, hands or feet) which serves self through sinful responses and behavior rather than God according to his wisdom and will must be mortified.

Second, putting to death the deeds of the body is something that believers have

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[175] Schreiner, *Romans*, 421.

[176] Schreiner, *Romans*, 421-22.

[177] Stott, *The Message of Romans,* 228-30.

to do. Passivity has no place in the life of the believer. There is no question of dying or of being put to death, but of putting to death. Believers are disposed toward initiation and execution. The believer does not wait for it to be done to him or for him. On the contrary, the child of God is responsible for putting evil to death. Now there is cooperative effort here. This is impossible without the Holy Spirit and he is faithful to provide the desire, and the strength, ensuring success through the believer's dependence on the Spirit. Paul makes this plain in his letter to the Philippians when he clearly exhorts the believers to "work out their salvation" knowing that "it is God who works" in them (Phil 2:12-13). Nevertheless, believers must take the initiative to act.

Negatively, this means repudiating everything that the believer knows to be wrong and responding to that knowledge by disavowing and refusing to think about how to gratify it or live it out no matter how appealing it might be. Stott makes an astounding comment about this that controverts what many would say is the mentally and emotionally appropriate way to respond. Repressing one's passions is seen as unhealthy, whereas Stott says, "This is not an unhealthy form of repression."[178] To the contrary, it is the opposite. Believers have to scrutinize and discern those evil wants and denounce them, even hate them for what they are. Moreover, when temptation comes, the believer must be ruthless in controlling any approach of sin. Positively, believers set their hearts and affections on the things the Spirit desires, occupying their thoughts with what is right and pleasing to the Father. In this way putting to death the deeds of the body and wanting what is good are counterparts, continually living congruent to the believer's theological identity.

Third, the believer's theological identity as an adopted child becomes the appropriate motivation for such a lifestyle of responding to the desire to disobey and sin by aggressively repudiating the desire and putting it to death. It most definitely suggests

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[178] Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 229.

an unpleasant and even painful business. To which the child of God must endure daily. It contradicts the natural tendency to please self and live for self. Living this way is somewhat easy, because it essentially entails doing what one feels like doing without any resistance or repudiation. There is a sense that living according to the desires of the flesh brings a sense of relief. Superficially, it does seem mentally and emotionally unhealthy to deny what the body wants. Thus, if the believer is to engage in putting to death the deeds of the flesh, then he will need strong motives. As an adopted child of God there is the obligation to the indwelling Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the adopted child of God has been removed from a family that is headed to destruction and death and placed into a family that is destined for life.

Paul provides such an astounding promise in verse 13—life. Paul is not contradicting himself by saying that the believer must earn life by self-denial. Schreiner believes that the life (ζήσεσθε) referred to by Paul denotes eschatological life.[179] He disagrees with Stott's conclusion that Paul is referring to the life here and now.[180] Both are right. Herein is the already and not yet tension of the believer's adoption. There is a life to be enjoyed here and now—a rich, abundant, satisfying life that can be enjoyed by believers as they live a life of dying to self, putting to death the deeds of the body. This is, indeed, a healthy way to live. One must not underestimate the indescribable peace and joy that comes from repudiating sinful living and embracing God's purpose, goodness, and wisdom, enjoying unhindered filial fellowship with God as father. For even Paul exhorted Timothy to train himself for godliness, contending that godliness is of comprehensive value, "as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come" (1 Tim 4:7-8). Clearly, Paul was comfortable with the tension of what is enjoyed in the present and what is not yet realized.

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[179] Schreiner, *Romans*, 421.

[180] Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 229.

Life through death is the common and outstanding paradox of the gospel. Through Christ the adopted child of God enjoys the benefits of redemption, forgiveness, and salvation. According to Paul, only by putting to death the deeds of the body do the children of God experience the full life of their filial relationship with God as father both in the present and in the life to come. Therefore, just as the believer must define who they are by God's revealed Word, so too, they must define both life and death. Life, according to the world, is life lived for self. It is a life characterized by self-love, self-actualization, and self-empowerment, which in reality is self-indulgence. This life leads to alienation from God, which is death. Contrarily, putting to death the deeds of the body, which the world sees as an unhealthy and undesirable self-depravation, is really the way to genuine life.[181]

Assurance of Filial Relationship
to God as Father

Genuine life for the believer comes through the gracious and loving action of God to adopt sinners to be his legitimate children. However, with adoption often times comes doubt. Especially, as it pertains to physical adoption. This can easily cause children to not only question the legitimacy of their filial relationship, but also question their own identity. Again, this dissertation contends that parents positively influence their child's self-perception by modeling for him the doctrine of adoption. When parents dynamically live out the doctrine of adoption, they provide the necessary framework for bringing their child to a theological understanding of his identity.

The Holy Spirit reinforces one's confidence that he is a child of God. As Paul makes clear, the theological framework and its implications for the experience of adopted children is not a complete framework without the Holy Spirit. Thus, Paul

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[181] Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 230.

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continues in this passage to assure the believer about his identity in Christ. He has shown the intimate connection between the believer's perception of self and the believer's lifestyle. And, he has professed the importance of the believer's perception being informed by God's revelation. Like with any form of knowledge or wisdom, what God says is to be trusted, particularly when he is informing his children about their identity. Moreover, it is important to note that this identity is more about a relationship than a status.[182] While a status is bestowed and radically transformed in the life of a believer, adoption speaks more to the believer's identity as it pertains to his relationship, and especially his relationship to God, but also includes his relationship to other believers as brothers and sisters. "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:4-6). Believers must have a theological identity, and that identity, as Paul contends affects the way that believers both interpret and respond to their circumstances.

In verse 14, Paul begins to argue for the assurance of the believer's theological identity and that assurance rests on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The γάρ ("for") in verse 14 indicates that the verse elucidates and reiterates in different terms what Paul says in verse 13.[183] Verse 14 clarifies by saying that those who are the children of God, that is, truly part of the people of God, are those who are led by the Spirit of God. The leading of the Spirit is a distinguishing sign of God's sons, not the making of God's sons.[184] Every child of God is led by the Spirit. Believers not only belong to the family of God, but they act like it.

Nevertheless, the passage concerns the witness the Spirit bears believers,

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[182] Boice, *Romans,* 2:840.

[183] Schreiner, *Romans*, 422.

[184] Morris, *Romans*, 313.

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assuring them of their identity in Christ through adoption.[185] How exactly does the Spirit do this? As noted, the Spirit leads believers into holiness, leading and helping believers put to death the deeds of the body and live according to the Spirit. The Spirit renews the believer's mind.[186] This, the Spirit does as the believer interacts with God's Word. The Spirit has authored Scripture and enables the believer to warmly welcome it, believe it, understand it, and submit to it.[187] God has given the Bible to inform and to enlighten the minds of his children in order to direct their thinking rightly, so that they will perceive themselves and life's circumstances rightly.

Furthermore, the Spirit replaces fear with peace (Rom 8:15a). Paul characterizes the slavery of one's sin and efforts to remedy the problem of sin by human effort as living in a state of constant fear. And for good reason. No one is capable of remedying the problem outside the gracious and loving work of God through Christ. The author of Hebrews says that through Christ's death he destroys death and delivers the children of God from the fear of death, which the author describes as "lifelong slavery" (Heb 2:14-15). Elsewhere, John speaks to the fact that love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). Due to the change in the person's status and identity—now a child of God—there is no longer any fear of punishment.[188] The one who continues enslaved to the fear of punishment has "not been perfected in love." Herein lies evidence and confirmation of the child of God's legitimate and permanent filial relationship with God through

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[185] Stott, *The Message of Romans*, 230.

[186] Boice, *Romans,* 2:834.

[187] Paul describes the believers in Thessalonica as those who "accepted" the word of God for what it is—the word of God (1 Thess 2:13). This was evidence that they were indeed believers. Likewise, Paul explains the work of the Spirit as the one who enables the believer to comprehend God's Word in 1 Cor 2:6-16, especially verse 12. As Paul proclaims similarly in Rom 8:14, this is the work of the Spirit to authenticate the person as a child of God.

[188] See Cranfield and Boice's analyses of the different views of and their understanding of what Paul means by the use of πνεῦμα δουλείας and πνεῦμα υἱοθεσίας ("spirit of slavery" and "spirit of adoption"): Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:396-97; Boice, *Romans*, 2:838-40.

Adoption. And this theological identity affects the way the believer perceives and responds to life's circumstances. Knowing that one's greatest need—salvation from the punishment and enslavement of sin—is met; brings peace, security, confidence, and comfort. The child of God is never to tremble with fear or be tormented with anxiety. Far from it. God's wrath has been appeased forever, and since the believer has been adopted into the family of God, he may turn to his Father with utter calmness, and with the full confidence that God will never turn him away. All this embodies the believer's identity. All this is secured in adoption.[189]

Adoption as the sons of God changes the person's identity and that identity comes with magnificent privileges and as Paul contends those privileges promote certain responsibilities. However, there is a sense that even those responsibilities are portrayed as privileges. For it is a privilege that the believer is adopted and to live with such an identity that affects perception and response to life's circumstances. The believer no longer lives in fear and is no longer obligated to live according to the flesh, meaning that the child of God has the privilege by his new identity to live according to the Spirit, where otherwise, he would not. It is worth noting that there is obvious similarities between Paul's argument in Galatians 4:3-7 and Romans 8:2-17 and as such, they together show that before the cross, people (both Jew and Gentile) lived as slaves to the flesh, carrying out the deeds of the flesh, being corrupted and headed to an eternal punishment; but as a result of God's gracious adoption they (both Jew and Gentile) receive the Holy Spirit and become "sons" and "heirs," no longer obligated to the deeds of the flesh.[190]

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[189] Donald Grey Barnhouse, *God's Heirs: Romans 8:1-39* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963), 89.

[190] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996). Moo provides the following comparison: Gal 4:3b: ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ἤμεθα δεδουλωμένοι ("we were enslaved under the elemental spirits of the world"); Rom 8:2b: ἠλευθέρωσεν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου ("… set you free from the law of sin and death"). Gal 4:4a: ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου ("when the

The Holy Spirit enables the child of God to communicate closely with God. Moreover, God assures the believer of his adoption through the Spirit by granting the privilege of intimate and filial communication. Believers are given the privilege and right not only to address God but to address him as "father." This privilege must not be underestimated. To appreciate the significance of this in the believer's life, it is important to understand what exactly Paul means when he writes, κράζομεν, Αββα ὁ πατήρ ("we cry, 'Abba! Father!'"). Schreiner warns, though, that a focus on the background and meaning of the terms υἱοθεσία and Αββα may minimize or distract from the main point that those liberated through adoption are no longer enslaved to sin and that believers as children of God is inseparable from the obedience of believers.[191] This is a helpful warning. No study of background and meaning should be done to the detriment of the point and argument of the text. However, the background and meaning of these words is essential to understanding the point of Paul's argument.

Αββά as the chatter of a child. The meaning of ἀββά ὁ πατήρ must be considered and related to the adoption metaphor Paul employs. There is much research and debate surrounding the precise meaning, including but not limited to its use and

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fullness of time came"); Gal 4:4b: ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός, γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον ("God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law"); Rom 8:3b: ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱὸν πέμψας ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας ("God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh"). Gal 4:5a: ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ ("in order to redeem those under the law"); Rom 8:3c: καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί ("and as a sin offering, he condemned sin in the flesh"). Gal 4:5b: ἵνα τὴν υἱοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν ("in order that we might receive adoption"); Rom 8:15b: ἀλλὰ ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα υἱοθεσίας ("but you received the Spirit of adoption"). Gal 4:6: ὅτι δέ ἐστε υἱοί, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ εἰς καρδίας ἡμῶν κρᾶζον: αββα ὁ πατήρ ("because you are sons, God has sent forth his Spirit into your hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father' "); Rom 8:15c: ἐν ᾧ κράζομεν: αββα ὁ πατήρ ("in which we cry, 'Abba, Father' "); cf. 9b: πνεῦμα θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν ("the Spirit of God dwells in you"). Gal 4:7a: ὥστε οὐκέτι εἶ δοῦλος ἀλλὰ υἱός ("so that you are no longer a slave, but a son"); Rom 8:15a: οὐ γὰρ ἐλάβετε πνεῦμα δουλείας πάλιν εἰς φόβον ("for you did not receive the Spirit of slavery again unto fear"). Gal 4:7b: εἰ δὲ υἱός, καὶ κληρονόμος διὰ θεοῦ ("and if a son, then also an heir through God"); Rom 8:17a: εἰ δὲ τέκνα, καὶ κληρονόμοι ("and if children, then also heirs").

[191] Schreiner, *Romans*, 424-25.

origin.[192] The word is used in its Aramaic form by Jesus (Mark 14:36) and Paul (Rom 8:15 and Gal 4:6) and by implication would have been familiar to people in that time. Although, there are disagreements among scholars about its precise meaning, the use of that word basically denotes the confidence Jesus had in his identity as the Son of God and through union with Christ carries over to the children of God to give them assurance of their filial relationship to God made manifest through the Holy Spirit.

As mentioned, Αββά is an Aramaic word that scholars generally agree pertains to paternity, but disagree on a detailed definition. One definition informed particularly by the work of Joachim Jeremias,[193] suggests that an accurate translation of ἀββά into English is "daddy."[194] Contrariwise, others maintain that, though ἀββά was used by children, that is not conclusive evidence that the word was a childish word.[195] James Barr is the foremost critic of Jeremias' conclusion and contends that while ἀββά was an informal term for addressing fathers in Aramaic it was not a word that originated in the chatter of small children, but rather small children learned to use it as a result of its use by adults.[196]

Unquestionably the most recognized research on the meaning and origin of the Aramaic word, ἀββά, was carried out by Joachim Jeremias, which appeared in several

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[192] See especially James Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" *Journal of Theological Studies* 39, no. 1 (1988): 28-47; Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, trans. John Bowdern and Christoph Burchard, Studies in Biblical Theology, series 2, vol. 6 (London: SCM, 1967); Géza Vèrmes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973), 210-11; Géza Vèrmes, *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 40-42. For a recent survey and critique of the research on the Abba prayer see Georg Schelbert, *Abba Vater: Der literarische Befund vom Altaramäischen bis zu den späten Haggada-Werken*, Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus / Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments 81 (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 17-35.

[193] See Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*.

[194] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 28; Vèrmes, *Jesus and the World of Judaism*, 42.

[195] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 28.

[196] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 39.

influential publications.[197] Jeremias' case relies on a series of claims, but there are four that bear the most weight. The first is that the word ἀββά represents a special use of Jesus that was central to his teaching; second, that for Jesus it expressed a special kind of intimacy deriving from its supposed origin in baby talk; third, that this practice was distinct from the usage of the early church; and fourth, that it was distinct from the practice of Judaism.[198]

Of the four, Jeremias' chief argument was that ἀββά is a child's word, used in everyday talk, and, in his view, would have been disrespectful and inconceivable to the people of the ANE to address God with this familiar word.[199] This suggests that ἀββά was an informal, intimate, and childish word children used to address their fathers. And, that is what makes it astonishing for a child of God to be given such a privilege. Jeremias himself did not believe that ἀββά reflected exclusively the chatter of a small child, for he contended that even adult children addressed their fathers as ἀββά.[200] However, since Jeremias' original research relied heavily on his assertion that ἀββά was the babbling sound of small children, many of his followers have persisted in equating ἀββά with "daddy."[201] Even as Jeremias acknowledged that the word was in common use by adults and was used as a mark of respect for older men and teachers, he continued to stress the origins in the chatter of small children and the consequent intimacy as a special

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[197] Joachim Jeremias, *Abba: Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966); Joachim Jeremias, *The Central Message of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1965), 9-30; Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 11-65; Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1971), 1:61-68.

[198] Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Abba and 'Father': Imperial Theology and the Jesus Traditions," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 4 (1992): 612.

[199] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 62.

[200] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 62.

[201] E.g., Anders, *Galatians–Colossians*, 51; George, *Galatians*, 307; Spurgeon, *Galatians*, Gal 4:6.

component of Jesus' use of the word. This was much of the foundation on which he regarded Jesus' use as distinct from the practice of Judaism.[202]

Jeremias also spoke of the complete novelty and uniqueness of ἀββά as an address to God in the prayers of Jesus.[203] Αββά is attributed only once to Jesus in Mark 14:36, but twice to the Spirit in the early churches (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15). As of yet, there are no examples of the use of ἀββά for God in Jewish texts as early as the Gospels.[204] D'Angelo also contends that there is equally no evidence for the significance Jeremias attributed to this absence.[205] She argues that ἀββά cannot be shown convincingly to have been unique to Jesus.[206] However, this is not to say that Jesus' use of the Aramaic address to God as ἀββά was insignificant. Αββά did belong to a familiar register of language, distinct from more formal use. Thus, Jesus' use of ἀββά was not unique per se, but certainly uncommonly recorded. As Jeremias asserts, ἀββά does go to show the heart of his relationship to God as he understood it.[207] Jesus spoke to God like a child to his father: he knew who he was in relation to God the Father, and that Jesus' use of ἀββά denoted Jesus' confidence in his identity as the Son of God. Jesus' use of ἀββά ushered in a new filial relationship with God, different from the more ceremonial relationship of the Law. Jeremias goes on to assert that by using ἀββά, Jesus also displayed a complete surrender of obedience to the Father.[208]

Although various critiques of Jeremias' work have cast doubt on the

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[202] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 57-65.

[203] Mark alone records Jesus' use of ἀββά in his prayer the night he was betrayed (Mark 14:36).

[204] D'Angelo, "Abba and 'Father,'" 616.

[205] D'Angelo, "Abba and 'Father,'" 616.

[206] D'Angelo, "Abba and 'Father,'" 616.

[207] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 62.

[208] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 62.

exclusivity of Jesus' use of ἀββά, it is probable that the use of the Aramaic form among

Paul and the believers in Rome and Galatia derives from Jesus' own use of the word.[209]

The confidence Jesus had in his identity as the Son of God carries over to the children of

God by their union with Christ to give them assurance of their relationship to God made

manifest through the Holy Spirit. The significance of ἀββά in both Galatians 4:6 and

Romans 8:15 lies in the believer's experience of adoption and that relationship is made

certain by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Holy Spirit gives the child of God the confidence to

speak to God in an intimate and filial manner. One's self-perception affects their

communication and in particular their confidence to speak with a particular person. When

one understands they are identified as an adopted child of God he can "with *confidence

draw near* to the throne of grace, that [he] may receive mercy and find grace to help in

time of need" (Heb 4:16).[210]

Lastly, Jeremias maintained that an additional unique feature of the use of

ἀββά was that the word was distinct from the practice of Judaism. No OT Jew ever

addressed God directly as "father." Jeremias concluded that father was new with Jesus

and that he authorized his disciples to the same word after him.[211] The word "father" is

used in the OT as a designation for God infrequently and never personal.[212] God refers to

Israel in Exodus 4:22 as "my firstborn son," and in Psalm 10:3:13, David says, "As a

father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear

him."[213] Indeed, in most of the passages the point is that Israel has not lived up to the

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[209] Erin Heim, "Light through a Prism: New Avenues of Inquiry for the Pauline Huiothesia Metaphors" (PhD diss., University of Otago, 2014), 151.

[210] Author emphasis.

[211] For a study on Jesus' implied use of ἀββά when addressing God as "Father," see D'Angelo, "Abba and 'Father,'" 611-30.

[212] Boice, *Romans*, 2:840.

[213] Boice goes on to note that, even though Isaiah writes, "Yet, O Lord, you are our Father" (Isa 64:8), in none of the passages does any individual Jew address God directly as "my Father." See Boice,

family relationship.[214] Furthermore, when Jesus lived on earth, the gap between the people and God had widened. Boice reasons that since the names of God were more and more withheld from public speech and prayers, and that the name of God was so protected that that none today precisely know how it was pronounced.[215] However, this could be evidence of the practice of Judaism to protect and honor the supremacy of God. But, Boice's point is well taken to showcase the widening of the relational gap between man and God and goes to show the striking nature of Jesus' use and especially the believers' use of ἀββά.

This is greatly significant for the children of God. Jesus is the Son of God in an inimitable sense and God is uniquely his Father. Jesus spoke to God in prayer as God's unique Son. Moreover, Jesus revealed that this same relationship is enjoyed by all who have been adopted. Believers come to God as God's legitimate and permanent children. As such, they enjoy the privilege of filial communication with God as their father. "We now know that God is our loving father, and because we know this, we are drawn to him."[216]

Αββά is not "daddy." Jeremias brought to the forefront the intimate, unique, and uncommon use of ἀββά as a way to address God in order to better understand what Paul means by its use in Romans 8:15 and how it contributes to Paul's main point. As previously mentioned, Barr is the foremost critic of Jeremias' conclusion and contends that while ἀββά was an informal term for addressing fathers in Aramaic it was not a word that originated in the chatter of small children, but rather small children learned to use it

Romans, 2:841.

[214] Boice, _Romans,_ 2:841. For biblical examples, see Jer 3:19-20; Hos 11:1-2.

[215] Boice, _Romans,_ 2:841.

[216] Boice, _Romans,_ 2:843.

as a result of its use by adults.[217] Barr's concern is that by Jeremias' influential study, many exegetes are overly attracted to interpret ἀββά as "daddy."[218] Barr questions whether this is the authentic nuance of ἀββά. He contends that ἀββά did not originate from the babbling or chatter of small children. He says bluntly that the account of ἀββά in NT times as "infantile babbling is nonsensical."[219] Willem A. VanGemeren adds to the concern by contending that Jeremias' work questions the integrity of the biblical witness on the fatherhood of God.[220] Namely, he questions why Jeremias fails to address the lack of offense the Jews took to Jesus' use of ἀββά and in claiming that Jesus' use of ἀββά was some new bold approach to God, Jeremias appears to ignore the boldness that the Psalmists used when speaking to God.[221]

Barr and VanGemeren do not question the reality of Jeremias' evidence or add any new evidence to the meaning of ἀββά, but rather argue that the existing evidence points in a different direction.[222] Barr mainly contends that the words that children used for "father" or "mother" are the same words that were used by adults. None of the evidence points clearly to the words originating in the chatter of young children. They had no word that was nuanced like today's "daddy." "Father" was the intimate and endearing term used.[223] Ἀββά was an adult word used heavily by children. Barr does not disagree with the frequent use of the word, but children's use of ἀββά was not because it originated in their babbling form of speech, but because children are more dependent on

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[217] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 39.

[218] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 28.

[219] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 34.

[220] Willem A. Vangemeren, "ABBA in the Old Testament?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31, no. 4 (1988): 385.

[221] Vangemeren, "ABBA," 388.

[222] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 35 and Vangemeren, "ABBA," 389.

[223] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 36.

parents and more likely to address their parents frequently. Barr and VanGemeren do not have an issue with whether Jesus enjoyed a unique relationship or whether he introduced the new era, but whether the word ἀββά expresses all that. There is the concern about projecting too much of one's theology into one word rather than allowing it to freely express what it means.[224]

Cranfield disagrees with Barr. He contends that ἀββά originated with children and by Jesus' time it was used more extensively by people of all ages.[225] Like Jeremias, he believes Jesus' use of the term was exceptional and fresh, signifying a new and more intimate relationship with God through the Holy Spirit.[226] Likewise, Moo contends for the intimate relationship, but that it is evidenced more by Jesus' own use of the term and the Holy Spirit's conferring upon the child of God such a filial status that brings the term its significance, not necessarily its use as a term originating with children and more consistent with "daddy."[227] Barr contends then that ἀββά was used by all sorts of people of all sorts of ages and children were more likely to use it than adults and more likely to use it in a vocative function, calling for the attention of their father. So, it would be natural to think that ἀββά was specially associated with small children, but this could be true of any word that was used in regular everyday speech by adults.[228] Therefore, the evidence points in the opposite direction from that implied by Jeremias.[229] Furthermore, the background of υἱοθεσία shows that the adopted child was usually older and not an infant or young child, so the word ἀββά as a

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[224] Hugh Anderson, *Jesus and Christian Origins: A Commentary on Modern Viewpoints* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 117.

[225] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:400.

[226] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:400.

[227] Moo, *Romans*, 502.

[228] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 36-37.

[229] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 35.

normal word for an adult child is more congruent with Paul's υἱοθεσία metaphor.[230] The

emphasis is on dependence and the confidence exemplified by the use of ἀββά.

Nonetheless, Barr professes that there is something about the use of ἀββά that

is significant in meaning to the early believers that caused the term to be remembered as

it was.[231] The most striking facts for Barr is that in all three places where the phrase

"ἀββά ὁ πατήρ" is used (Mark 14:36; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6) includes the nominative with

an article. As Barr rightly points out, this implies one of two things: (1) it is more of a

literal rendering that seeks to represent the different elements within the Semitic form; or

(2) it is an emphatic rendering, "the Father."[232] This is not to say that it is not used in a

vocative sense, but that it is used in a vocative function of an emphatic state expression,

which is represented by the nominative with an article. Jeremias does not agree with this

rendering.[233] Barr argues commendably when he warns about the problem of

etymological studies and the interpretation of Scripture. Etymological studies can, at

times, render meanings that attract the senses of the interpreter, but do not accurately

reflect the meaning of the word within its context. This is what Barr believes Jeremias to

is doing with his study of ἀββά. Whatever the beginning of the use of ἀββά, by the time

of the NT, ἀββά was used in vocative address and was also the common noun form

meaning "the Father." Moreover, it was used in the first-person possessive relation, "my

father."[234] Thus, the NT writers treated the form as an emphatic state form in a vocative

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[230] Barnhouse, *God's Heirs*, 92. See also D'Angelo, "Abba and 'Father,'" 615-16; and Allen Mawhinney, "God As Father: Two Popular Theories Reconsidered," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31, no. 2 (1988): 188.

[231] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 39.

[232] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 40.

[233] Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 109.

[234] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 40-41.

function,[235] reemphasizing the intimately filial relationship that exists among God and his children whereby children can rightfully and confidently approach God in prayer as their loving and caring father.

Through the use of Αββα ὁ πατήρ God assures his children of his protection, care, and forgiveness and that becomes the basis of a believer's confident approach to God in prayer.[236] There is a sense that the mere benefit of the confident approach to the almighty creator God is great enough with no need to press upon the term the English equivalent "daddy." There is an infinite difference between God and his children (Eccl 5:2b). It is an amazing truth that the children of God have the benefit of confidently "drawing near to the throne of grace…[to] receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16). This must not be underestimated. The richness of this great truth is made even greater when Paul says that not only can the children of God approach God, but that they can approach God as father. Solomon is helpful when he exhorts people that in light of this great benefit, they uphold the transcendence of God by "guarding" their steps when they approach God (Eccl 5:1) and ἀββά as "father" rather than "daddy" protects the balance of both the immanence and transcendence of God and in no way takes anything away from the intimate significance of the word.[237] Martin Luther sums it this way, "small as this word is, it says ever so much. It says: "My Father, I am in great trouble and you seem so far away. But I know I am your child, because you are my Father for Christ's sake. I am loved by you because of the Beloved.""[238]

Paul speaks to the children of God who struggle with sin and with suffering

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[235] Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy,'" 41

[236] Mawhinney, "God As Father," 186.

[237] Mawhinney, "God As Father," 188.

[238] Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 181. Quoted in Mawhinney, "God As Father," 185.

and assures them they are legitimate and permanent children of God with all the rights and privileges. As adopted children their sins have been dealt with and they rest close to the heart and care of their heavenly father.[239] As Paul contends, adoption as sons is both a privilege and an obligation. Both flow from the filial and intimate relationship to God. Through the passage Paul has naturally moved from filial obligation to the absence of fear to the fatherly immanence of God through the Spirt. This filial relationship is immediate, intimate, secure, and loving. It is a relationship that by its nature grows and matures as the child of God lives without any obligation to the flesh, but continually lives according to the Spirit, actively putting to death the deeds of the flesh. This filial and intimate relationship with God as Father naturally produces maturity as the child grows in his knowledge of his Father, and as the child comes to think and act more like his father.[240]

The significance of $\kappa\rho\alpha\zeta\omega$ in a filial relationship. As significant as $\dot{\alpha}\beta\beta\dot{\alpha}$ is to the understanding of the filial relationship with God brought about by adoption, what Paul says the child of God has the privilege of doing with that word is of comparable weightiness. The children of God, in union with the Spirit, "$\kappa\rho\dot{\alpha}\zeta\omega\mu\epsilon\nu$, $A\beta\beta\alpha$ $\dot{o}$ $\pi\alpha\tau\dot{\eta}\rho$." $K\rho\alpha\zeta\omega$ means to "communicate with someone in a loud voice, to cry out, scream, shriek, or call out."[241] A survey of its use in Scripture yields various situations and its intended meaning in those situations. One situation is a subject under duress crying out for help. In the LXX, $\kappa\rho\alpha\zeta\omega$ is used in the context of people crying out to God for help either as individuals or groups of people.[242] In the NT to Jesus comes the cry for

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[239] Mawhinney, "God As Father," 185.

[240] Mawhinney, "God As Father," 189.

[241] Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 563.

[242] In the LXX $\kappa\rho\alpha\zeta\omega$ is used in the translation of צָעַק (see Gen 41:55; Num 11:2; Judg 4:3; Ps 76:2; 87:2; and Job 35:12), זָעַק (see Isa 14:31; 15:4; 26:17; Jer 11:11; 29:2; 32:20; Lam 3:8; and Ezek

help which emanates from need or fear. The sick turn to him, like the two blind men in Matthew 9:27 or the Canaanite woman on behalf of her daughter in Matthew 15:22-23. In his struggle of faith, the father of the possessed boy cries out to Jesus in Mark 9:23-24. Jesus himself cries out to God from the cross in Matthew 27:50. This is best understood as a final prayer to God rather than an inarticulate death-cry.[243] Similarly, Stephen cries out to God as a final prayer in Acts 7:60. In Revelation 6:10 the souls cry out for God's justice and in James 5:4 worker who have been treated unjustly are depicted crying out to God in their distress. Some situations of duress are nuanced by fear on the part of the subject as the demons which Jesus drives out raise cries in fear, because they know Jesus' identity (Mark 1:23; 3:11; 5:5, 7; 9:26; Luke 9:39; cf. Matt 8:29; Luke 4:33; 8:28). The disciples cry out for fear in Matt 14:26 when they see Jesus like a ghost walking toward them on the sea. And then Peter hastens to walk to Jesus on the water and then overwhelmed by fear, cries out Jesus. These all depict situations where the subject crying out is distressed and fearful.

Furthermore, there are situations whereby κραζω is used when the subject cries out in jubilation. The people cry out in elation when Jesus enters Jerusalem, as described in Matthew 21:9 and 15. Jesus even wills the rejoicing on this occasion, and when the Pharisees try to stop it, he says even the stones would cry out (Luke 19:40). Antithetically, there are situations when the subjects cry out in hate rather than joy. In Matthew 27:23, the people demand Jesus' death and order the release of Barabbas (Luke 23:18). There are also the outcries of the mob in Acts 19:28, 32, and 34, and during the stoning of Stephen in Acts 21:36.

Lastly, κραζω is used in situations whereby the subject is making a bold

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27:30), and קָרָא (see Ps 3:5; 4:4; 16:6; 21:3; 26:7; 27:1; 29:9; 60:3; 65:17; 119:1; Isa 6:3, 4; 31:4; and Jer 40:3).

[243] Grundmann, "Κράζω, Ἀνακράζω, Κραυγή, Κραυγάζω," 901.

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proclamation. Four times it is used in John to proclaim the truth about Jesus, one from John and the other three from Jesus himself (John 1:15; 7:28, 37f; 12:44ff). Other incidents of proclamation include the angels in Revelation. A mighty angel with authority and a mighty voice proclaimed the fall of Babylon (Rev 18:2). Angels are seen giving commands in Revelation 7:2 and 19:17. And, in Revelation 14:15 by divine commission is the call of an angel to the Son of Man.

Κραζω is clearly used in a variety of situations and its intended meaning in those situations likewise varies. As seen above, it is used as a cry to God by those who are under duress (Ps 17:6; 28:1; 30:8), a cry of jubilation and in hatred (Matt 21:9, 15; Acts 19:28, 32, 34), and making bold proclamations (John 1:15; 7:28, 37f; 12:44ff; Rev 18:2). While the situations and intended use of κραζω vary, what is common amongst its uses, is the confidence of the subject. Those who are in distress cry out to God, because they are confident of his ability to save, "for you will answer me" (Ps 17:6). Those seen crying out joyfully or hatefully, do so with confidence, "let him be crucified!" (Matt 27:23). And, those making bold proclamations or commands do so with utter confidence in the truth they are proclaiming, "he who sent me is true" (John 7:28).

This is significant as the focus now turns to how Paul makes use of κραζω in Romans 8:15 and since the train of thought is so similar in Galatians 4:6, it must also be considered. In both passages, Paul is presenting his case for the divine and filial relationship between God and believers through adoption and the guarantee of that relationship brought by way of the Holy Spirit's indwelling and empowering work. Moreover, in both cases the Holy Spirit is seen as the agent emboldening confident communication between the child of God and God as father. This filial relationship finds expression in the prayer, Αββά ὁ πατήρ. Expressing oneself in this way to God was a foreign concept in Judaism and Jesus' use of the prayer introduced something which is

wholly new.[244] In Galatians 4:6 the Holy Spirit is the subject of prayer, κρᾶζον, Αββα ὁ

πατήρ. Whereas, it is the adopted children of God who are the subjects in Romans 8:15,

κράζομεν, Αββα ὁ πατήρ. Although the Holy Spirit is the one crying out to God in

Galatians 4:6, he is doing so from the hearts of believers. He is pictured in the place of

perfect and intimate union with believers, not separated and detached from the believer.

There remains in both passages a personal and filial communication with God inspired by

the Holy Spirit.

Given the use of κραζω in Scripture there are a variety of ways Paul intends

κραζω to be understood. Since κραζω is used in the Gospels of those who cry out under

the influence of demons, and since Paul has alluded to the believer, in a sense, possessed

by the Spirit, it may be that κραζω is an allusion to ecstatic acclamation.[245] However,

there is little evidence to conclude that the prayer of the believer, even though through the

Holy Spirit, is not aware of what he is saying. The Spirit is the one sent into the heart of

the believer and in Romans 8:16 Paul explains that the Holy Spirit bears witness with the

believer's spirit.[246] While Moo agrees with κραζω as an allusion to ecstatic acclamation,

he clarifies, though, he does not believe the cry of the believer is the product of mindless

possession, but of conscious understanding.[247] Thus, Moo's contention that κραζω is an

allusion to ecstatic acclamation seems mostly driven by his desire to protect the

emotional connotations of the word; maintaining the jubilant aspect of κραζω.[248] Paul

explains such an intimate and intertwined relationship between the Spirit and the

believer, but that is not intended to mean that the believer is not aware of what he is

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[244] Grundmann, "Κράζω, Ἀνακράζω, Κραυγή, Κραυγάζω," 903.

[245] Moo, *Romans*, 502.

[246] Grundmann, "Κράζω, Ἀνακράζω, Κραυγή, Κραυγάζω," 902.

[247] Moo, *Romans*, 502.

[248] Moo, *Romans*, 502.

saying, but it does imply a sense of joy in the relationship. By the Holy Spirit the believer is consciously and joyfully aware that he is a child of God. Thus, κραζω is a conscious cry of confidence by the child of God to his father with a joyful awareness of his filial relationship to God.

Another possible meaning is that believers are depicted as people under duress and as God's children they cry out to God for help. In the context of Romans, the believers are depicted in the constant circumstance of putting to death the deeds of the flesh and suffering as part of living the Christian life. Therefore, κραζω may mean that the believers are under spiritual stress and freely call out to God for help, with the emphasis that they may do so with confidence because of the filial relationship they now have with God. Yet, κραζω is used elsewhere to denote a loud, public proclamation. As such, Paul may mean that as children of God, they may confidently come before God invoking the name of God before making their request. Lastly, another possible way to understand κραζω is that believers pray aloud, expressing their confidence and joy, contrasted with the often-whispered prayers that were prescribed by Jewish custom.[249]

As noted earlier, confidence is the common theme. Whether the children of God cry out to God for help, proclaim his name and nature, or call out in joy; they are undoubtedly secure in their filial relationship to God by the Holy Spirit to cry to God as father. Moo reiterates that the children of God are consciously aware of their filial relationship to God and it is the result of that self-perception that they confidently cry out to God their father.[250] Moo goes on to underscore the great status the children of God have as a status comparable to that of Jesus himself. He picks up on the fact that Jesus' prayer Αββα ὁ πατήρ was remembered and treasured as distinctive and meaningful by the

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[249] Adolf von Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit: Ein Kommentar Zum Römerbrief* (Stuttgart, Germany: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1965), 265. Quoted in Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:399.

[250] Moo, *Romans*, 502.

early church.[251] By attributing to believers the use of Αββα ὁ πατήρ, Paul demonstrates that believers have a relationship to God similar (certainly not identical) to that of Jesus. It must not be missed how much this reemphasizes the intimate union of the triune God to believers. The children of God are intimately and filially related to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As Moo rightly emphasizes, "God has taken no half measures" when he adopts his children.[252] Believers have been made full members of the family and partakers of all the privileges belonging to members of that family.

In summary, Cranfield rightly contends that the best explanation for Paul's use of κραζω is a simple one.[253] Due to its frequent use as the urgent prayer of people, it seems difficult to disagree with Cranfield's explanation that no matter the way children of God cry out to him they cry out to with sincerity as children who regularly depend on their father God for every facet of life.[254] A necessary addition to that understanding is to include the confidence behind the prayer. There is confidence on the part of the adopted child of God to approach God in prayer and address him as father. This is the privilege of adoption. Paul's description of the Spirit's work as a result of God adopting his children into his family "forms one the most beautiful pictures of the believer's joy and security anywhere in Scripture."[255] There are powerfully rich ways parents can practically teach and model these truths, which are discussed later.

Internal witness of the Holy Spirit. Meanwhile, Paul continues to emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in the theological framework of adoption. In verse 16 he

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[251] Moo, *Romans*, 502-3.

[252] Moo, *Romans*, 503.

[253] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:399.

[254] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:399.

[255] Moo, *Romans*, 499.

solidifies his attestation that believers are secure in their standing and relationship to God. He explains how it is that the children of God may confidently approach God to cry out and in their crying out may address him as "father." As has been central to each passage where the υἱοθεσία metaphor is used, the Holy Spirit is the agent. He provides the privilege of approaching God intimately and addressing God filially and Paul describes his doing so by bearing witness with the believer's spirit. The Holy Spirit is instrumental in making people God's children and he is also instrumental in making believers aware that they are God's children.[256] The knowledge that believers are God's children is something which no person can impart to himself. This is something that has to be given to him from outside and beyond himself: it must be given by God.[257] Paul emphasizes this in verse 16 and explains how this knowledge is not identified with believers calling God "father," but is the warrant for it.[258]

Unsurprisingly, to best understand what Paul means is to address the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the believer. Does συμμαρτυρεῖν mean "witness together with" or "witness to?" It is clear that the Holy Spirit is the agent for the purpose of securing confidence in believers that they are indeed the children of God. One way to consider how he does this is by taking συμμαρτυρεῖν to mean that the Holy Spirit testifies and assures the believer that he is the child of God. Cranfield argues that to clarify and confirm one's filial relationship to God as father and further substantiate in whom one cries "Abba! Father!" the Spirit testifies to the believers that they are the children of God.[259] Cranfield emphasizes the independent nature of such a

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[256] Moo, *Romans*, 503.

[257] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:402.

[258] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:402.

[259] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:402. Cranfield also contends that the second use of πνεῦμα does not refer to the human spirit, since virtually every other usage of πνεῦμα in the chapter denotes the Holy Spirit. See Eduard Schweizer, "Πνεῦμα, Πνευματικός, Πνέω, Ἐμπνέω, Πνοή, Ἐκπνέω, Θεόπνευστος," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard

work. For such assurance and security, testimony from outside oneself is necessary. An objective witness is key; and it is God himself, the Holy Spirit, who provides such objective testimony.

Contrastingly, Schreiner sees συμμαρτυρεῖν meaning that the Holy Spirit confirms that believers are the children of God by bearing witness with their spirit.[260] The prepositional prefix σύν retains its meaning, "with," and denotes that the testimony derives from both the Holy Spirit and the believer's spirit. However, τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν is in the dative case. To retain its meaning would mean to understand Paul as saying that the Holy Spirit testifies to the believer's spirit, not with his spirit.[261] Godet concurs. He recognizes that the σύν in the verb συμμαρτυρεῖν should preserve its natural meaning, but that the dative, τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν, is not to be regarded as the regimen of σύν.[262] It is the spirit of the believer that receives the divine testimony from the Holy Spirit. Murray, like Godet, seeks to retain both the σύν in the verb συμμαρτυρεῖν and the dative case by asserting that both the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the believer work conjointly, but the Holy Spirit must be distinguished from the witness of the believer's filial consciousness.[263] He goes on to underscore the importance that it is a witness given to believers as distinct from the witness given by believers.[264]

In addition, commentators mention the biblical theme of witnesses to validate a

Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 6:436.

[260] Schreiner, *Romans*, 426.

[261] Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:403.

[262] Frédéric Louis Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Alexander Cusin (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1890), 2:84.

[263] John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 1:297.

[264] Murray, *Romans*, 1:297.

fact, as a possible referent.[265] Deuteronomy 19:15 plainly teaches that one witness will not suffice to establish a fact. Two or three are necessary. They conclude that it is possible that the theme is prefigured here to express the certainty believers have in knowing they are the children of God. The two witnesses, the believer's conscious faith and the direct action of the Spirit, confirm each other's testimonies.[266] As mentioned in the study of Galatians 4:1-7, Craig Keener adds to this idea that even in the background of adoption, the legal proceedings of Roman adoption would be attested by witnesses. Thus, the Holy Spirit here is here the attesting witness that God adopts believers as his own children.[267] Whether either of these ideas are adumbrated here or not, the evidence from the text does not confirm it nor rule it out.

A final observation to be made is the concern Schreiner and Godet have for not missing the emotional component in this passage. Godet contends that the absence of a connecting particle between verses 15 and 16 indicates profound emotion.[268] He explains that it announces a forcible reaffirmation of the same fact, but in a new aspect.[269] Likewise, Schreiner maintains that what Paul describes is an indescribable religious experience.[270] He claims that the conjoint witness of the Holy Spirit with the human spirit that one is a child of God is "mystical in the best sense."[271] One must not miss the mystical and emotional dimensions of the Christian experience.[272]

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[265] Schreiner, *Romans*, 427; Barrett, *Romans*, 154.

[266] Barrett, *Romans*, 154.

[267] Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 430.

[268] Godet, *Romans*, 2:83.

[269] Godet, *Romans*, 2:83.

[270] Schreiner, *Romans*, 427.

[271] Schreiner, *Romans*, 427.

[272] Schreiner, *Romans*, 427.

Godet and Murray are on the right track as they seek to accurately balance both the preposition "with" and the dative case "to." For this to hold true then some credibility must be attributed to the spirit of man. As some have mentioned, the Spirit is the authoritative and credible witness and the spirit of man is incapable of objective testimony. However, as a believer, there is a transformed heart—a new creation (Ezek 11:19; 2 Cor 5:17). There is what Murray refers to as a "filial consciousness."[273] Thus, while the Holy Spirit does testify to the believer the believer agrees with a hearty "amen," because of his new disposition as a new creature. It is the initiation of the Spirit to testify this objective truth to the believer and the believer subjectively agrees with the testimony as true due to his filial consciousness. The spirit of man and the Holy Spirit are seen as testifying together with one another.

Godet and Murray provide the best way to interpret what Paul is saying, but there is still the aspect of how this takes place. Both Godet and Schreiner contend that a subjective experience occurs between the Spirit and the believer. Contrarily, Barnhouse cautions the exegete from perceiving it this way.[274] It must be understood that no spiritual experience like what Paul explains is valid in itself. Every experience can be faked or fabricated, and hence, no experience is valid unless it is solidly based on correct theology. To build one's theology upon some experience is dangerous. One's experience must be explained by Scripture. It is easy for people to mistake what they believe is the voice of God for the voice of self, or worse yet, the voice of Satan. This is why Barnhouse rightly proclaims that every believer must be willing to turn to God's Word and why he must repudiate any voice that speaks contrary to the Word of God and avoid any experience that is an end in itself.[275] "Let God be true though every one were a liar"

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[273] Murray, *Romans*, 1:297.

[274] Barnhouse, *God's Heirs*, 97.

[275] Barnhouse, *God's Heirs*, 97.

(Rom 3:4). There is no room for those subjective experiences based more on feelings than thoughts. The believer's assurance and security in his filial relationship is founded objectively on the written Word of God.[276]

Paul has been proclaiming the great truth of the believer's filial relationship with God as father through God's adoption of the believer. The Holy Spirit is very much emphasized as the agent bringing about security and assurance, so that the believer may never doubt his legitimate and permanent filial relationship with God. What the spirit of man does is agree with what God reveals about the believer's identity. "If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son" (1 John 5:9). What will and what should the child of God believe about himself? The believer's self-perception is to be a perception founded on a theological identity shaped by the Word of God.

The witness of the Spirit is always based on the Word of God and the child of God is enabled by God to welcome it and testify to it as the very Word of God.[277] Consider Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 2:10-16. Paul uses the analogy of the internal mind of man and the internal mind of God. He reasons that no one knows the mind of man except the spirit of man. Likewise, no one knows the mind of God except the Spirit of God. The Spirit is the author of Scripture and the Spirit indwells the believer, enabling the believer to warmly welcome and understand the Word of God.[278] Contrarily, those who are outside God's family do not accept God's Word nor believe it to be God's Word: they have no understanding. The word translated "accepted" is the word δέχομαι, which conveys the idea of someone receiving a guest into their home warmly and/or giving

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[276] Barnhouse, *God's Heirs*, 97.

[277] Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 1 Cor 2:14.

[278] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 271.

approval, expressing conviction over what is being accepted.[279] In this case, it is the Word of God that is warmly welcomed and accepted with conviction by those who are the children of God. This acceptance does not exist among those who are not the children of God. Rather than approving of it, they consider it to be foolish. Or, as Calvin puts it, they are like an "ass at a concert."[280] They are completely uninterested in the music and disturb the concert with an "irritating commotion."[281] For, if they had understanding, if they were transformed—a new creature in union with Christ with the mind of Christ—then they would not make such an assessment, but would rather see it for what it is as wise and lifegiving.[282]

Paul intimates something similar when he writes to the church in Thessalonica. He states his praise to the Lord that the Thessalonians received and accepted the Word of God for what it really is—the Word of God (1 Thess 2:13). Δέχομαι again is used to describe what response the believers in Thessalonica give to the Word of God. They warmly welcome with conviction God's Word as his authoritative and sufficient Word. The believer is transformed and as such, rather than rejecting Scripture, he believes that all Scripture is "breathed out" by God and that the human authors who wrote it were "carried along" by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16-7; 2 Pet 1:19-21).

Therefore, the witness of the Spirit is best understood, not as a mere feeling, in the sense of some "spine-tingling emotion, or vague, sense movement," but rather an

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[279] Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon*, 221.

[280] John Calvin, *Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, vol. 49 (Brunsvigae: C. A. Schwetschke, 1863–98), 325.

[281] David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 100.

[282] Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T&T Clark, 1911), 51.

"intelligent, controlled, and related work of God" in the hearts of believers.[283]

Unquestionably, though, this is an intimate testimony and is not absent of subjectivity. But, the subject nature of the witness is brought about by the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in this sense, the Spirit bears witness to and with the believer's spirit. The assurance that is afforded the child of God does not depend entirely upon the external testimony of the Holy Spirit, but additionally the inward conviction of the believer brought about by the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, the child of God's self-perception is forged by his conscious awareness through the external witness of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and internal witness of the transformed spirit of the believer by the Holy Spirit.

Expectation of Suffering and Future Inheritance of God's Children

God gives his children assurance of their filial relationship with him through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and that filial relationship is made even more extraordinary by the inevitable result of adoption: inheritance. Inheritance is a common privilege for the eldest son of the Roman family, and it is the privilege of the adopted child of God. This is easy to accept, for receiving an inheritance is typically a pleasant experience. However, Paul also expounds on the privilege of suffering, which is not typically a pleasant experience.

This point of the theological framework of adoption is extremely informative for shaping the adopted child's perception. The secular worldview and the biblical worldview of suffering clash at many points. Adoption itself is within the context of suffering since within it lies a broken sense of identity in relationship and there is the consequent fallout in the child's responses to his present situation. Thus, parents can positively influence their child's perception of his own adoption experience by modeling

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[283] Barnhouse, *God's Heirs*, 101.

for him a biblical worldview of suffering that is a part of the theological framework of adoption.

A child of God must expect suffering in this present life. Suffering is integral to the believer's relationship as a child of God. As the believer lives life putting to death the deeds of the body, living life contrary to the world and according to the Holy Spirit; the child of God lives oppositional to himself and the world he lives in. The adopted life is a life of abundant opposition and strife as the believer lives out his identity and relationship as a child of God in a body of death and a world that rejects God. Understandably, believers do not share the redemptive suffering of Christ, but they do share the consequences in terms of opposition from the world Jesus came to save (Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 4:13). The children of God share both in the trials of life as well as the benefits.[284] Paul now implies that the suffering of tribulation and persecution by the children of God is another affirmation of their filial relationship with God.[285] Being children of God does not provide immunity from trials and suffering, but the security of the permanent and intimate filial relationship with God does provide comfort, strength, courage, confidence, and grace in the midst of suffering.[286] This is why Paul immediately follows verse 17 by saying that he does not consider these sufferings of any significance when the children of God compare them with the inheritance that is due them.

For many, it may seem counterintuitive to comprehend the reality that suffering in the believer's life is another proof of the believer's filial relationship to God.[287] The opposite seems more reasonable; that the adopted child of God would expect

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[284] Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, The New American Commentary, vol. 27 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 183.

[285] Barrett, *Romans*, 154. See also Matt 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; Acts 14:22; Phil 1:29-30; 1 Pet 1:6-7; 1 Pet 2:20-21.

[286] Boice, *Romans,* 2:846.

[287] William Pass offers another alternative. He contends that seeing suffering as proof of one's

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to live a more carefree and comfortable life. However, suffering is the sphere in which the children of God prove the reality of their profession and achieve spiritual victories. Believers do not triumph by avoiding hardships.[288] Children of God put to death the deeds of the flesh out of a desire to imitate their father, pursuing godliness in all that they say, think, and do. When facing suffering circumstances, the child of God does not turn to iniquity in order to escape (Job 36:21). Contrariwise, he really considers his trials and suffering as something beneficial. James explains that in addition to proving one is a child of God, trials are used by God to help the believer become more like God (Jas 1:2-4). Hebrews depicts suffering as a result of God's discipline of his children, which is designed to produce godliness in the children of God (Heb 12:7-11). The author contends that such suffering is something to be comforted and encouraged by, for it evinces God's filial relationship with his children. Consequently, due to their secure filial relationship with God, the children of God count it joy to face suffering, because it proves they are legitimate children of God and it help them grow in imitating their father. Thus, the believer's self-perception naturally affects the way they perceive and think of their circumstances.

Therefore, there are particular forms, each with a certain purpose, in which the children of God experience suffering. As seen in both James and Hebrews one way they experience suffering is for the purpose of purifying them. Trials produce steadfastness in the believer, resulting in godliness. Suffering as a result of God's discipline is for the purpose of training the believer in righteousness. This is undoubtedly a privilege of

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adoption undermines the motivational force of Paul's exhortation and asserts that the starting point is to forgo the assumption that all of verse 17 is to be understood as addressing the subject of salvation. He reads the verse as two first-class conditional sentences, not one. The first refers to salvation, but the second refers to an aspect of sanctification. And the ἵνα clause relates only to the apodosis of the second conditional sentence. See William N. W. Pass III, "A Reexamination of Calvin's Approach to Romans 8:17," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 170, no. 677 (2013), 69-81.

[288] Boice, *Romans,* 2:856.

sonship. God cares for believers through discipline to reaffirm his intimate and permanent relationship with them.

A second form of suffering is persecution. As intimated earlier, persecution in the believer's life proves that believers really are children of God.[289] Similar to discipline, persecution is a privilege of sonship. Near the beginning of his ministry, Jesus teaches that those who are persecuted, insulted, and maliciously maligned because of their relationship to God are to be considered blessed (Matt 5:11-12). Elsewhere he says that to be hated by the world is to be expected by the children of God, because due to their filial relationship they are no longer a part of this world: they have been chosen out of the world and accordingly the world naturally hates them (John 15:18-20).

Lastly, another form of suffering, which is often overlooked, is the precise suffering that believers experience as they regularly put to death the deeds of the flesh. Paul is clear elsewhere that this daily activity of the children of God is met with tremendous resistance. He declares plainly that the flesh and the Spirit are adversaries and endlessly opposed to each other (Gal 5:17). The flesh opposes every way that the child of God wants to go. Paul testifies to his own experience with this reality in Romans 7. Even the struggle attests to the legitimacy of the believer's sonship. For, the one who is not a child of God has no desire to live according to the Spirit. Hence, there is nothing to resist what that person wants to do. He follows after the patterns and teachings of the world, and according to his own lusts and desires, which are at odds with the Spirit (Eph 2:1-3). By God's grace the child of God wants to live according to the spirit, which is indicative of his adoption. However, living according to the flesh is attractive still, because it promises a sense of relief from the suffering that exists to the endless struggle. To a certain degree it does temporarily provide relief. Thus, proof of sonship is seen in

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[289] D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 8:5-17, The Sons of God* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 433.

the daily agonizing the child of God experiences over putting to death the deeds of the flesh. This daily battle is a privilege to the believer, for the child of God learns obedience and the skill of denying self and following Christ, growing up into maturity and the full stature of Christ.[290] The adopted life is a life of great opposition and strife as the child of God lives out his identity and filial relationship to God in a body of death and a world that rejects God. How this can be taught and modeled by parents is discussed later.

A child of God has the assuredness of an eternal inheritance. Therein exists one more feature of suffering, which Paul directly addresses in verse 17. Paul asserts that an additional value of suffering is that it is the "ordained path to glory."[291] While suffering is necessary and valuable (it is an overlooked privilege of sonship) it is not the end of the story for the child of God. Although being an adopted child of God places the believer into an eschatological life, he is also placed in the "already-not yet" tension, which is created by him belonging to the realm of righteousness while he lives in the midst of the realm of sin and death.[292] This means that while a son of God in the present life, he is moreover an heir. Naturally, as a legitimate and permanent child of God, the believer looks to the future for the full enjoyment of his filial relationship to God.[293]

For the adopted child, his adoption brings with it the expectation of inheritance that is intended to give hope, which then shapes the child's perception of his trials and promotes a life of perseverance. The life which is characterized by the indwelling of the

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[290] See Luke 9:23, where Jesus teaches that denying self and follow after Christ daily is the lifestyle of a true disciple of Christ; and Heb 5:8, where it is said of Christ that he learned obedience through suffering. Additionally, see 1 John 3:2, where it is said that the believer, as a beloved child of God, will over his lifetime grow up into godliness until the day he is ushered into the very presence of God in heaven.

[291] Boice, *Romans,* 2:859.

[292] Moo, *Romans*, 496.

[293] Moo, *Romans*, 496-97.

Holy Spirit whereby the child of God lives by the Spirit, is furthermore a life characterized by hope.[294] Paul uses the term here to denote full possession of all that being an adopted child of God means. This has more to do with a relationship than it does to possessions. For as one's father would leave his children an inheritance, he would do so after his death. But God does not die. Thus, Paul refers to the heirship of the child of God as another affirmation of the privileged relationship that exists between him and God through adoption.[295]

Furthermore, believers are not God's heirs in their own right but only as joint heirs with Christ. The union with Christ that the adopted child has is an integral part of the theological framework and is seen dramatically in the sharing of the inheritance God provides for his children. This is best understood through Paul's treatment of Abraham in chapter 4 and in his discussion of the same theme in Gal 3:6–4:7. In the latter passage Paul contends that Christ alone is the true heir of the promise made to Abraham. Jesus is the legitimate seed of Abraham.[296] Others may become sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:26). Hence, believers become the seed of Abraham, and heirs according to promise (Gal 3:29).

Κληρονόμος may be a natural heir or one named by a will or by legal provisions.[297] Συγκληρονόμος is an heir who receives, or will receive, something along with another heir.[298] A solid relationship is established between the children of God and

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[294] Cranfield, *Romans*, 2:404.

[295] Morris, *Romans*, 317.

[296] See esp. Gal 3:16.

[297] Werner Foerster and Johannes Herrmann, "Κλῆρος, Κληρόω, Προσκληρόω, Ἀλόκληρος, Ὁλοκληρία, Κληρονόμος, Συγκληρονόμος, Κληρονομέω, Κατακληρονομέω, Κληρονομία," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 3:768.

[298] Foerster and Herrmann, "Κλῆρος," 781.

inheritance through the whole of the NT.[299] In Romans 8:17, Paul attributes the inheritance of believers expressly to their υἱοθεσία as God's children and συγκληρονόμος with Christ.

It stands to reason that if Paul's referent for υἱοθεσία is Roman law then he would remain consistent with his use of κληρονόμος and συγκληρονόμος. Lyall provides helpful background to these terms, which substantiates and reinforces the rich nature of the believer's adoption. First, there exists a fundamental difference between the Roman rules of succession and those of other legal systems of the time. Under the Roman system the heir was considered to be more than the legal representative of the deceased: he actually continued his legal personality.[300] The original concept of heir in Roman law had reference to the patriarchal system and the family cult. The heir was the person or persons entitled to carry on the family cult. The heir was considered the personification of the family. In essence, the heir was the same person as the deceased and was liable for the full amount of the deceased's debts. Consequently, rules developed to protect the heir, giving him the right to refuse the inheritance lest he ruin his own financial standing. Still, even with the development of this concession, the technical position of the heir who accepted his inheritance remained that of continuing the legal personality of his father.[301]

Barnhouse offers this illustration to bring greater light to what Paul means by heir and joint heir.[302] In law there is a difference between an heir and a joint heir. The distinction can be explained thusly. If a man should die and he leaves a large piece of

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[299] E.g. Matt 5:5; 19:29; 25:34; Acts 20:32; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 15:50; Eph 1:11, 14, 18; Col 1:12; 3:24; Heb 9:15; 1 Pet 1:4.

[300] Francis Lyall, "Legal Metaphors in the Epistles," *Tyndale Bulletin* 32 (1981): 92.

[301] C. W. Westrup, *Introduction to Early Roman Law* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934) 3:219-29; H. S. Maine, *Ancient Law, Its Connection with the Early History of Society, and Its Relation to Modern Ideas; with an Introduction and Notes by Frederick Pollock*, 10th ed. (London: John Murray, 1920), 123-230, quoted in Lyall, "Legal Metaphors in the Epistles," 93.

[302] Barnhouse, *God's Heirs*, 113.

property to four heirs, the property will be divided evenly, each heir receiving twenty-five per cent of the property. On the other hand, if a man leaves a large piece of property to four of his sons as joint heirs, then they each own the property. Thus, when Paul declares that believers are heirs of God and joint heirs of Jesus Christ, he is declaring that the children of God share in everything that God the Father has given to Jesus.

Just as children are naturally heirs, so inheritance is natural to what it means to be an heir. There are three possible interpretations of κληρονόμοι . . . θεοῦ. One, God is the object of heir, indicating that believers inherit God himself. Two, God is the one from whom the inheritance derives. Or three, a combination of the two.[303] Inheriting God himself is the most reasonable rendering.[304] As previously mentioned, Paul asserts that believers inherit the promise of Abraham, but here he says something even more striking. Certainly, the children of God inherit what God has promised, but Paul intimates that children inherit God himself.[305] Unmistakably, the epitome of heirship is inheriting God as God and father and that truth is possible through inheriting together with Christ as Jesus' joint heir. It is only through the true seed of Abraham that the children of God realize their inheritance. The reward of Christ was preeminently that he was glorified with the Father; and the Lord was the portion of his inheritance.[306] Joint heirs with Christ means that the children of God enter in jointly with Christ into the possession of the inheritance which was bestowed upon him.[307] Moreover, Paul's argument has consistently depended on filial relationship brought about by adoption and made certain

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[303] Watson, *Paul, His Roman Audience*, 164.

[304] See Barnhouse, *God's Heirs*; Schreiner, *Romans*; Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1; Boice, *Romans*, vol. 2.

[305] Schreiner, *Romans*, 427-28.

[306] See John 17:5; Ps 16:5.

[307] Murray, *Romans*, 1:298.

by the truths herein. It is most reasonable that he would not abandon this filial relationship to discuss the inheritance of the children of God as nothing less than God himself. Finally, it must be underscored that believers are heirs not based on physical descent, nor on the origin of all natural life, nor on derivation from Abraham, but on the divine call and appointment by God the Father to adopt them as his own. This he does through Christ and is made secure by the Holy Spirit.

Boice provides a helpful breakdown of the particulars of what it means for the child of God to inherit God himself.[308] He categorizes these particulars as lesser and greater items. Of the lesser items, the first is a heavenly home. Jesus indicates that he is presently preparing a place for his children (John 14:1-3). By the authority of Jesus himself, believers will someday inherit a place prepared especially for them. Next, is a heavenly banquet. Children of God can expect a celebratory meal in honor of Jesus himself. Boice contends that this is to be inferred by the number of parables dealing with banquets and reference to the marriage supper of the Lamb mentioned in Revelation.[309] These present a view of the believers' inheritance as one of extreme joy and secure filial fellowship. Third, is what Boice says is the privilege of ruling with Christ. Though there is some difference among exegetes as to whether this will be an earthly rule with Christ in some future age or to a heavenly rule only, there is doubtlessly some important ruling authority that is promised.[310] Lastly, there is the likeness to Christ, which Boice does not appropriately label. It is difficult to see this as a lesser feature of inheritance. Nevertheless, this is one of the promised blessings inherited by the children of God. As mentioned earlier, 1 John 3:1-2 plainly says that believers certainly already enjoy great

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[308] Boice, *Romans:* 2:847-51.

[309] See Matt 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Luke 14:15-24; 15:11-32; Rev 19:9.

[310] See 2 Tim 2:12, where Paul intimates some future ruling with Christ for believers. Also see Luke 19:11-27, where Jesus speaks of servants being awarded cities over which to reign in the master's kingdom.

benefits as the children of God, but what is not yet is the fullness of Christ in the believer.

To Boice's credit, he justifies his characterization of lesser features as the means by which he magnifies the supreme greatness of inheriting God himself. Arguing from the grammar, Boice repeats the possible interpretations. The genitival phrase Paul uses, κληρονόμοι . . . θεοῦ, may be rendered as a subjective genitive, or an objective genitive. Since the words can have either meaning, the interpretation has to be determined by the context. If it is a subjective genitive, then God is the subject and the meaning is that believers belong to God as his heirs. If an objective genitive, then the meaning is that believers have God as their inheritance. Boice claims this is the boldest of the two possibilities.[311] One reason includes consistency with the OT. Passages such as Psalm 73:25-26 and Lamentations 3:24 speak about God as their portion, their all-sufficient sustenance for life. Second, as mentioned before, Paul speaks of believers being joint heirs with Christ, which intimates that the children of God through union with Christ will inherit alongside Christ. Jesus sums up his own inheritance in John 17:4-5, declaring that he will rejoin the vision of, participation in, and enjoyment of God himself. Similar is Paul's flow of thought in Romans 8:17. The believer's inevitable end is "glorified with him."

Lastly, is the relationship the Holy Spirit has not only to the security of the paternal relationship among believers and God, but also to the work of guaranteeing the believer's inheritance that Paul proclaims in Ephesians 1:14. Therefore, Boice contends that if the guarantee of the believer's inheritance is the Holy Spirit—being the third person of the Trinity—then it is reasonable to see that the full inheritance must be God himself. Thus, if God is the believers' inheritance, they can be assured of salvation, and nothing is ever going to dispossess them of their heavenly inheritance. Paul showcases that every facet of this relationship is created by God, sustained by God, and affirmed by

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[311] Boice, *Romans*, 2:848.

God, so that the child of God has the utter assurance in God himself for his permanent, legitimate, and intimate filial relationship with God as his father forevermore; and with that relationship comes the privilege of a lifestyle of putting to death the deeds of the flesh.

Conclusion

Paul makes use of υἱοθεσία as a metaphor to aid the believers in their understanding and appreciation for what it is God has done to make them family. The intended effect is to attune their perception of themselves according to God's Word. He intends for them to develop and sustain a conscious awareness of their theological identity with its consequent effects, including perception of their circumstances and response to those circumstances. Specifically, the purpose of this dissertation is to see how that theological identity can be communicated to adopted children by the influence of their parents. Parents can positively influence a child's perception of his own adoption experience by modeling for him the doctrine of adoption as an aspect of salvation in Christ. Dynamically lived out by adoptive parents, the doctrine of adoption gives the framework for bringing restoration to the child's self-perception in relationship.

An analysis and exposition of the three main passages where υἱοθεσία is used (Gal 4:1-7, Eph 1:3-14, and Rom 8:12-17) produces the rich themes of adoption, which provides for parents the theological framework necessary to practically teach and model; including the intimate filialness with God as father; the permanent nature of that relationship, and the "already" and "not yet" experience of adoption. Galatians 4 and Ephesians 1 speak to the nature of the adoptive relationship. Galatians 4 highlights the overall richness of adoption as a filial relationship to God as Father with the consequential benefits of connectedness and intimacy, whereby Ephesians 1 emphasizes the permanent quality inherit to adoption due to the predetermined plan of God and his faithfulness to fulfill what he determines to do. Since Pauline's soteriology rests squarely

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on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the context of Romans 8 underlines the way the child of God should perceive his present life due to his filial relationship to God in hope of his future glory in Christ.

Redemption through Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit solidifies the filial relationship between God and his children. Thus, Paul says of the children of God that they are no longer slaves, but sons, and if a son, then an heir through God (Gal 4:7). This is a declarative statement of theological identity. Effectively, Paul is defining the identity of adopted children of God, declaring how then they should perceive themselves. Of importance here is that they not define their identity by the world, family, friends, or even themselves, but from God. The believer's identity is an objective, theological declaration made manifest through the foreordained work of God, redemptive work of Christ, and indwelling work of the Holy Spirit.

As the self-existing God, he deposits the Holy Spirit in the hearts of his children, obligating himself to bestow upon them subsequently the full remainder of all the blessings of salvation merited for them by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. This complete and full inheritance is God's gracious gift, not bought with money, or earned by labor, or won by victory. Paul points to the end and purpose of God's gracious activity— his praise and glory. God is the beginning and the end of believers' adoption. The intended purpose of these blessings of adoption is to glorify God. It is an appropriate end, just as it was an appropriate beginning, for adoption is the "singular goal of redemptive history."[312] In Ephesians 1, Paul begins by praising God for his self-determined plan to adopt in eternity past then the actualization of adoption through the redemptive work of and finally the future consummation of adoption with a wholly realized inheritance. Everything adopted children have in Christ comes from God and returns to God,

[312] Garner, *Sons in the Son*, 143.

beginning in his will and ending in his glory. It is God-centered from beginning to end.[313]

Lastly, in Romans 8, Paul reaffirms the legitimate, intimate, and permanent filial relationship between believers and God as father. Like the beginning and end of the believer's adoption, the present proof is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. Adoption severs any obligation the believer has to his former relationship to the devil as father, whereby he once was identified as a child of wrath and of disobedience. He is now adopted into God's family and that naturally obliges him to God, whereby he lives his life in love of God through radical holiness brought about by putting to death the deeds of the flesh and living according to the Spirit. His former life was a life leading to death and his new life in the family of God leads to life everlasting. The Holy Spirit also reinforces the believer's confidence in his identity by granting access to the ear of God and the privilege of addressing God as father. Due to their filial relationship they may speak intimately to God himself.

Finally, Paul assures the believer through adoption there exists the expectation of suffering, for even suffering is proof of such a relationship. It is a privilege to suffer as a child God either persecution for such an identity or through discipline from God for the purpose of training believers to live righteous lives. Believers are affirmed in their relationship, because by the work of the Holy Spirit they desire to live holy lives and welcome with joy the various trials they face. They do not take pleasure in suffering, but they counted it as joy, because they desire, more than physical pleasure or absence of pain, the growth in Christ likeness that suffering and trials bring about. Consequently, the believer is assured of the great life to come when he realizes his full inheritance—God himself. The Holy Spirit proclaims these truths to the child of God and the child of God welcomes them, believes them, and walks by them. It is by these evidences that the Spirit witnesses to believers that they are certainly God's children. God consummately

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[313] Boice, *Ephesians*, 32.

communicates with astounding clarity the intimate and filial relationship believers enjoy through adoption.

Conscious awareness of such an identity astounds the child of God to an extent that the thought of living according to the flesh and satisfying its desires is reprehensible, so that the child of God continually puts to death the deeds of the flesh, embraces suffering and trial, and longs for the inheritance of God himself. Thus, the doctrine of adoption assures the believer that he is a permanent and legitimate child of God, chosen by the grace of God, with the privilege of living a life pleasing to God, and with the assurance of a future inheritance of God made possible by the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF KARYN PURVIS' TBRI METHOD AND
THE SELF-PERCEPTION OF THE ADOPTED CHILD

This dissertation argues that the doctrine of adoption, dynamically lived out by adoptive parents, gives the framework for bringing restoration to the adopted child's self-perception in relationship. For, parents can positively influence their child's perception of his own adoption experience by modeling for him the doctrine of adoption as an aspect of salvation in Christ. In particular is the adopted child's broken sense of identity in relationship and the fallout in the child's responses in the present situation.

Due to its widespread literary influence, this chapter analyzes *The Connected Child,* and is conducted using David Powlison's three epistemological principles as the framework.[1] According to Powlison, believing parents and counselors must be concerned in a primary way to construct a biblical model of helping people with their problems in living. This means that it is not necessary for believers to depend or trust conflicting models of helping others, but it does not mean they cannot learn from them. Thus, believing parents should engage secular models of helping others, especially those models that specialize on helping children, using Scripture as their standard of judgment with a willingness to learn from those models.

According to Powlison, the first priority is to articulate biblical truth and develop a systematic theology of care for the soul. This was the purpose of the previous chapters to develop, in this case, a theology of adoption that the child of God may be

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[1] David Powlison, "Questions at the Crossroads: The Care of Souls & Modern Psychotherapies," in *Care for the Soul*, ed. Mark R. McMinn and Timothy R. Phillips (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 32-42.

consciously aware of his theological identity. This is of first priority. God's primary revelatory purposes are neither to criticize nor to adopt what floods the cultural. He proclaims, teaches and models something distinctive.[2]

The second priority consists of exposing, debunking, and reinterpreting alternative models. Believers must grow in discernment, accurately discerning right from wrong, and truth teaching from false teaching. "Idolatries and lies, false teachers and 'the world' are like viral pathogens that endlessly mutate."[3] Therefore, believing parents must be vigilant and diligent about growing in the truth of God's Word. Sinful people instinctively think about life as if there were no God, no judgment, and no need for a savior. People industriously construct false Gods and false ideas about life and how to live (Ps 14:1; John 8:44; Eph 2:1-3).

Lastly, the third priority seeks to learn what one can learn from defective models. Believing parents can learn from everything around them. Believers interact with the functions and objective realities of life every day. Knowing what is true, and critiquing error is an integral part of living life as a believer. But from the standpoint of developing a model by which believing parents conduct their care of adopted children, such learning plays a distinctly tertiary role.[4] Though, theories that do not derive from Scripture can give insight into the factors of the human experience of various troubles. Scripture does not claim to provide descriptions of every experience people have— including a child's experience of adoption. So, these sources can help believing parents gain knowledge about human experience, so long as their interpretive lens through which they understand those insights is their preestablished biblical framework. Interaction with the world and its ideologies will provoke believing parents to think, rethink, critique,

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[2] Powlison, "Questions at the Crossroads," 34.

[3] Powlison, "Questions at the Crossroads," 34-35.

[4] Powlison, "Questions at the Crossroads," 35.

correct, and grow in discernment and conviction. God uses such careful engagement with the world to mold believers into mature thinkers who rightly apply biblical truth to the issues of life.

The Theological Framework
for Adopted Children

The first priority is to articulate biblical truth. In the previous chapters the doctrine of adoption is discussed and explained. Foundational to the doctrine of adoption is the *imago Dei*. Adoption begins with Adam and Eve. Genesis records the creation of Adam and Even in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27), but that image was marred (not destroyed) by sin (Gen 3). As a result, the intimate and filial relationship between God and man is significantly harmed and severed. Adoption exists because of the severed relationship and by God's own will, he restores the intimate and filial relationship with man through Christ. Furthermore, union with Christ is essential for adoption. Christ is the perfect image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3), he succeeded where Adam had failed. Adoption depends on the believer's union with Christ and results in securing the permanent, intimate, and filial relationship between the believer and God as father.

Human identity is illuminated in the covenantal relationship of bearing the image of God. The believer's significance and security are rooted in the covenantal claim that God is his creator and that his identity is grounded in a distinct relationship to him. Created in God's image, man is both a material and spiritual beings—a psychosomatic union.[5] However, due to the marred image and severed relationship with God, man has a distorted perspective on his experience, which results in inappropriate and iniquitous responses. The need for counseling began are creation and is much more needed due to sin. Thus, parents have a God-given responsibility to faithfully help shape their child's perspectives. Created in the image of God is one's identity and that should profoundly

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[5] Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 217.

shape and influence the way an adopted child perceives and responds to his experience.

In particular, the doctrine of adoption provides a pertinent theological framework to help parent's shape their child's self-perception. Parents can positively influence a child's perception of his own adoption experience by modeling for him the doctrine of adoption as an aspect of salvation in Christ. Dynamically lived out by adoptive parents, the doctrine of adoption gives the framework for bringing restoration to the child's self-perception in relationship. Through adoption there is the restoration of the legitimate, intimate, and filial relationship with God as father (Gal 4:1-7). Sin has created a disconnected relationship and adoption reconnects that relationship. Adoption is a matter of God the Father choosing to make people his children very own children (Eph 1:3-14). The doctrine of adoption accentuates the affection of God for his children and his direct involvement to choose with delight, children for himself, securing the relationship's permanency through Christ and the Holy Spirit. Lastly, Romans 8:12-17 underscores the "already" and "not yet" aspect of the filial relationship. Currently, this relationship comes with filial obligations as well as privileges brought about by the gift of the Holy Spirit that provides each child with confidence, security, and connection. While children will share in the suffering of Christ, they live through such suffering with hope of a future inheritance with no more suffering and the enjoyment of a perfectly connected and intimate relationship with God as father.

Purvis' TBRI Model for Parenting
Adopted Children

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to the second priority of describing and reinterpreting Karyn Purvis' TBRI model as espoused in her book, *The Connected Child*. The subsequent chapter will utilize the third priority to seek to learn what believing parents can learn from Purvis' model.

The above theological framework will guide the analysis. The main tenets from above is that children are made in the image of God as material and spiritual beings

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that perceive the world around them, and their perspectives were designed to be shaped by the perspectives modeled for them by their parents. Hence, the godlier and healthier the perspectives modeled for children, the greater the likelihood of them forming godlier and healthier perspectives. However, when that design for godly, healthy modeling is uniquely broken, children's perspectives are uniquely hindered. Adoptive parents who wish to take up the unique task of parenting a child with a uniquely hindered perspective of himself, of relationships, and of God himself, must approach the child seeking to understand specifically how that child's perspective is skewed, knowing that the skewed perspective of the child involves both the personal sinfulness that all children share as well as the specific errors they absorbed from their situation. The theology of adoption can help to remedy the errors of perception an adoptive child may suffer from—not merely as simple facts to teach, but as experiential knowledge to model.

Purvis and her colleagues offer TBRI as an approach to help adoptive children who have experienced the intrinsic trauma of separation from their parents and placement into another family.[6] They recognize a persistent struggle in adoptive families relating to the way in which the adopted child perceives himself and his circumstances, and how that affects the way that child then responds to his circumstances.[7] TBRI demonstrates how a child's behavior, neurochemistry and life trajectory can change given the right environment.[8]

The TBRI method relies heavily on empirical observation and the tenets of attachment theory to interpret those observations.[9] John Bowlby originally wrote about

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[6] Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine, *The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 1-2.

[7] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 23.

[8] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 33.

[9] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 1. Purvis also admits to the influence of cognitive behavioral theory (CBT), but attachment theory appears to have a much greater influence on the formation of TBRI. For more information on a biblical critique of CBT, see Scott Mehl, "The CBT

attachment theory in 1958 after spending years as a child psychiatrist.[10] In the 1930s Bowlby worked as a psychiatrist in a Child Guidance Clinic in London, where he treated many emotionally disturbed children. This experience led him to consider the importance of the child's relationship with his mother in terms of his social, emotional, and cognitive development. Particularly, it shaped his belief about the link between early infant separations with a child's mother and his later maladjustment. This led Bowlby to formulate his attachment theory.[11]

For Bowlby, attachment related to evolutionary issues. He incorporated Darwin's ideas such as natural selection, control systems theory, and evolutionary biology into a larger theory of human development.[12] Moreover, he was influenced by ethological theory, especially by Konrad Lorenz's study of imprinting.[13] Lorenz showed that attachment was innate and therefore has a survival value.[14] During the evolution of the human species, it would have been the babies who stayed close to their mothers that would have survived to have children of their own. Bowlby hypothesized that both

Therapist in Us All: A Biblical Evaluation of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy," *Association of Certified Biblical Counselors*, accessed July 17, 2019, https://biblicalcounseling.com/resources/acbc-essays/cbt-therapist-us/.

[10] Inge Bretherton, "The Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth," *Developmental Psychology* 28, no. 5 (1992): 762.

[11] Bowlby's works include: John Bowlby, "The Nature of the Child's Tie to His Mother," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 39 (1958): 350-73; John Bowlby, "Separation anxiety," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 41 (1960): 89-113; John Bowlby, "Grief and Mourning in Infancy and Early Childhood," *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 15, no. 1 (1960): 9-52; John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss,* vol. 1, *Attachment* (New York: Basic Books, 1969); John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss,* vol. 2, *Separation* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss,* vol. 3, *Loss, Sadness and Depression* (New York: Basic Books, 1980); John Bowlby, *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development* (New York: Basic books, 2008); and John Bowlby, *Charles Darwin: A New Life* (WW Norton & Company, 1992).

[12] Bowlby, *Attachment*, 37-64.

[13] Bowlby, "The Nature of the Child's Tie to His Mother," 364.

[14] Bowlby, *Attachment*, 166-71.

infants and mothers have evolved a biological need to stay in contact with each other.[15]

He hypothesized that attachment behaviors are instinctive and will be activated by any

conditions that seem to threaten the achievement of proximity, such as separation,

insecurity, and fear.[16] Bowlby also postulated that the fear of strangers represents an

important survival mechanism, built in by nature.[17]

Later, Mary Ainsworth, his research partner, would outline various types of

attachment from Bowlby's initial research findings.[18] Likewise, for Ainsworth, Darwin's

evolutionary theory informed much of her research.[19] Ainsworth's thinking was on the

biological components of behavior stemming from an evolutionary framework. Together,

Bowlby's and Ainsworth's work was influential in changing much of psychological and

sociological theory. Literature, theories, and counseling methods have all been influenced

by attachment theory and largely by Ainsworth's description of the secure attachment

style.[20]

In practice, Bowlby studied the responses of young children as they were left

by their parents.[21] He observed that these children went through fairly predictable stages

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[15] Bowlby, "The Nature of the Child's Tie to His Mother," 366-67.

[16] Bowlby, "The Nature of the Child's Tie to His Mother," 369-70.

[17] Bowlby, "The Nature of the Child's Tie to His Mother," 360.

[18] Ainsworth's works include: Mary D. Salter Ainsworth, "Attachments Beyond Infancy," *American Psychologist* 44, no. 4 (1989): 709-16; Mary D. Salter Ainsworth and Silvia M. Bell, "Attachment, Exploration, and Separation: Illustrated by the Behavior of One-Year-Olds in a Strange Situation," *Child Development* (1970): 49-67; Mary D. Salter Ainsworth, *Infancy in Uganda: Infant Care and the Growth of Love* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967); and Mary D. Salter Ainsworth, "Object Relations, Dependency, and Attachment: A Theoretical Review of the Infant-Mother Relationship," *Child Development* 40 (1969): 969-1025.

[19] Ainsworth, *Uganda*, 431.

[20] Bretherton, "The Origins of Attachment Theory," 791.

[21] Bretherton, "The Origins of Attachment Theory," 763.

after being separated from their parents for extended periods of time.[22] They responded

with protest, followed by despair, followed by detachment or some other form of defense

against the experience of perceived abandonment. Children either developed an

ambivalent response of anger, vengeful, or manipulative behavior; or an avoidance

response of isolating themselves from their parents altogether.[23] Bowlby describes the

importance of this attachment behavior as an internal working model or set of rules and

beliefs that the child applies to his relationships.[24]

     As noted, Ainsworth built upon Bowlby's observations, and studied

attachment in the context of daily interactions between mothers and their children.[25] Her

observations confirmed that children with secure attachments to their mothers will seek

them out for comfort when they are anxious or afraid.[26] On the other hand, children with

insecure attachments do not do this, but rather show the same defense responses that

Bowlby observed.[27] Altogether, Bowlby's and Ainsworth's observations show that early

childhood relationships, especially those with parents or other primary caregivers, form

the inner rules of relationship that shape relationships throughout the rest of life.[28]

     Synthesizing the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth, attachment theory consists

of a set of core beliefs that can be understood as relationship rules or an internal working

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[22] Bowlby, "The Nature of the Child's Tie to His Mother," 359.

[23] Bowlby, "The Nature of the Child's Tie to His Mother," 370-71.

[24] Bowlby, "The Nature of the Child's Tie to His Mother," 351.

[25] Mary D. Salter Ainsworth, Mary C. Blehar, Everett Waters, and Sally N. Wall, *Patterns of Attachment: A Psychological Study of the Strange Situation* (New York: Psychology Press, 2015), 29-64.

[26] Ainsworth, et al., *Patterns of Attachment*, 84-85.

[27] Bretherton, "The Origins of Attachment Theory," 773.

[28] John Bowlby and Mary D. Salter Ainsworth, *Child Care and the Growth of Love* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1965), 36-52.

model.[29] These beliefs or rules make up a person's attachment style.[30] Those beliefs are divided into two main categories: thoughts about self and thoughts about others.[31] Thoughts about self entail (1) "am I worthy of being loved" and (2) "am I competent to get the love I need."[32] About others include (1) "are others reliable and trustworthy" and (2) "are others accessible and willing to respond to me when I need them to be."[33] How the children answer each set of these questions reflect either a positive or negative view of self and others. Since each set of questions can have either a positive or a negative response, a four-quadrant grid represents the possible combination of views of self and other each quadrant representing an attachment style.[34]

The first style is the avoidant attachment style.[35] This arises out of a positive view of self and a negative view of others. The avoidant child often believes that he is worthy of love and capable of getting the love and support needed but believes that others are either unwilling or incapable of providing these things. Therefore, other people are not trustworthy. Based on these beliefs, these children naturally respond with fear of relationships to avoid the disappointment and pain of relationships.[36]

Second, the ambivalent attachment style arises out of a negative view of self and a positive view of others.[37] The ambivalent person believes that he is not worthy of

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[29] Bowlby, *Attachment*, 235-64.

[30] Bowlby, *Attachment*, 350-60.

[31] Tim Clinton and Gary Sibcy, *Attachments: Why You Love, Feel, and Act the Way You Do* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 23.

[32] Clinton and Sibcy, *Attachments*, 23.

[33] Clinton and Sibcy, *Attachments*, 23.

[34] Clinton and Sibcy, *Attachments*, 24.

[35] Clinton and Sibcy, *Attachments*, 27-28.

[36] Bowlby, *Attachment*, 338.

[37] Clinton and Sibcy, *Attachments*, 27.

love and is incapable of getting the love and support needed. He believes others are capable of meeting those needs but might not do so because of the ambivalent person's shortcomings. The ambivalent person is unsurprisingly described as living out of a sense of dependency on others but being ruled by a fear of abandonment at the same time.[38] They often seek to please others by doing unpleasant tasks and are fearful of making decisions.

The next attachment style is the disorganized style, which arises out of a negative view of both self and others.[39] The disorganized person believes that he is not worthy of love and is incapable of getting the love and support needed. However, he also believes others are unable to provide it. Attachment theorists believe the disorganized style is a product of childhood abuse and assumes that background in describing the disorganized child.[40] The disorganized child mainly has a shattered sense of himself. Broken relationships that offer no stability or predictability influence how the child perceives himself. The disorganized child, therefore, has a chaotic inner world. They are prone to volatile emotional responses, tend towards anxiety and depression.

Lastly, the fourth attachment style is the secure style.[41] Secure children believe that they are worthy of love and capable of getting the love and support they need. Additionally, they also believe that others are willing and able to love them. Secure children are described as confident in their perception of themselves. They believe that

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[38] Clinton and Sibcy, *Attachments*, 27.

[39] Clinton and Sibcy, *Attachments*, 28.

[40] Clinton and Sibcy, *Attachments*, 28. See also Mary Main and E. Hess, "Parents' Unresolved Traumatic Experiences Are Related to Infant Disorganized Attachment Status: Is Frightened and/or Frightening Parental Behavior the Linking Mechanism?" in *Attachment in the Preschool Years: Theory, Research, and Intervention*, ed. Mark T. Greenberg, Dante Cicchetti, and E. Mark Cummings (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 161–82, and M. Main and J. Solomon, "Procedures for Identifying Infants As Disorganized/Disoriented During the Ainsworth Strange Situation," in *Attachment in the Preschool Years: Theory, Research, and Intervention*, ed. Mark T. Greenberg, Dante Cicchetti, and E. Mark Cummings (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 121–60.

[41] Clinton and Sibcy, *Attachments*, 26.

they are able to influence others, have a basic trust of others, are willing to seek and accept comfort from others, and bring courage to their relationships. Secure children are still vulnerable to the pain and emotional ups and downs of relationships, but they are more resilient.[42]

It is through the lens of attachment theory that the TBRI method interprets the observations made through empirical studies, experiences of the counselors, and experiences of adoptive families. Consequently, the TBRI method contributes keen insight into the physiological effects on the adopted child from the inadequate stability in his relationship with his parents. However, it does not adequately recognize the importance of these physiological effects on his spiritual being or the strong influence of his spiritual being on his physiology. Therefore, the adopted child's behavioral and relational problems are incompletely interpreted as issues pertaining to his circumstances and environment rather than the combination of both his experiences and his sinful heart, desires, and will. Naturally, the solutions offered by the TBRI method lean more to changing a child's experience and biology to right what wrongs he has experienced. Since it is the common experience of adoptive parents to wrestle with how to connect, how to develop appropriate behavior, and how to correct inappropriate behavior; it is no surprise that Purvis' TBRI model has such large appeal. And rightly so. However, its inadequacies must be complemented with a right theological framework.

Thus, believing parents positively influence their children's perception of their own adoption experience by modeling for them the doctrine of adoption as an aspect of salvation in Christ. Undoubtedly, within the adoption experience there is a child's broken sense of identity in relationship and the fallout in the child's responses to their circumstances. The doctrine of adoption, though, dynamically lived out by adoptive parents, gives the framework for bringing restoration to the child's self-perception in

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[42] Bowlby, *Attachment*, 336-37.

relationship. The key element of the doctrine on display in parents' conduct toward their children is the legitimate and permanent filial relationship that exists between God and his adopted children.

TBRI is a method based on three main principles: empowering, connecting, and correcting.[43] The first TBRI principle, the connecting principle, states that in order to establish healthy relationships between adoptive children and their new adoptive parents, secure attachment must be formed.[44] Second, the empowering principle follows the connecting principle and centers on addressing the physical and physiological needs of the adoptive child after initial attachment has been established.[45] And the last of the three TBRI principles is the correcting principle, which aims to reduce the number of maladaptive behaviors displayed by the children and to correct them in a positive way when they do arise.[46]

The TBRI method considers the effect experience and biology has on the adopted child's perception of self and his circumstances. Much of TBRI is founded on the physical difference between the brain of an adopted child and the brain of a child who has not gone through such trauma. The experience of the adopted child can affect a physical change in the child that requires a suitable approach to parenting, different from the parenting approach of those who are born into their families through natural means. Plainly, she contends that this method can help rewire the adoptive child's brain.[47]

As mentioned earlier, Purvis' model was largely forged through

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[43] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*. Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Jacquelyn S. Pennings. "Trust-Based Relational Intervention™: Interactive Principles for Adopted Children with Special Social-Emotional Needs," *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development* 48, no. 1 (2009): 3-48.

[44] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 16.

[45] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 20.

[46] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 16.

[47] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 9-10.

her observation of adoptive children. Her observations sought to discover any neurological effects of the adoptive experience. As engagement with Purvis' model is conducted in this dissertation, the intention is to assess its use in general adoptive situations.[48] TBRI was created to address the fact that children who are adopted are disproportionally represented among those who receive services for emotional and behavioral problems.[49] In spite of being cared for in stable, attentive homes, these children continue to be at increased risk for behavioral deterioration. She contends that studies find that adopted children show more behavior problems, including internal problems such as depression and anger, and external problems such aggression and seclusion.[50] Furthermore, adopted children and their parents utilize mental health services in significantly higher numbers than nonadopted children.[51] Purvis also observed that many of these adopted children may remain at risk for relational brokenness due to any historic circumstances of abuse and/or neglect.

In response, she and her colleagues have been devoted to creating research-based interventions for at-risk children. Emerging from their research and that of others,

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[48] As noted earlier, there are a variety of experiences adopted children face, including the various reasons why they were adopted. A woman may give up her child for because she is not ready to be a mother; she does not want to be a mother; she cannot afford to raise a child; she cannot provide a safe home; she is too young to raise a child; her family is complete; she does not have a good relationship with her child's father and does not want to have a relationship with him; or she does have a good relationship and together they decide that adoption is a good choice. Much can be said about the differences between a child who is adopted at one week old and a child adopted at seven years old, or even 14 years old. There are differences between a child who is adopted out of a foster care where there was abuse and a child who was readopted where there was the experience of repeated abandonment. While these distinctions are important, this dissertation is limited to understanding theologically the experience of adoption generally, so as to provide a solid framework from which to develop specific strategies to address the varying and distinct circumstances that constitute the adoption experience.

[49] Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, Donald F. Dansereau, and Sheri R. Parris, "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," *Child & Youth Services* 34, no. 4 (2013): 361.

[50] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 48.

[51] F. Juffer and M. H. van Ijzendoorn, "Behavior Problems and Mental Health Referrals of International Adoptees: A Meta-Analysis," *JAMA: Journal of the American Medical Association* 293, vol. 20 (2005): 2501-15.

Purvis has synthesized an attachment-based intervention called Trust-Based Relational Intervention.[52] Some research has been done to test TBRI's effectiveness for helping adopted children and it has been found to have favorable outcomes.[53] Moreover, it has been effectively applied in homes, schools, orphanages, and residential treatment facilities.[54] The TBRI method seeks to assist parents help their adopted children heal from past broken relational circumstances and develop positive relationships and behaviors.[55]

As way of reminder, TBRI consists of three sets of intervention principles. The empowering principles are (1) designed to meet the child's basic needs for hydration, nutrition, and physical activity, and (2) instill a sense of felt-safety by creating an environment that is predictable and child-centered. The connecting principles are designed to enhance (1) caregiver awareness of self and child, (2) engagement and nurturing interaction, and (3) dyadic attunement. Lastly, the correcting principles include both (1) proactive strategies such as teaching self-regulation and prosocial skills, and (2) reactive strategies that yield effective, positive, and non-punitive responses to child misbehavior.[56]

Empowering Principles

The empowering principles address the environmental and physiological needs

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[52] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 1-2.

[53] E.g. Lauren E. Nielsen, "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) for Adopted Children Receiving Therapy in an Outpatient Setting," *Illinois Wesleyan University Honors Projects*, August 5, 2014, accessed September 13, 2019, https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/psych_honproj/165.

[54] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 376.

[55] Karyn B. Purvis, Sheri R. Parris, and David R. Cross, "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Principles and Practices," in *Adoption Factbook V: The Most Comprehensive Source For Adoption Statistics Nationwide* (Alexandria, VA: National Council For Adoption, 2011), 497.

[56] Purvis, Parris, and Cross, "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Principles and Practices," 497.

of the adopted child.[57] These principles address what Purvis purports is the reality that a

child's mind is housed in his body and that the needs of the body influence his ability to

behave.[58] According to Purvis, the empowering principles are founded on research from

various domains.[59] The first component of empowering principles is addressing the

child's environment.[60] The child's environment includes both feeling safe and

predictability. First, a child must feel safe in his environment. It is not enough for parents

to know their children are safe, the child only feels safe if that is what registers in their

child's physiology and neurochemistry.[61] Purvis notes that hypervigilance is common

among children who did not have attentive, protective parenting during important

developmental periods of their lives.[62]

   Another subcomponent is providing an environment of predictability.[63]

Naturally, unpredictability and chaos are nerve-wracking for a child and creating a

predictable environment is empowering, because it decreases fretfulness over what may

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[57] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 20.

[58] Purvis, Parris, and Cross, "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Principles and Practices," 497.

[59] Tiffany Field, *Touch* (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 2014); Tiffany Field, Maria Hernandez-Reif, Miguel Diego, Saul Schanberg, and Cynthia Kuhn, "Cortisol Decreases and Serotonin and Dopamine Increase Following Massage Therapy," *International Journal of Neuroscience* 115, no. 10 (2005): 1397-413; Stephen W. Porges, "Love: An Emergent Property of the Mammalian Autonomic Nervous System," *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 23, no. 8 (1998): 837-61; M. L. Barton and D. Robins, "Regulatory Disorders," in *Handbook of Infant Mental Health*, ed. Charles H. Zeanah, Jr., 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), 310-25; Carol Stock Kranowitz and Ellen Archer, *The Out-of-Sync Child* (New York: Berkley Publishing Group, 1998); Bonnie J. Kaplan et al., "Improved Mood and Behavior During Treatment with a Mineral-Vitamin Supplement: an Open-Label Case Series of Children," *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology* 14, no. 1 (2004): 115-22; and Janet A. Welsh et al., "Interventions for Internationally Adopted Children and Families: A Review of the Literature," *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 24, no. 3 (2007): 285-311.

[60] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 47-73.

[61] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 48-50.

[62] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 51.

[63] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 53-54.

or may not happen next. A key ingredient to creating a safe, predictable environment is to ensure smooth transitions for children.[64] Purvis identifies three main types of transitions: daily transitions, major life transitions, and developmental transitions.[65] Daily transitions are the "joints" that connect daily experiences, and these pose challenges for children who are fearful and for those with poor self-control. By explicitly managing daily transitions such as providing children with advance notice before transitioning from one activity to another problematic behaviors can be reduced. For example, telling a child that dinner will be ready in fifteen minutes will help the child prepare and predict the transition. Next, major life transitions such as the first day of school or joining a new family can be difficult to navigate. Life books, memory books, storytelling, and journaling are strategies that can help children negotiate these difficult situations. Lastly, developmental transitions occur as the brain continues to reorganize itself during major developmental milestones throughout the lifespan like the transition from childhood to adolescence. According to Purvis, these transitions pose opportunities to help children feel safe by increasing predictability and perceived control throughout the day.[66] Family or daily rituals help increase predictability, manage transitions, and build family cohesion.

The second component of empowering principles is meeting a child's physiological needs.[67] This includes safe touch and physical activity. Regular, affectionate touch is an empowering principle since it is essential for both physiological health and interpersonal relationships. Safe, nurturing touch can slow down a child's

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[64] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 175-96.

[65] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 363.

[66] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 364.

[67] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 137-74.

heart rate and blood pressure, inducing relaxation.[68] It can also curb stress hormones like cortisol, facilitate food absorption and digestion, and possibly help counteract pain.[69] Purvis asserts that research has shown that safe touch improves both behavior and biochemistry in children with various medical and mental conditions.[70] Physical activity is also seen as important, because it promotes more balanced brain chemistry, which enables children to learn and organize information more effectively.[71] Any repetitive movement, such as walking, riding a bike, bouncing on a trampoline, or swinging has shown to boost calming neurochemicals and lower levels of excitatory and stress neurochemicals. Overall, TBRI empowering principles meet children's basic physical needs and support healthy emotional, relational, and behavioral development.[72]

Connecting Principles

Whereas the empowering principles address the physical needs of children, the connecting principles address the relational needs of adopted children.[73] Typically, children respond in one of two ways to trying circumstances: dissociation and hyperarousal. The connecting principles address the tendency of a child to withdraw or dissociate as a means of self-protection through methods that engage the child while attending to his feelings of threat or fear.[74] The TBRI connecting principles are grounded

[68] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 162.

[69] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 162.

[70] Ashley Montagu, *Touching: The Human Significance of the Skin* (NY: Harper Paperbacks, 1986), referred to in Purvis, Parris, and Cross, "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Principles and Practices," 498.

[71] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 163-66.

[72] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 367.

[73] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 367-71.

[74] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 62-63.

in attachment theory as a way to conceptualize the importance of early parent-child relationships for optimal child development.[75] The connecting principles are designed to enable parents and their children experience a personal relationship that builds trust and leads to secure attachment.[76] This set of principles closely resembles the connections that would be expected to occur between a mother and her newborn infant. TBRI is designed to restore that connection to those who did not have that opportunity from their biological parents. Purvis contends that building secure attachment relationships is important for developing a child's ability to control himself or as she calls it, "self-regulate."[77] She asserts that as an attentive mother meets her infant's needs, she "imposes" regulation on the child by meeting the infant's most basic needs, providing an "external modem" for regulating the child's physical and emotional needs.[78] This meeting of needs becomes the foundation on which the child learns to regulate his own needs and emotions. Connecting principles intend to provide the foundation for attachment and self-regulation and include awareness and engagement.[79]

The first component, awareness, contains two subcomponents, observing and recognizing behavior.[80] While most adopted children are actually safe in their new homes, many continue to engage in maladaptive practices, which are mostly driven by

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[75] Attachment theory is based on the joint work of J. Bowlby and M. S. Ainsworth. They believe there is a significant link between maternal loss or deprivation and later personality development. See Jeremy Holmes, *John Bowlby and Attachment Theory* (Abingdon-on-Thames, England: Routledge, 2014) and Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver, eds., *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, (New York: Guilford Press, 2002).

[76] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 21-32.

[77] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 368.

[78] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 368.

[79] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 16-17.

[80] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 73-88, 186-87.

fear and anxiety. This often results in anger, stubbornness, or defiance.[81] By recognizing behavior driven by fear and anxiety, parents can respond appropriately to their children, who are often unable to verbalize their needs. TBRI emphasizes recognition of nonverbal markers of fear and anxiety such as pupil dilation, heart rate, depth of respiration, and muscle tension so that needs do not go unmet.[82] Purvis maintains that insightful parents who become deeply aware of nonverbal cues of fight, flight, or freeze can often avert unfavorable behavioral responses.[83] In other words, parents who are keenly aware of any fears or anxieties their child is experiencing are better equipped to impede bad behavior.

Engagement is the second component of Purvis' connecting principles and with it are two subcomponents: nurturing interaction and playful engagement.[84] Nurturing interaction has as its foundation the belief that the best pathway to a healthy and flourishing child is through building trust in infancy.[85] Therefore, when parents are attempting to connect with their child, they must pay attention to the aspects of relationships that may have been missed in infancy. This may include attention to physical needs, attentiveness to emotions, and responsiveness.[86] Especially, a child with a history of maltreatment will likely benefit much more from these types of interactions. Playful engagement produces warmth and trust between parents and their children. This type of interaction can go far to disarm fear, promote relational attachment, and even help builds social skills. Many adopted children lack this type of playful connection early in

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[81] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 48-50.

[82] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 368.

[83] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 124.

[84] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 142-44.

[85] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 1-5.

[86] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 2.

their lives.[87] Through playful engagement, including active listening, parents can become attuned and responsive to their children's immediate needs. Becoming attuned is the idea of creating a harmonious relationship between the child and parent.

Through verbal and nonverbal nurturing communications between the parents and their child, attunement can be achieved through matching behaviors, eye contact, voice and inflection, body position, and safe touch.[88] Matching is the act of mimicking facial expressions, sounds, or actions, and Purvis contends that this develops naturally in healthy parent and child relationships and fosters attachment and security.[89] Again, Purvis and her colleagues contend that this kind of engagement changes the biology of the child, which then affects change in the child's fear, anxiety, and behavior.[90] Generally, the connecting principles give parents tools to build trusting, secure attachment relationships with their children. This improved relationship is believed to be key to reversing the unfavorable effects of early strain on the brain, reducing unfavorable behavior, and improving mental function, and social skill.[91]

Correcting Principles

TBRI correcting principles are built on the foundation of the empowering and connecting principles to create an environment in which the child can risk abandoning

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[87] Theraplay is an attachment-based model of playful interaction that resembles the natural playful activities that closely resemble the interaction style that is at the heart of TBRI. For further study on Theraplay, see Phyllis B. Booth and Ann M. Jernberg, *Theraplay: Helping Parents and Children Build Better Relationships Through Attachment-Based Play* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009).

[88] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 73-79.

[89] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 371.

[90] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 146.

[91] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 370.

unhealthy behaviors and creating new healthy ones through the correcting principles.[92] Foundational to these principles is Purvis' reliance on research that reveals that parental regulation of food, warmth, sensory input, and emotional soothing during infancy and early childhood provide physical and emotional security that create a foundation for the development self-regulatory behaviors.[93] Particularly, mistreated children often lack this foundational regulatory support. It is contended that these children with moderate to severe difficulties will not outgrow these issues without intervention. Thus, with the balance of increasing structure and nurture, gentle and kind interaction in the context of dependable care will help develop the child, providing a relationship whereby behavioral change can occur.[94]

The correcting principles are also based on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT),[95] which Purvis affirms is effective in treating a wide range of childhood problems, including depression, anger, and suffering. She sees behavioral training that is proactive, rather than reactive, is effective in improving children's ability to solve problems and address conflict.[96] Consequently, this proactive teaching reduces the need for corrective action by parents. By planning how to handle problems in advance, the child is prepared to react more appropriately with the practiced replacement behavior. The correcting principles consist of both proactive and responsive strategies to promote favorable behaviors.

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[92] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 73-136.

[93] Purvis relies on the research conducted and espoused in Heidelise Als et al., "Toward a Research Instrument for the Assessment of Preterm Infants' Behavior (APIB)," in *Theory and Research in Behavioral Pediatrics*, eds. H. E. Fitzgerald, B. M. Lester, and M. W. Yogman (Boston: Springer, 1982), 35-132, and T. Berry Brazelton and Stanley I. Greenspan, *The Irreducible Needs of Children: What Every Child Must Have to Grow, Learn, and Flourish* (Lebanon, IN: Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2009).

[94] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 16.

[95] For further study, see Judith S. Beck, *Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Basics and Beyond* (New York: Guilford, 2011).

[96] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 119-36.

Proactive strategies include emotional regulation and life value terms.[97] TBRI proactive strategies are designed as preventative teaching measures, and consist of verbal reminders, behavioral rehearsals, role play with others or with puppets, teaching life value terms, and demonstrations of rule-following or socially appropriate behaviors that are presented in settings where problem behavior is likely.[98] In normally developing parent and child relationships, regulation by the parent offers not only a venue of practical care such as regulation of warmth and food, but also becomes the vehicle by which a developing child learns self-control. Many children with histories of constant separation or mistreatment lack such physical regulation and consequently fail to develop the necessary skills to control emotions and behavior.[99]

Similarly, life-value terms help create a language and culture of mutual respect, whereby the child's character is shaped. Practice with life values provides children with tools and the skills to resolve real-life circumstances and issues appropriately.[100] Important life-value skills include using respect, making eye contact, using words to replace troublesome behaviors, being gentle and kind, accepting consequences, and others.[101] When proactive strategies are practiced regularly, troublesome behaviors become less frequent. Purvis asserts that based on her current understanding of brain development and personal experience, lasting change will require, on average, one month per year of age for a child or youth from hard places to develop new beliefs and new behaviors; assuming the brain develops as it should.[102] The child

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[97] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 175-96.

[98] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 372.

[99] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 25-32.

[100] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 74.

[101] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 73-88.

[102] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to

who began life with constant and little to no secure relationships, resorted to his basic instinct to survive. Consequently, he may deal with difficult circumstances by manipulating, avoiding, or aggressive control.[103] Developing scripts that put on display addressing difficult circumstances with respect for others, gentleness, and kindness will help parents proactively teach their child important values.[104] Over time and with regular use, these short scripts become tools for the child to evaluate his own behaviors.

The second component of correcting principles are responsive strategies.[105] Though proactive training is effective, Purvis rightly assumes that there may still be instances when troublesome behaviors are exhibited and, in these cases, responsive strategies may be necessary.[106] These strategies include levels of response, the IDEAL approach, and re-do's, which were developed as part of the TBRI correcting principles to guide parents in resolving troublesome behaviors when they occur.[107]

Levels of response, described next, identify responsive practices that balance matching the intensity to the level of troublesome behavior with maintaining the connection with the child.[108] Level one is playful engagement.[109] This represents a low-level challenge, like speech that is disrespectful. This may be met with playful engagement. For example, in response to a child who demands "Give me that crayon!" a

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Complex Developmental Trauma," 373.

[103] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 33.

[104] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 74.

[105] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 89-118.

[106] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 373.

[107] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 96-97.

[108] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 121-23.

[109] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 374.

parent may respond playfully, "Are you askin' or tellin'?" Then the parent guides the child to a behavioral re-do in which the child asks with respect for the crayon. Level two entails structured engagement.[110] This is a situation with a slightly elevated challenge, such as when a child does not respond appropriately to playful engagement, the parent may offer choices. For example, a six-year-old on the playground who demands that her mother pick her up and carry her in, was asked if she was "askin' or tellin'." The child replies forcefully that she was telling, to which her mother responds, "You have two choices, you may ask with respect or you may simply walk to the car on your own." At that level, the young girl asks with respect, and her mother carries her playfully to the car.

At level three, the situation is vulnerable and requires calming engagement.[111] This is a situation when there is a risk of full escalation, so the parent must be carefully attuned to this possibility. At this level, parents are encouraged to give their child a chance to do "time-in"[112] and think about the situation while the adult is nearby. At level four there is significant threat of violence or harm by the child, either to himself or to someone else, which requires protective engagement.[113] At this level, TBRI encourages parents to contain the violence by responding calmly. Parents are then instructed to seek formal training in an intervention accepted by laws in their state. When the violence passes, the parent remains with the child until the connection is restored and the child

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[110] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 374.

[111] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 374.

[112] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 102. Time-in is a think-it-over place similar to a time-out, but without the isolation. When a parent wants to give their adopted children time to reflect on their behavior, use a designated location that is near to the family and offers few distractions. Instead of being sent away, the child is brought closer. The child does not go there alone, but is accompanied by an adult who stays quietly nearby while the child thinks it over. This was developed in response to an adopted child's possible history of neglect and rejection. Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine*, The Connected Child*, 102.

[113] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 374.

feels safe and secure again.[114]

Notably, in each of these levels, the goal is to sustain connectedness while guiding the child to appropriate behaviors and responses, and for the child to know that a parent, who they consider safe, will help them control their emotions and behavior. Purvis clarifies that these levels are not intended as a punishment, but rather as a guiding support to help the child.[115] Negotiation is a critical component of all TBRI strategies, as parents are encouraged to seek to give voice to their children who Purvis believes have lost their voices.[116] Specially, negotiation is vital in both proactive and responsive strategies, because many children who have suffered have developed the habit of using violence, manipulation, or control to keep themselves safe and to get their needs met. Parents can significantly diminish the frequency, intensity, and duration of troublesome behavioral episodes with negotiation, because it gives the child a voice and a certain amount of control, which in turn makes them feel empowered.[117]

A guiding principle for parents to follow at any level is what Purvis coins as the IDEAL response.[118] This is an acronym to remind parents of five principles that should be used when challenging behaviors occur, which stands for parents responding to their children's behavior (1) immediately and (2) directly, in a way that is (3) efficient and (4) action-based, (5) leveling the response at the behavior, not the child. First, parents respond immediately to the behavior due to research that proves that learning is greatest when the response is close in time to the behavior.[119] Second, parents are to respond

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[114] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 374.

[115] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 89-118.

[116] Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 374-75.

[117] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 57-72.

[118] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 96-97.

[119] Purvis et al. refer to the findings in Peggy P. Hester, Jo M. Hendrickson, and Robert A.

directly to their child through eye contact, giving him undivided attention, and bringing him nearer to themselves physically for teaching and guidance. Research shows that this changes the brain chemistry when there is eye contact and close proximation to another.[120] The next response to remember is to respond in an efficient and measured manner. This is reflected in different levels above, in which parents use the least amount of firmness, corrective effort, and verbal directive that is required to correct the behavior. The purpose is to continue the effort to help children gain trust, knowing their parents will not overreact to their behaviors.[121] Next, parents' response should be action-based. Parents redirect their child to practice an appropriate behavior. Lastly, parents level the response at the behavior, not at the child. This means that parents do not reject their child as a person, only respond to the behavior.[122]

The final subcomponent of responsive strategies is what Purvis calls re-do's.[123] Children who have difficulty controlling their behavior need opportunities to practice appropriate responses.[124] Once an opportunity to correct troublesome behavior is identified, parents model the appropriate way to complete the action. When the child re-does it the parents praise him lavishly and sincerely for his efforts. If done in a playful and fun manner, Purvis contends that re-dos can build self-esteem and shape positive behaviors through success.[125] This provides parents and children with interactions that are

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Gable, "Forty Years Later—The Value of Praise, Ignoring, and Rules for Preschoolers at Risk for Behavior Disorders," *Education and Treatment of Children* 32, no. 4 (2009): 513-35, in Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 375.

[120] Purvis et al. cite Jeffrey S. Danforth, "Parent Training for Families of Children with Comorbid ADHD and ODD," *International Journal of Behavioral Consultation and Therapy* 2, no. 1 (2006): 45, in Purvis et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention," 375.

[121] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 97.

[122] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 97.

[123] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 97-98, 119, 123, and 148.

[124] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 98.

[125] Purvis, Parris, and Cross, "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Principles and Practices,"

positive, encouraging, and practical.[126]

Purvis concludes that the TBRI principles outlined here (Empowering, Connecting, Correcting) represent a broad scope of research-based practices for interacting with adopted children. They are also derived from her experience working with adopted children. She genuinely desires these principles to help families for years to come and looks forward to future empirical research studies that will show the efficacy of TBRI for helping adopted children and their parents.[127]

Purvis' TBRI Model and the Adopted Child's Self-Perception

What Purvis purports through the TBRI method showcases rightly what is at stake when parenting an adopted child. Children perceive the world around them. They are created in the image of God as a psychosomatic union. They are embodied moral agents who actively perceive what they experience. And due to the adoptive child's experience, the design for godly, healthy modeling is uniquely broken and his perspective of himself, of relationships, and of God are hindered. Furthermore, are the effects, as Purvis rightly observes, that the adopted child's experience has on his biology and the influence that his biology has on his perception of his experience.[128] The material and immaterial aspects are necessarily correlative in their function. The soul does not function apart from the brain, and the brain apart from the soul. There is an inseparable interaction of the spiritual, biological, and experiential components of a child's life that must be taken into consideration when caring for adopted children. Thus, adoptive

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[126] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 94.

[127] Purvis, Parris, and Cross, "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Principles and Practices," 501.

[128] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 9-10.

parents have the unique role and wonderful opportunity to help shape the child's perspective rightly.

To help believing parents care well for their adopted children, it is important to interact with methods like the TBRI model in order to gain discernment and make use of what is helpful. To analyze the TBRI model certain questions must be addressed. How does Purvis explain the nature of children to perceive the world around them? Does she account for something other than the adopted child's experience or biology that hinders their perspectives? What ways should parents shape their child's perspectives and what should be those perspectives?

These questions are important to answer because what adoptive parents believe about their children, their perspectives, and how they are shaped and in what ways should their perspectives be shaped, are lived out through their parenting practices and will particularly shape their child's perspective about himself and his experience. For example, in his review of *The Connected Child*, Brian Liechty makes a helpful observation about the view of the child's nature and how that impacts the practice of parenting. He contends that failure to view children as God views them leads to three problems.[129] One, inappropriate behaviors are attributed to physical causes only. Two, failure to view children rightly leads to a lack of accountability. And three, an improper view of children inhibits opportunities to address the child's greatest need of being reconciled to his creator. There is no denying that physical issues such as a child's biology and experiences effect a child's behavior, but they must be seen as correlative operations of an embodied soul. The child's immaterial component—his heart, soul, and mind—must be considered along with the material component of his body.

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[129] Brian Liechty, "Review of *The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family* by Karyn B. Purvis, David Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 30, no. 3 (2016): 89-91.

**TBRI's Perception of the Nature
of the Adopted Child**

TBRI contributes keen insight into the mental and physiological effects of inadequate stability in his relationship with his parents on an adoptive child.[130] However, TBRI does not recognize the more ultimate implications of these effects on spiritual agency. Undoubtedly, one's identity is shaped, in part, by what he believes about his nature; furthermore, what parents believe about the nature of their children will affect the way they parent. The child must be perceived as the whole person he is—a psychosomatic union. As Adams observes, it is common "to discover that when one attempts to deal with man in ways that demand some distinction between the organic and the nonorganic, he runs into problems."[131] Ontologically, the material and immaterial components of the child are not the same. Yet, they are correlative in how parents approach caring for them. When addressing the child's hindrances to perceiving the world around him and how to remedy that, parents must not shirk their responsibility to address both the body and the soul of their child. To Liechty's point, an inadequate view of the whole person will lead to inadequate methods, which result in inadequate outcomes.[132]

Since people are created as embodied souls, TBRI rightly draws attention to the physiological effects an adoptive child's experience has on his perception.[133] However, TBRI does not adequately acknowledge the child as an embodied soul, whose responses as spiritual, and therefore moral.[134] Children are embodied moral agents. A way to understand the relationship between the physical and the spiritual is that the

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[130] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 2.

[131] Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 438.

[132] Hoekema concurs with this point in *God's Image*, 222.

[133] Adams, *Counselor's Manual*, 438.

[134] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 445.

physical is a necessary platform of the spiritual. Therefore, a child's response must be considered as a whole when addressing him.[135]

Powlison furnishes helpful insight into what challenges parents face when addressing their adopted children as psychosomatic unities. He identifies the influence secular thought has had on the explanation for maladaptive behavior. Before the middle of the 1990s one's experience energized and directed one's behavior, but in the middle of the 1990s one's biology was believed to be the primary cause.[136] More recently, as seen in the TBRI method, there is an amalgamation of the two.[137] He cautions parents not to forget the authority of Scripture, though, and to maintain a holistic biblical anthropology. "What the Bible says about people will never be destroyed by any neurological or genetic finding."[138] Powlison is not saying that the physiology of the person is inconsequential. What he is underscoring is the importance of perceiving a person as created in the image of God as body and soul.[139] Furthermore, the Bible's presuppositions are not contrary to the facts of neurobiology, any more than they are contrary to the facts of human life and experience.[140] Parents can praise God for the common grace of medical doctors and other specialists who provide helpful solutions to heal biological problems without neglecting the material and immaterial aspects of their child.

The inner and outer man function together as a unity.[141] Emlet discusses the

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[135] See Hoekema, *God's Image*, 222-26 and Adams, *Counselor's Manual*, 437-43 for further implications of the tension of the psychosomatic union of man and counseling methodology.

[136] David A. Powlison, "Biological Psychiatry," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 17, no. 3, (1999): 2.

[137] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 50-51.

[138] Powlison, "Biological Psychiatry," 4.

[139] Powlison, "Biological Psychiatry," 4.

[140] Powlison, "Biological Psychiatry," 5.

[141] Michael R. Emlet, "Obsessions and Compulsions: Breaking Free of the Tyranny," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 22, no. 2 (2004): 17. OCD is defined in American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5*," (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric

correlative functioning of the outer and inner man when addressing even the more complicated behaviors like Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).[142] He states that God has designed man to express his worship of his heart (inner man) in a tangible biological (outer man) context.[143] The origin of every man's response to his circumstances originates in the inner man and is an expression of that man's worship.[144] Again, though, the inner man and outer man function together and the biological context of a man varies from one person to another. There are various states of health or disease that will make behavioral responses easier or harder. However, a person's body does not have the final say in whether his desires, thoughts, and actions will honor or dishonor the Lord.[145] Moreover, Scripture does not ignore the genuine and often intense influence of bodily weaknesses and limitations that test the response of one's heart.[146] Jesus simplifies this dynamic when he tells his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt 26:41). Thus, when parents address their adopted children as psychosomatic unities, they must differentiate between potential bodily pressures and the active responses of the heart without overemphasizing one or the other.[147]

Parents cannot allow the weaknesses and suffering of their adopted children to

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Association, 2013), 300.3 as "an anxiety disorder in which time people have recurring, unwanted thoughts, ideas or sensations (obsessions) that make them feel driven to do something repetitively (compulsions). The repetitive behaviors, such as hand washing, checking on things or cleaning, can significantly interfere with a person's daily activities and social interactions."

[142] Emlet, "Obsessions and Compulsions," 15-26.

[143] Emlet, "Obsessions and Compulsions," 17.

[144] Emlet, "Obsessions and Compulsions," 17.

[145] Emlet, "Obsessions and Compulsions," 17.

[146] Emlet, "Obsessions and Compulsions," 17.

[147] Winston Smith, "Dichotomy or Trichotomy? How the Doctrine of Man Shapes the Treatment of Depression," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 18, no. 3 (2000): 24.

override the responsibility of their inner self to respond to their particular experience in a right way.[148] No aspect of one's experience escapes his obligation to trust, worship, and obey God. Parents cannot carve out any part of their children and treat it as if it exists apart from their spiritual obligations to God. "To do so impoverishes our understanding both of Scripture and of the role of Christ Himself."[149] Smith goes on to say that "Christ did not come simply to rescue one-third" of one's being and contract the rest of it out to the psychological and medical professions. Rather, Christ came to redeem people from their fallen nature as it pervades the way they think, the way they feel, what they do, their bodily existence.[150] Unless parents understand their adopted children as fundamentally spiritual, worship-driven creatures, their approaches will be inconsistent, and they will miss the goal of glorifying God in everything they do.[151] Therefore, parents must assess the potential body-based influences and the potential heart issues children are facing. This is difficult and there is no easy answer, and as such the possibility of bodily pressure along with a sinful disposition should increase a parent's compassion and grace for the difficulties their adopted children face.[152] Additionally, since there is still a certain sense of mystery that remains, parents must parent with humility.[153] Furthermore, they should also give their adopted children hope that in addition to the biological influence there is a spiritual dynamic behind their behavior and through their adoption in Christ real and lasting change is possible.[154]

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[148] Smith, "Dichotomy or Trichotomy," 24.

[149] Smith, "Dichotomy or Trichotomy," 29.

[150] Smith, "Dichotomy or Trichotomy," 29.

[151] Smith, "Dichotomy or Trichotomy," 29.

[152] Emlet, "Obsessions and Compulsions," 18.

[153] Emlet, "Obsessions and Compulsions," 26.

[154] Emlet, "Obsessions and Compulsions," 19.

That the body affects the immaterial aspect of the adopted child is a fact that parents must remember. Their parenting constantly involves the biological dimension.[155] While some counseling models can easily emphasize the immaterial, considering lightly or outright neglecting the material, some will do the reverse and overemphasize the material to the neglect of the immaterial. The TBRI method does that. Purvis perceives the child as shaped primarily by his environment and biology, mostly the effects his experience has on his brain function.[156] As a result, Purvis' method contends that adopted children are victims of circumstance with a natural right to protect self.[157] They are primitive and instinctual beings.[158] Right responses are possible when biological and environmental needs are met. Purvis posits, "as a direct result of their early deprivation, adopted and foster children often have suboptimal brain chemistry."[159] And their brain function must be healthy to be capable of behaving appropriately.[160]

Therefore, the TBRI method seeks to provide methods and practices to affect change primarily in the body of the child as the primary conditioner of behavior. Much discussion is given to the primitive brain's fear response, the neurochemical impact of deprivation and abuse, and the flattened cortisol levels these children often experience.[161]

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[155] Adams, *Counselor's Manual*, 438–39. Because the problem of the dividing line between problems caused by biological factors and spiritual factors is often fuzzy, Adams contends that the best solution seems to be for the counselor and/or parent to cultivate a close alliance with a Christian physician with whom he can work closely. Such teamwork recognizes and gives expression to man's fundamental psychosomatic unity. See "The Christian Physician and Counseling" for a practical way parents and counselors can work with medical doctors to best minister to their children and counselees in Adams, *Counselor's Manual*, 439.

[156] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 9.

[157] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 1-20.

[158] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 47-72.

[159] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 9.

[160] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 33-46.

[161] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 9-10, 50, 53-54, 57-58, 62-63, 146, 204-6, etc.

Additionally, TBRI seeks to address the impact that insufficient nurture has on the child. Alienation, insecure attachments, the effects of isolation and institutional living, and the harm that results from not feeling safe are very important. The fact that these children experience deficits in nature and nurture reasonably contributes to the view that these children are victims and sufferers.[162]

Additionally, the tendency of TBRI is to see the problem merely as an ability problem and not as a moral problem, presuming that an adopted child's maladaptive thinking or behavior is simply the operations of conditioning. TBRI's overemphasis on biology minimizes the mutual influence of the immaterial. The child's environment certainly affects his biology and his biology in turn affects his perception and response, but that perception and response is always by nature spiritual. In other words, the child is acting from his moral agency, even as that response is shaped by physical and environmental factors. While being victimized and biologically affected, the child is also corrupted by sin, as all people are.[163] TBRI wrongfully concludes that the child *would* comply if he *could* but cannot because of his disordered biology.[164]

A more holistic biblical anthropology would recognize that conditioning is powerfully influential, but that moral agency is still central to human response. Choices are not made for the child; rather, the child chooses. Those choices are the result of his perception, made up of ideas, desires, and intentions. These are spiritual agency. This is made clear in passages like Matthew 15:19, Mark 7:21-22, and James 1:14. When a child properly perceives himself as a spiritual being in addition to a physical being, he rightly perceives the mutual effect his experience, biology, and soul have on developing his

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[162] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 33.

[163] See Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 221; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 444; and Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 632-36 for a theological framework of the child's sinful disposition.

[164] Author emphasis.

character. The tension is real and without a theological framework, it all too easy to overemphasize the physical.

Purvis rightly draws attention to children who have been abused or neglected as those who have genuinely suffered, which has certainly affected their brains and bodies.[165] Consequently, this makes their lives more difficult and hinders their perception. Traumatized children are not only sufferers and victims, though. They also have the dignity of being created in the image of God and as such are embodied moral responders and active agents. Thus, Purvis and the TBRI method does not adequately account for something other than the child's experience and biology that hinders his perspective. And this inadequate account leads to incomplete practices.

Because of this inadequacy in theory, TBRI is unable to offer adequate practical guidelines for caring for an adoptive child holistically as a psychosomatic unity. Without an adequate accounting for the distorted spiritual component of the child, there is an inadequate assessment of the problem to be remedied. Children with traumatic histories are not merely passive recipients of their challenging and trying circumstances, and the bodies they inhabit. Like all people created by God, these children have souls that are continually interacting with the trials and struggles they encounter. Those instinctual and primitive responses that Purvis mentions[166] are natural as she contends, but they are an aspect of character. Adopted children respond morally to the suffering that comes from their experience, biology, and from within. The compassion that Purvis rightly contends for is not merely because of the experiential and biological troubles the adopted child faces,[167] but also the inherit sin that the child must contend with.[168] Recognizing

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[165] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 204-6.

[166] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 47-72.

[167] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 33.

[168] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 531-34.

the influence of both the material and immaterial features of the adopted child is vital to successful parenting. So, parents' expectations for their adopted children must be realistic and failures must be met with mercy and grace, but believing parents cannot and should not abandon the biblical mandate to faithfully bring up their child in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, addressing the hindrances to perceive brought about by his experience, his biology, and the issues of the child's soul that influence his perspective and responses.[169]

A key component of biology that TBRI seeks to heal is the brain function of the child.[170] Since the experience of the adopted child affects the child's brain and the brain greatly influences the child's behavior, it is appropriate for parents to consider this when caring for their adopted child. Due to TBRI's espoused understanding of the nature of the adopted child, human connections are believed to shape the neural connections from which proper operation of the brain emerges.[171] So, parents are to help the child build relationships with others and affect healthy change in the brain, thereby affecting the function of the child. The child then will thinks better, controls himself better, rightly handles his emotions, and functions better in social settings when his brain is functioning better.

Undoubtedly, there is truth about the affects the brain has on one's body, but acknowledgement of other crucial components of behavior, namely desire and will is needed. A child's biological component is not an adequate causal explanation of the desires and thoughts of the adopted child's soul.[172] As argued all along, it influences and

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[169] Hoekema, *God's Image*, 217 and Adams, *Theology*, 15.

[170] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 19.

[171] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 19.

[172] Edward T. Welch, *Counselor's Guide to the Brain and its Disorders: Knowing the Difference Between Disease and Sin*, 2nd ed. (Glenside, PA: Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation, 2015), 34-36.

conditions the soul, but does not determine it. The soul and brain do not function apart from each other, but are distinct from each other. Welch appropriately contends that "the body or brain cannot affect the heart in such a way as to deprive it of moral responsibility or spiritual vitality."[173] Thus, more than the brain must be cared for and healed, and the doctrine of adoption underscores the severity of such a need with its corresponding solution, which brings the appropriate healing to the soul of the child (Eph 1:5-7).

Furthermore, TBRI contributes keen insight into the physiological effects on the child's brain from inadequate stability in his relationship with his parents.[174] Once again, though, unbalanced weight is given to effect of biology on the child. The unattached child's brain is seen as malfunctioning, and relational attachment is the solution. The relational disposition of TBRI is commendable, but it lacks the acknowledgement of the great effect the soul of the child has on his drive for relationships and the theological framework necessary to understand the design of the *imago dei* as relational. Again, not allowing material concerns to eclipse spiritual concerns is key, so to maintain the psychosomatic unity of the person.[175] Genes, neurons, and chemicals do not generate choices in moral behaviors. Those originate in the heart and mind of man. The body is the platform for living out those inclinations of desire and thought.[176] The adopted child is an embodied moral agent and his brain does not function apart from his soul. Likewise, his soul does not function apart from his brain. If the brain is injured in some way, that will hinder the child from carrying out his thoughts and

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[173] Welch, *Counselor's Guide to the Brain*, 34. Welch contends the opposite. He says that according to the apostle Paul physical weakness can actually strengthen believers spiritually (2 Cor 4:16).

[174] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 9-20.

[175] Welch, *Counselor's Guide to the Brain*, 2. Welch's book is an excellent resource for helping parents (believers and nonbelievers) navigate the tension between nonorganic and organic diagnoses and proper solutions.

[176] Calvin, *The Institutes*, 1. 15.3.

desires. However, the present point is that TBRI reduces the functions of soul to the functions of the body, confusing and convoluting how parents perceive their children and how to help their child perceive and respond in a godly and healthy way to his experience.

The Bible teaches people to set a guard over their hearts, being careful what they are exposed to in thought and desire. This is because the heart of man is the origin of the life people live, "for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov 4:23). Proverbs 4:23 underscores the vitality of keeping one's own soul. Since the soul is the source of every thought, every word, and every action of man, it "should transcend any other self-protecting act."[177] The body is the platform for living out what originates in the spiritual aspect of man. Jesus reinforces this in Mark 7 when he specifically says that that which people do with their bodies in speech and action originates in the heart of that man. "For *from within*, *out of the heart of man*, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come *from within*. . . . (Mark 7:21-23).[178] Thus, one's behavior—whether good or bad, righteous or unrighteous—cannot be disconnected from the dynamic workings of the heart of man. One must keep the psychosomatic unity of the person in mind.

Paul underlines the psychosomatic unity of man in Galatians 5. In verses 19-24 he demonstrates the difference in behaviors by those who are born of the Holy Spirit and

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[177] Peter A. Steveson, *A Commentary on Proverbs* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2001), 63; Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1964), 65. Crawford Howell Toy offers another explanation for what exactly is the "springs of life" in Crawford Howell Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1899), 97–98. He contends that the antecedent is not the immaterial aspect of man, but the act of obeying God's wisdom. Thus, man must be vigilant and diligent to obey God's Word. However, Toy neglects the aspect of inner life and outgoing realms of human life in the text. It is more likely that the "springs of life" refer to those things that find their source in the heart and mind of a man.

[178] Author emphasis.

thereby walking by the Spirit; and those who are not born by the Holy Spirit and carry out the deeds of the flesh. Such behavioral discrepancy between the two is an immaterial difference rather than a material difference. One is living according to his intrinsic sinful disposition and the other is living according his newly restored relationship that entails a new disposition brought about by the gracious work of God. Elsewhere, Jeremiah rhetorically asks, "who can understand the heart," implying that no one can (Jer 17:9). It is the Lord who searches the heart and tests the mind (Jer 17:10). Only one being can comprehend and explain an adopted child's heart and mind—God. A clear explanation of how the immaterial and material work together will remain somewhat incomprehensible and thus demands one not overemphasize one to the neglect of the other and maintain the tension that exists between how they affect one another and remain distinct from one another. The Bible, though, clearly teaches that change occurs to the immaterial aspect of man, which effects change to his perceptions and responses to the circumstances of life. Paul's description of the Spirit-filled life (Eph 5:18), fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-24), and the adoption of the believer in Romans 8 support such a conclusion.

Purvis provides useful insight to the effects that the body and experience has on an adopted child, but those insights must be seen and balanced by the theological identity of the child. While brain function certainly affects a child's response to trying circumstances, a biological malady is not the decisive hindrance to the child's wellbeing. He uses his body to express his perceptions and desires. As a psychosomatic unit there is an immaterial component where the desires, perceptions, and will of the child exist.[179] Parents must consider their children as whole persons and work with the tension between the material and spiritual components of their child. This means humbly recognizing that

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[179] For further study on function of the heart see Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016); Brad Bigney, *Gospel Treason: Betraying the Gospel with Hidden Idols* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2012); and Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Idols of the Heart: Learning to Love for God Alone* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2001).

"the dividing line between problems caused by organic factors and nonorganic factors is often fuzzy" and therefore it is wise for believing parents to consult sources like Purvis and others, and a medical physician about possible organic issues while also searching the Scriptures and consistently proclaiming the truth of God's Word to attend to the thoughts, beliefs, and desires of their child.[180]

A theological identity, then, will help the adopted child see that he is a material and spiritual being created in the image of God, and that his adoption relationship with his parents points to a greater adoption relationship by his creator. This permanent filial relationship with God as his eternal father as seen in the Galatians, Ephesians, and Romans passages, will help shape his perception of himself as a courageous and confident person as he trusts and depends on God. That relationship results in peace, rest, and a lifestyle that leads to life. The child perceives himself as secure and attached through his adoption in Christ (Rom 8:15-17). Thus, his greatest security and peace will not be in himself or primarily in his body functioning appropriately, but primarily by being rightly related to God through the redemption and forgiveness in Christ (Eph 1:7). He will see himself as one who is influenced by his circumstances and his body, but will also recognize the dynamics of his heart and mind. As a result of his adoption by God in Christ he will desire to love and please his heavenly Father and also love others. He will see the importance of his behavior as a natural outward expression of his filial relationship with God as father.

TBRI's Perception of the Emotions
of the Adopted Child

Additionally, TBRI emphasizes the importance of adopted children's feeling of security.[181] This is crucial so that the physiology of the child will regulate to a state that

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[180] Adams, *Counselor's Manual*, 439.

[181] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 47-72.

makes it possible for the child to behave appropriately. TBRI insightfully acknowledges the physiological effects on the adopted child, but once again, does not recognize the more ultimate implications of these effects on spiritual agency and balancing the correlative function of the body and soul, which leads toward practices that are lacking. The feelings of the adopted child are not inconsequential, and Purvis rightly observes how a child's sense of security influences the child's response to his experience, specifically his relational attachment to his family.[182] Taking the feelings of the adopted child seriously is undeniable, for they are gauges and helpful indicators of what a child is thinking and wanting. However, an overstated view of a child's emotions can lead to a parent submitting to those emotions rather than leading the child to understand their emotions through a biblical lens.

The safest of environments with the safest of parents does not guarantee that a child actually feels safe. Children are dynamic perceivers of the world around them and this is a significant area of the child's life that parents have an opportunity to shape. The child's perception of safety is what conditions him to feel safe, not necessarily his right relationships, experiences, or biological remedies. That is not to say, though, that Purvis is wrong when she observes the importance parental nurturing and parental habits have on influencing a child to feel safe.[183] Again, adoptive parents must acknowledge that children are embodied moral agents and the soul does not function apart from the brain.

Bob Kellemen provides a helpful framework for understanding emotions through a theological lens. He contends that emotions are based on evaluation and not necessarily fact (Jas 1:2-4). It is important not to equate a cognitive theory of emotions with an assertion that emotions are necessarily reasonable. The same facts can lead to different emotions in different people. An emotion can be illogical or unjustifiable

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[182] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 28.

[183] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 13.

because it is based on wrong judgments, even though the environment and relationships the child is in may not appear unsafe to most. Even so, this does not mean that the emotions one is experiencing are not genuine and should not be minimized,[184] but they certainly may be illogical, because of the influence of their perception.

Kellemen offers the following formula for understanding this concept: E.S. + I.P. = E.R. This refers to one's *external situation* plus his *internal perception* leads to his *emotional response*. The possibilities include: (1) a negative experience (E.S.) plus biblical belief (I.P.) leads to a healthy painful emotion (E.R.), such as sorrow and sadness. (2) A negative situation (E.S.) plus an unbiblical belief (I.P.) leads to an unhealthy painful emotion (E.R.), such as hatred and despair. (3) A positive situation (E.S.) plus a biblical belief (I.P.) leads to a healthy positive emotion (E.R.), such as joy and peace. And (4) a positive situation (E.S.) plus an unbiblical belief (I.P) leads to an unhealthy positive emotion (E.R.), such as pride and self-sufficiency.[185] None of this diminishes the importance of parents nurturing their child and providing for their child a safe environment, but this does help adoptive parents recognize their limitations to do so. Purvis correctly states that parents should be there for their child,[186] they should respond to their own experiences in a calm manner,[187] and that they should provide for their child's physical needs.[188] Nonetheless, parents are limited in their ability to maintain this at all times and control what life experiences might occur. Furthermore, if a child's emotional stability, in particular his feeling of safety, is attached primarily to these

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[184] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 557.

[185] Bob Kellemen, "Emotions: Why Do We Feel What We Feel?," RPM Ministries, accessed August 1, 2018, https://www.rpmministries.org/2014/03/emotions-why-do-we-feel-what-we-feel/.

[186] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 28.

[187] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 28.

[188] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 25.

environmental variables then the child's felt safety will waver with the natural ebb and flow of his experience. What Kellemen helps adoptive parents understand is how the heart and mind of the child interact with his perceived experience to affect an emotional response. This relieves parents from the burden of controlling the experiences their child has and instead focuses their attention to faithfully shape their child's beliefs, bringing a remedy to his distorted perceptions. Many of their child's painful and unhealthy emotions are as a result of ignorance, confusion, and lack of knowledge. This does not mean that parents neglect creating safe environments and developing habits congruent with the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), since they will want to keep in balance the bodily and spiritual aspects of their child.

Thus, TBRI rightly draws attention to the role of emotions, but believing parents must complement this with an adequate theological framework. While the adopted child's experience hinders his perception of what is safe and secure, the parent can make use of the beautiful tenets of the doctrine of adoption to live out and teach about the security and safety that naturally derive from knowing and experiencing the permanent and filial relationship between the child of God and God their father. Scripture portrays children, along with all people, as perceivers of the world around them and due to their experience, their perception may be hindered. And a hindered perception mixed with ungodly and unhealthy desires will lead to ungodly and healthy responses. The doctrine of adoption speaks to the security of the child by anchoring his security to the permanent and filial relationship with his creator God, conscious of God's steadfast love and affection for him (Gal 4:1-7; Eph 1:3-14; Rom 8:12-17).

The TBRI model overly emphasizes the child's experience and biology as the object of the child's security without taking into adequate consideration the dynamic and correlative interaction of the child's spiritual aspect.[189] Furthermore, parents have limited

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[189] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 72.

control over their child's experience and biology. Therefore, adopted children will be prone to perceive inadequately and respond unhealthily to their experience. They may live more by their emotions and make demands about their environment and circumstances without understanding the role their beliefs and desires play, seeing their emotions as a guide rather than a gauge. Moreover, their courage and confidence will wane with the ebb and flow of their own distorted perceptions.

According to TBRI, the perceived fear and anxiety of the child affects the function of the child's brain.[190] Purvis posits that an adopted child must feel safe in order to behave appropriately.[191] If he does not feel safe that will affect his biology in such a way that renders it difficult for the adopted child to behave appropriately.[192] Therefore, parents must establish a secure attachment with their adopted child.[193] Purvis is right to draw attention to the effect the child's experience has on his perception, but does not adequately recognize the importance of these physiological effects on the child's spiritual agency.

Purvis' recognition of how the child's perception is hindered is helpful insofar as it describes how particular deficiencies of the environment can lead to particular deficiencies in the child's perception, but without a robust doctrine of sin's global effects on both the environment and personal perception, her model is unable to have the full weight of compassion that Scripture provides for people suffering under sin's curse. That compassion is displayed in God initiating reconciliation with weak and sinful people.[194] Thus, what is missing with TBRI is the great need that the adopted child has to have a

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190 Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 53.

191 Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 42.

192 Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 53.

193 Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 53-54.

194 Powlison, "Biological Psychiatry," 4.

securely attached relationship with the triune God (Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:18-19).[195] TBRI

recognizes brokenness, but not the brokenness brought about by sin and the great need

for these children to be securely attached to God through Christ. Behavioral issues must

not be minimized, but children created in the image of God, including both relationality,

and human composition, must be seen together as an influence on all human behavior.[196]

Without redemption in Christ, adopted children are separated from God (Eph

2:12). This is the primary driving force for all relationality. This is the precise issue the

doctrine of adoption addresses. Adoption brings a comprehensive solution to the utmost

relational need of the adopted child, and the child's security is not merely temporal, but

eternal and founded on the triune God's impeccable character and promises (Eph 1:4-5).

While TBRI presumes that every child needs to have a secure attachment to its primary

parent due to the child's primal survival instincts, the Bible teaches believing parents that

their children have this natural desire because they are created by God for relationship.

Relationship, especially with God, is what the doctrine of adoption teaches and

magnifies.

TBRI is not wrong about establishing security in the relationship between the

child and his parents, but it does not adequately recognize the limits of this human

relationship. Ultimately, the child will only be secure in God.[197] Foundational relational

health is redemption and adoption by their creator God. Once in a redeemed relationship

with God as father, there is safety because Christ himself is their security (Heb 4:14–16).

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[195] Powlison warns believers that to explain and fix life through some interpretation of human life that excludes God, sin, Christ, sanctification, and the rest of truth will inadequately assess the problem and in turn offer a deficient solution in Powlison, "Biological Psychiatry," 4.

[196] J. Ryan Davidson, "Secure Attachment? A Biblical and Theological Analysis," *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry: Theological Perspectives on Marriage and Children* 3, no. 1 (2012): 45.

[197] Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and its Inversion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 36. Emphasizing the identity of man as created in God's image, Lints contends that finding security for any person is grounded in God through the peculiar relationship to him.

The doctrine of adoption clearly teaches that the child of God is safe and secure in his permanent and filial relationship with God. Parents do well to teach their children that security and safety is in knowing the sovereign, caring, good, and wise God of all creation (Isa 40; Ps 8). God lovingly cares for them and is not a distant, uninvolved being upon whom one cannot depend (Ps 46:1-3). God is the security for his own children, and therefore believing parents have every reason to model that security with their own children in way they perceive and respond to their own experience. Purvis and Scripture agree with the important role parents play in bringing security to their adopted child. However, Scripture extends the object to which the child secures himself to a permanent and filial relationship with God. Parents do create a safe environment for their child and point them to God as their child's sure safety.

As parents live this out, they instill in their children an awareness that they are a psychosomatic unity. They are fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27; Ps 139:14). This means that parents regularly consider the impact their child's experience and biology has (which Purvis rightly draws attention to) and what impact the condition of their soul in relation to God has. Adopted children are responsible moral agents that are nevertheless conditioned by their surroundings. This is a spiritual and physiological reality that must be factored into our approach.

**TBRI's Perception of the
Purpose of Parents**

What goal the parents set for their children showcases what they perceive is their purpose as parents and influences the perception their children have about their own purpose in life. Parents rightfully influence what kind of person their child should be and what he should do. Parents communicate their goals intentionally or unintentionally as they interact with their children. They tell their children what they expect from them. They say it with their words and with their responses to their child when either he does what his parents expect of him or not. This helps shape what children think of themselves

and that perception will certainly influence how children interpret their circumstances and how they respond to those circumstances. For TBRI, the stated goal for parents is to teach their children to "thrive in society."[198] Herein lies a complication. Thriving in society as a standard means that the standard for measuring whether an adopted child is thriving will fluctuate, for as the society goes so does the measure of what thriving looks like. However, whatever the standard, one aspect is sure: behavioral skills will always be the target of parenting. Therefore, according to TBRI, the goal of parents is to help shape the child's behavior in a way deemed appropriate by the society in which they live.[199]

Similar to TBRI's perspective on the nature and emotions of the adopted child, there are helpful observations that can be strengthened with a theological perspective. For the believing parent what is acceptable to society is not a complete standard by which believing parents evaluate their child's behavior. Scripture provides the standard for appropriate behavior and the implication of the doctrine of adoption is that the child has an obligation to that behavior established by their father (Rom 8:12). At one time, the child was obligated to adhere to the appropriate behavior of his former family, namely Satan (1 John 3:8, 10). Now, however, the child is no longer obligated to such behavior (Rom 8:12-17).

Another facet is the underwhelming attention given to the correlative function of the material and immaterial aspects of the adopted child. While behavior is important, and as such must not be neglected, so is the heart of the child and its strong influence on the child's behavior (Mark 7:21-23). The believing parent is concerned as much with a child's worship, desires, and thinking, because of the Scripture's clear teaching that the heart must be guarded (Prov 4:23), analyzed (Matt 5:21-30), and shaped (Eph 6:4). Adopted children are responsible moral agents with a responsibility for both their

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[198] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 130.

[199] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 130.

immaterial and material aspects. They are nevertheless conditioned by their surroundings, but also by their longings and perceptions. This is a spiritual and physiological reality that must be factored into the adoptive parents' approach. So, Purvis' points are helpful insofar as they give insight into various external influences that are often part of the adoptive child's experience, yet a proper approach never loses sight of the moral agency of the child. This is vital to honoring the dignity of God's image in the child.

Consequently, due to the effect of sin and the resultant condition of the child, the greatest need of the adopted child is remedying the condition of his soul. A child who is thriving is not so much determined by the society, but by God through his Word. Children are created in the image of God, but because of sin and their filial connection to the devil as their father, they naturally follow the principles of the world and walk according to the desires of their flesh (Eph 2:1-3). It is God, rich in mercy, who remedies the child's condition by way of adoption in Christ (Eph 1:5-7; 2:4-5). Through adoption, the child is forgiven his sins, redeemed (Gal 4:5; Eph 1:7), and indwelled by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). Moreover, adoption results in a change of the immaterial aspect of the child, and thusly, he lives according to the Spirit (Rom 8:12-14). The significant change that takes place in the soul of the child leads to a change in behavior. Herein lies the fundamental goal of parenting—the salvation and sanctification of their child.

Therefore, the goal for believing parents is the salvation and sanctification of the child, which is not merely an issue of biology and experience, but is also an issue of the heart and mind of the child. It is not merely about attachment between child and parent, but is also about the permanent filial attachment to God as father through adoption by the gracious and predetermined plan of God. For the parent-child relationship pictures and points to a greater relationship with God. What this practically looks like in a parenting situation is addressed in the following chapter.

To accept TBRI's stated goal as the primary or exclusive goal of parenting

means that adopted children may be misled into thinking that their behavior, including

the biology and experience behind their behavior, is of utmost importance and that the

standard for what is appropriate behavior will be the society around them as interpreted

by their parents.[200] Caring for and healing a child's biology and helping them cope with

their experience are admirable purposes, but when the child is not adequately recognized

as an embodied soul and moral agent, the child may not see himself adequately. Quite

possibly, he will perceive himself as mostly a material being who has a purpose in life to

function and behave in a particular way, and that the coping with his experience and

healing his biology is the key to thriving.[201] Sadly, though, as the society goes, so does

the standard, meaning that while predictability is vital to a secure life that TBRI asserts is

necessary for appropriate behavior; the very standard is not necessarily predictable. TBRI

does not essentially contradict Scripture, but provides only part of the equation. Adopted

children in this situation may live in a state of flux, wondering, at times, what is the

proper way to perceive and respond to their experience. So, providing a theological

framework to complement what TBRI offers will help shape a child's perception,

bringing necessary comfort and security, knowing that the commands and expectations of

God are always right and never change (Ps 19:7-11).

TBRI's Solutions to the Problems
Faced by the Adopted Child

While contributing keen insight into the physiological effects of experience on

the child, the insufficient acknowledgement of the child's spiritual agency inevitably

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[200] This in no way implies that the life values the TBRI method teaches are wrong. Many of them agree with Scripture. The difficulty is the standard for judging what life values are important is not God's Word, but society and the parents, which are subject to change and may not always concur with Scripture.

[201] Berkouwer, *The Image of God*, 194. Berkouwer contends that the doctrine of the image of God suffers when one component of man is emphasized over another. The health of a child's identity depends somewhat on the holding in tension and balancing being created as both a material and spiritual being—a psychosomatic unity.

leads to some incomplete solutions. As mentioned earlier, Liechty makes a helpful observation about how the TBRI method originates and how that leads to three problems.[202] One, inappropriate behaviors are attributed insufficiently due to an overemphasis on the effect past experiences have had on their brain and the neurological impairments that have resulted. Heart desires and the will of the child are minimized. Insufficiently addressing these vital issues will not completely help the child or transform his behavior in a way that pleases the Lord, leading to sanctification. Additionally, TBRI's overemphasis on behavior neglects to acknowledge that the child is an embodied moral agent; the brain of the child does not operate apart from the soul. Likewise, the soul does not function alone from the brain.

Two, an insufficient view of children naturally leads to a lack of accountability.[203] To be clear, the TBRI method does underscore the importance of children taking responsibility for their actions.[204] Yet, due to an insufficient view of children as moral agents and embodied souls, Children are inadequately held responsible for their whole contribution to their behavior. For example, Purvis encourages parents not to blame their child for their manipulative and aggressive behavior, but rather respect the child for their skill to survive and cope with their difficult circumstances.[205] A certain amount of respect can be given for a child's strength and tenacity, but that strength must be seen for what it is. The child's natural disposition is to love himself, which includes protecting himself. This is clear in Scripture, where one is taught to love others *as himself* (Lev 19:18, 34; Matt 19:19; 22:39; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8) and where Paul refers to

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[202] Liechty, "Review of *The Connected Child*, 89-91.

[203] Liechty, "Review of *The Connected Child*, 90.

[204] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 89-136.

[205] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 33.

husbands loving their wives *as themselves* (Eph 5:28-29).[206] In response to the child's experience, the child develops particular habits to protect himself. All of this is natural, and the child, as a moral agent, is responsible for his heart and his behavior. Jesus makes this clear in Matthew 15:18 when he confronts the religious leaders about their overemphasis on behavior and insufficient attention to their heart. He also emphasizes this in his sermon on the mount, especially in Matthew 5:21-30.

Liechty adds that even though the child's conscience (immaterial aspect) may accuse him (Rom 2:14-16) and hold him accountable (Heb 4:13), the TBRI method insufficiently addresses the child's conscience as a normal component of being created a moral agent in the image of God.[207] To Purvis' credit, though, she encourages parents to develop a deep understanding of what an adopted child has gone through and to respond to their child with profound compassion.[208] However, that is incomplete if parents do not also help their child address the sinful disposition of his heart and his sinful self-protective habits through confession and repentance (Ps 32:5). Believing parents want to seize those opportunities to address a child's conscience and teach their child about God as holy and righteous, and people as sinful and unholy and in need of a savior who will forgive their guilt. Accountability must extend beyond the material to the immaterial, addressing the thoughts and desires of the child and the correlative relationship they have with his behavior.

For children who grew up experiencing more acutely the brokenness of the fallen world, they are not at fault for their experience, but they are accountable for how their wants and desires prompted particular responses.[209] Their interpretation of their

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[206] Author emphasis.

[207] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 33.

[208] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 33-35.

[209] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 499.

experience is tainted by sin.[210] They may have an unbiblical view of themselves and the world around them and so they naturally respond according to those views. The observations made by attachment theorists and by Purvis are accurate descriptions of what many children without biblical instruction think about themselves and others. They will struggle both internally and externally, and it is the believing parent who brings to them the inerrant, sufficient, and life-giving Word of God that will bring genuine healing to their broken sense of relationship. God and God alone can bring such restoration. That is the hope that every believing adoptive parent has to offer. God can overcome any relationship and behavioral issue adopted children experience. So, Purvis' points are helpful insofar as they give insight into various external influences that are often part of the adoptive child's experience, yet a proper approach never loses sight of the moral agency of the child. This is vital to honoring the dignity of God's image in the child. This is what believing parents put on display when they explain what their adoption in Christ means and how their child also may be adopted into God's family.[211]

Thus, this leads to a third problem: the TBRI method in isolation from a theological framework can impede opportunities to address the child's greatest need—to be redeemed in Christ.[212] Helping adopted children learn to build relationships and behave appropriately are fitting goals, but without the theological framework of the doctrine of adoption, an insignificant amount of attention may be given to a child's saving relationship with Christ. As much as the child is in need of being adopted by loving and compassionate parents who are sensitive to the child's experience, the child is in as much need of parents who lovingly and compassionately concern themselves with

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[210] Adams, *Theology*, 165.

[211] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 568-607; Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 818-40; Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 367-83, 392-99; and Bruce Demarest, *The Cross of Christ,* ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 147-202.

[212] Liechty, "Review of *The Connected Child*, 90.

the child's spiritual condition and his need for spiritual adoption. By God's mercy, they need to be removed from their filial relationship to Satan and placed into a permanent, intimate, connected, and filial relationship with God as father (Eph 1:5). This is what the doctrine of adoption makes unequivocally clear.

Believing parents understand that their adopted child is a psychosomatic unity.[213] He is an immaterial being as much as he is a biological being created in God's image for a dependent, intimate, and loving relationship with God as his father. This does not mean that care, patience, and thoughtfulness in relating to the biological weaknesses and experiential distress of the adopted child should not characterize adoptive parents. To the contrary, the theological framework of the doctrine of adoption, which speaks to the child as created in the image of God and the correlative relationship between the material and immaterial, induces adoptive parents to parent with compassion and sufficient care (Gal 5:22; Eph 4:32; Col 3:12-14).

As noted, TBRI found its methodology because adopted children are at one level victims of their experience and sufferers of their physiology. A biblical view also recognizes that they are moral agents with active desires and perceptions that exist in their immaterial self.[214] Believing parents do not minimize the histories of their children or the affects those histories have on them.[215] But, to sufficiently care for their child, believing parents realize the moral inability of the child that renders a child weak and unable to appropriately interpret or respond to his experience.[216]

Thus, believing parents positively influence their children's perception of their own adoption experience by modeling for them the doctrine of adoption as an aspect of

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[213] Hoekema, *God's Image*, 217.

[214] Pierre, *Dynamic Heart*, 29-52.

[215] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 557.

[216] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 225-26.

salvation in Christ. Undoubtedly, within the adoption experience there is a child's broken sense of identity in relationship and the fallout in the child's responses to their circumstances. The doctrine of adoption, though, dynamically lived out by adoptive parents, gives the framework for bringing restoration to the child's self-perception in relationship. The key element of the doctrine on display in parents' conduct toward their children is the legitimate and permanent filial relationship that exists between God and his adopted children.

CHAPTER 5

STRATEGY FOR CARING FOR AN ADOPTED CHILD
THROUGH THEOLOGICAL SELF-PERCEPTION

In the previous chapter an analysis of Purvis' TBRI method began by using David Powlison's three epistemological principles as the framework for evaluating and critiquing.[1] The first priority is to articulate biblical truth and develop a systematic theology and the second is reinterpreting alternative models. The third priority seeks to learn what one can learn from those alternative models. That is the purpose of this final chapter. Though Purvis' TBRI model is incomplete in its premise about the nature and hindrances of adopted children to rightly perceive the world around them and in what ways parents can rightly shape their child's perspectives; it nevertheless offers useful observations and recommended practices that are valuable to a strategy for caring for an adopted child through theological self-perception. These observations and proposals are considered within the practical implications of the theological framework of adopted children and biblical adoption.

**Toward a Theology of Adoption and
the Care of Adopted Children**

Adopted children are responsible moral agents that are nevertheless conditioned by their surroundings. This is spiritual and a physiological reality that must be factored into the adoptive parents' approach to caring for their adopted child. People are made in the image of God as psychosomatic unities. The brain and the soul are

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[1] David Powlison, "Questions at the Crossroads: The Care of Souls & Modern Psychotherapies," in *Care for the Soul*, ed. Mark R. McMinn and Timothy R. Phillips (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 32-42.

necessarily correlative in their function.[2] Accordingly, adopted children perceive the world around them, and their perspectives are shaped in part by the perspectives modeled for them by their parents.[3] Hence, the godlier and healthier the perspectives modeled for children, the greater the likelihood of them forming godlier and healthier perspectives. However, when that design for godly, healthy modeling is uniquely broken, children's perspectives are uniquely hindered.[4] As Purvis rightly indicates, fear in the child is a significant contributor to an adoptive child's perception and behavior.[5] And fear is best addressed by the Bible. Thus, adoptive parents who live according to Scripture, especially what is exemplified in the doctrine of adoption, will calm the fears of their children, providing them with the security that can only be found through a personal relationship with God.

Adoptive parents who wish to take up the privilege of parenting a child with a uniquely hindered perspective of himself, of relationships, and of God himself must approach the child seeking to understand specifically how that child's perspective is skewed, knowing that the skewed perspective of the child involves both the child's unique experience, biological weaknesses, and the sinfulness that all people share.[6] The theology framework of adoption helps remedy the errors of perception an adoptive child may suffer from—not merely as simple facts to teach, but as experiential knowledge to

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[2] Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 437-43.

[3] Jay Edward Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: Introduction to Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Ministry Resource Library, 1986), 1-37.

[4] George J. Zemek, Jr., "Aiming the Mind: A Key to Godly Living," *Grace Theological Journal* 5 (1984): 205-27.

[5] Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Wendy Lyons Sunshine, *The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 47-72.

[6] Julie Smith Lowe, "Counseling the Adopted Child," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 25, no. 1 (2007): 38-41.

model.[7] Therefore, this chapter seeks to engage with biblical discernment what of Purvis' TBRI model believing parents can utilize to help them understand specifically how their adopted child's perspective is skewed and how best to teach and model godly and healthy perspectives informed in particular by the doctrine of adoption.

Doctrine of Adoption Answers the
Question About the Nature of the Child

What adoptive parents believe about their children, their perspectives, and how they are shaped and in what ways should their perspectives be shaped, will be lived out through their parenting practices and will particularly shape their child's perspective about himself and his experience.[8] The adoption of the believer richly provides adoptive parents and adopted children with a robust and accurate view of their shared adoptive experience. It comes with priceless privileges of forgiveness and redemption; and remarkable responsibilities of glorifying God and sanctification.[9] Parents of adopted children do well to help their children make sense of their adoption experience through the glorious truths of God's joy-filled, choosing people to be his children (Eph 1:4-5).[10]

Every adopted child has the experience of family disruption. They have been displaced from their birth family and without a proper perception they may have a distorted view of their experience. Adoptive parents have the wonderful privilege of helping their adopted child see his experience differently. They will encourage, strengthen, and comfort their children with the reality that they have been chosen and embraced by parents who joyfully welcome them into their family as legitimate members

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[7] Lowe, "Counseling the Adopted Child," 41-45.

[8] Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 446–47.

[9] Joel R. Beeke, *Heirs with Christ: The Puritans on Adoption* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), 14.

[10] Lowe, "Counseling the Adopted Child," 42.

with all the affection, rights, and privileges as showcased in the doctrine of adoption (Eph 1:4). Especially its emphasis on the familial relationship with God as father (Gal 4:6). Regrettably, many adopted children do not have a theological understanding of their adoption experience. As seen in the literature review, much of the counsel available to adopted children and their parents overemphasizes the material aspect of the child, relying heavily on empirical studies and people's own explanation of their personal experiences.[11] This does not mean that these means of information cannot be consulted, it is simply that these means are incomplete and insufficient, leaving adoptive parents and adopted children without a theological perspective to turn to help them think rightly about their adoption experience.[12] The doctrine of adoption particularly underscores the significance of being placed into a permanent filial relationship, accentuates a person's identity as primarily one's union with God as father and promotes the relational responsibilities consistent with being adopted into God's family, which helps shape the theological framework for relational brokenness, personal identity confusion, and behavior problems that are commonly experienced among adopted children (Gal 4:1-7; Eph 1:3-14; Rom 8:12-17).

Paul uses the adoption metaphor to remind believers of their identity and the awareness of that identity reminds them of God's gracious act to forgive them of their sins and of the daily privilege of living secure in their relationship.[13] Adoption emphasizes relationship and the intimate attachment of the believer to God as father (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:14-16). Packer reiterates that how well believers understand Christianity will be seen in how much they make of the thought of being God's child and having God as

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[11] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 197-218.

[12] Adams, *Theology*, 16-37.

[13] Lowe, "Counseling the Adopted Child," 44-45.

their Father.[14] The believers' cry of "Abba! Father!" defines who believers are and to what family they belong. Adoption is an expression of the calling of a father to make one his own (Hos 11:1). It is a proclamation that in Christ believers have been given a right of a choice birth (John 1:12-13). The paternity test is not a blood test, but a Spirit test (Rom 8:14-17). Adoption is the meritless choosing of God to graciously and permanently bring people into his family with him as their eternal Father (Gal 4:4-7; Eph 1:5-6). Once again, by nature as with all people, adopted children are born members of the family of Satan, living according to their own passions and according to the skewed perceptions of Satan.[15] God mercifully removing a person from the family of Satan and willfully placing that person into his family gives the adopted child a right perspective about himself and his identity.[16]

Moreover, the permanent family relationship through adoption comes with matchless privileges. Believers cannot underestimate the tremendous privilege of their relationship with God that is based not on performance or birth, but by joyful choice as an act of grace (Eph 1:5). With that comes the privilege of a family.[17] When believers experience the gracious gift of adoption, they have the privilege of having other family members with which to share their lives, especially Jesus Christ. As adopted children of God they are placed into God's family, the church, with brothers and sisters bonded not by blood, but by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6). These relationships also come with

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[14] J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 226.

[15] C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2nd ed., Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1991), 152.

[16] Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and its Inversion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 36.

[17] Lowe advises using *Lifebooks* to help adopted children connect and recognize the legitimacy and privilege of their family relationship on pages 44 and 45 in "Counseling the Adopted Child." This can include keeping photos and other paraphernalia from the child's life in an organized way to show over time the beauty of being a member of their family.

the privilege of communication. Namely, because of believers' status as children of God, they have confidence to approach the throne of God in prayer and address him as father (Rom 8:15; Heb 4:14-16).

Furthermore, adoption affords the privilege of discipline (Heb 12:7). Discipline is a gracious show of love and acceptance by God. It is a sure sign of belonging to God as a child. It is a gracious means of producing christlikeness in believers' lives.[18] Additionally, as adopted children they have the privilege of imitation and conformity to the characteristics of their father (Rom 8:12-13). Lastly, believers have the privilege of inheritance. Their permanent filial relationship to God as their father comes with the inestimable gift of eternal riches, namely God himself (Rom 8:17; Gal 4:7; Eph 1:14).

Therefore, parents model the adoption relationship in their relationship with their adopted children primarily by keeping their children's greatest need in mind; their need for a savior.[19] The theological framework of the child's nature enjoins parents to keep the gospel at the center of their parenting strategy. This means that while parents keep in balance the correlative relationship of the child's experience and biology, they never lose sight of the eternal weight of their child's soul.[20]

**Doctrine of Adoption Answers the
Question About Perception Hindrances**

Karyn Purvis' observation about the commonality of fear among adopted children is accurate.[21] Likewise, her observation of their extreme behaviors due to their fear. They easily see the world as unsafe and naturally want to protect themselves.

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[18] Paul David Tripp, *Parenting: The 14 Gospel Principles That Can Radically Change Your Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 132-36.

[19] Lowe, "Counseling the Adopted Child," 40-41.

[20] Jesus regularly reminds the disciples of the significant value of one's soul and eternity in the Gospels (Matt 18:8; 19:29; Luke 12:5; 16:9; John 4:14; 6:27, 54; 12:25).

[21] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 47-72.

Consequently, this can often lead to despair and any thought about God is met with thoughts that God does not care and will not help them. Thus, left to themselves, without believing parents to help them, they will likely draw conclusions about their lives without a theologically informed worldview.[22] Their experience and their personally shaped perceptions will form the way they see God and others.

God designed the family to consist of a husband and wife who procreate and give birth to children who together grow up and mature in relation to one another. Due to a disruption in the family for a variety of reasons, children are displaced from their birth parents. This disruption provides an experience for adopted children whereby their perception of self is fragile and easily distorted.[23] Their relationship to those who gave birth to them is broken and they are chosen and placed into a relationship with people who are now considered their parents. Consequently, as Purvis and others rightfully point out, they naturally struggle with accurately making sense of their experience and the fear they experience is a major contributor to their perception.

Adopted children often have muddled thoughts about their separation from their biological parents.[24] The mystery about what their lives might have been like with them lingers. They have a sense of loss of identity and connection to their past. Their lives are riddled with mystery. They question the reasons why their biological parents did not keep them. They wonder if they are loved. They may think something is wrong with them. They know that something is not right about their situation, but they do not know what to think, how to perceive their situation, or how to respond to it. And because they are created in God's image, they want to know. They long to know how to perceive and respond to their experience.

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[22] Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 1995), 10.

[23] Lowe, "Counseling the Adopted Child," 38.

[24] Lowe, "Counseling the Adopted Child," 39.

As image bearers created by God, children depend on God for counsel and his primary agents for such counsel are parents.[25] Thus, parents portray through their instruction and lifestyle how the doctrine of adoption so beautifully displays the experience of being chosen and embraced by parents who welcome them into their families as legitimate members with all the affection, rights and privileges. Parents model for their children the very heart and activity of God to adopt them as children of God (Gal 4:1-7). These privileges help shape the child's perception of his experience. Rather than relying heavily on himself and his environment for security, he depends on God. He perceives himself possessing the ability in Christ to pursue conformity to his created purpose to bear the image of God through sanctification, which is true human flourishment.[26] And, like Paul, he perceives his experience "only a very slight thing" when comparing to his future inheritance.[27]

Amongst the literature about the experience of adoption, there is an overemphasis on biology, experience, and ancestry as the root of one's identity.[28] This does not mean that biology and ancestry of adopted children have nothing to do with their identity.[29] They are not less than that, but they are more than that. They are created in God's image as a whole person with distinct aspects that are never separated from the other. As their creator, God's knowledge of them, their nature, purpose, and what would amount to them flourishing in life is perfect, without error, and sufficient. Thus, God

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[25] Tripp, *Parenting*, 29-32.

[26] Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1988), 311.

[27] C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, International Critical Commentary (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 1:408.

[28] See especially Betty Jean Lifton, *Lost and Found: The Adoption Experience*, 3rd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009) and Nancy Newton Verrier, *The Primal Wound: Understanding the Adopted Child* (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 2003).

[29] Tripp, *Shepherding*, 10.

authoritatively informs the adopted child's identity.[30] It is rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is made manifest in the adopted child's life by the Holy Spirit (Gal 4:6; Eph 1:13; Rom 8:14-16). He assures the adopted child of the legitimate, permanent, and intimate filial relationship with God as father. Parents are the primary proclaimers, instructors, and counselors of these precious truths.

Thus, although the TBRI method is right to bring healing to the biology of the adopted child,[31] parents must also bring healing to the soul of their child with the good news of the gospel, for the gospel casts out fear (1 John 4:18). The child will thrive in the mysteries of his life, especially when he knows who he is as revealed by his creator through God's sufficient and authoritative Word. Beeke says it well, "to claim to be a son or daughter of God is a higher word than if a man could deduce his genealogy from an uninterrupted line of a thousand kings and princes. There is more honour, true honour, in it, and more profit too."[32]

In Christ, adopted children are forgiven and reconciled sinners (Acts 10:43; 2 Cor 5:18-19; Eph 1:7; Col 2:13-14), are born again (John 3:3; 1 Pet 1:3, 23; 1 John 5:1), have access to God (John 14:6; Eph 2:18; 3:11-12; Heb 10:19-22), are members of God's family (John 1:12; Gal 3:26; Eph 1:5; 1 John 3:1-2), and are permanently indwelled by the Holy Spirit and guaranteed entrance into Heaven (Rom 11:29; Eph 1:13; 4:30). Then with those privileges of adoption are the responsibilities of their filial relationship with God. As joint heirs with Christ they now grow into the likeness of Christ (Phil 2:12-13; 2 Pet 1:3-11), loving and caring for his family (John 15:17; Rom 12:10), depending on the truth, wisdom, authority and sufficiency of God's Word for life (Prov 3:5-8; 16:20; Ps

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[30] Lowe, "Counseling the Adopted Child," 41.

[31] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 1-20.

[32] Joel R. Beeke, *Heirs with Christ: The Puritans on Adoption* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2008), 16.

19:7-11; 84:12; Eph 5:15-17), and their meaning and purpose in life is living for the glory and pleasure of their father (Eccl 12:13; Matt 28:18-20; Luke 9:23; Gal 2:20; Phil 1:21). Since fear contributes to the child's ability to perceive himself rightly and to his behavior, parents will care for their children by calming their fears with a personal relational connection with God through their own lifestyle guided by Scripture.

Toward a Theological Identity
for Adopted Children

The doctrine of adoption speaks to the nature of children to perceive the world around them by providing for them an accurate view of relationship. It accounts for not only the adopted child's experience and biological weaknesses that hinders his perception, but also his sin nature—both the material and spiritual aspects that make up his identity as created in the image of God. Moreover, it provides the theological framework that parents use to help shape their child toward godlier and healthier perspectives. The remainder of this chapter lays out a strategy for adoptive parents to shape their children's theological identity, making wise use of the observations and proposed methods of the TBRI method.

Navigating Daily Experiences
in the Life of an Adopted Child

Security is a significant issue in the life of an adopted child.[33] Purvis and her colleagues are astute in their observation that fear is common and is a contributing factor to how children interpret their experience and respond to their experience.[34] As the primary shapers of children's perspectives, parents help their children develop security and confidence. To do so, the TBRI method offers helpful suggestions for believing parents to practice. The most helpful contribution is TBRI's recommendation to work

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[33] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 1-46.

[34] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 47-72.

with their children to manage their transitions.[35] Not necessarily unique to the experience of adopted children, but adopted children commonly experience a number of transitions. Children naturally find security in stable circumstances and familiarity. That means that transitions can easily be seen as threats to a child's security and therefore fear ensues.[36]

Purvis mentions three transitions, including daily changes, major life changes, and physical development changes.[37] Parents help their children manage these situations by speaking about them ahead of time, so that the child will not be caught off guard but have time to ask questions and process the transition to come. While TBRI's purpose for this is to increase predictability and give the child a sense of control, believing parents want to do this to help their child trust in their sovereign, wise, and good God.[38] Addressing fear is important and communicating regularly with children about upcoming transitions is also a practice to regularly implement. However, to develop a child's theological identity, parents will model their own trust in the Lord through confident courage and prayer in the face of unknown experiences and teach their children to do the same.

Unpredictability, transitions, and difficult times are common experiences for all people. While common, it can be said that they are also unnatural.[39] God's original creation was very good (Gen 1:31). In the garden, Adam & Eve experienced perfect harmony with each other and with God (Gen 2). When Adam & Eve sinned, difficulties and trials entered God's good creation (Gen 3). Physical suffering including death,

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[35] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 180-81.

[36] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 9.

[37] Karyn B. Purvis, David R. Cross, Donald F. Dansereau, and Sheri R. Parris, "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," *Child & Youth Services* 34, no. 4 (2013): 363.

[38] Adams, *Theology*, 153-59.

[39] Adams, *Theology*, 271.

relational suffering including alienation from God and others (Gen 3:8-10, 12, 17, 23-24), and psychological suffering like guilt, shame, and fear entered the human experience (Gen 3:7-10; Rom 8:20-23).

The natural tendency for the child is to trust self and desire control in order to avoid fearful situations.[40] This is natural due to the child's sinful disposition and is exacerbated by his experience. When a method like TBRI recommends that a child needs a sense of control, they mistakenly interpret what the child needs for what he wants.[41] This results in catering to and reaffirming the child's disposition to live for himself, which will lead to greater misery (Ps 16:4; Prov 3:5; 13:15; 16:25; 28:26) and relationally distance himself further from God. The observation and practice of TBRI is commendable and worthy of implementing with the right purpose and goal in mind.

Here again, the doctrine of adoption is helpful because it emphasizes the intimate filial connection between the child and God. The child of God can rest assured that God suffers with his children, and parents suffer with their children. Sin and its consequences grieve God (Gen 6:5-6; Eph 4:30). God immediately promises a coming rescuer who will defeat the Serpent and suffer in the process (Gen 3:15). This promised rescuer who suffers turns out to be God himself; Jesus Christ (John 1:1-3, 14; Phil 2:5-11; Acts 20:28). Jesus takes on flesh so that by dying he might destroy the one who brought death into God's good creation, the devil (Heb 2:14). God will one day end all suffering (Rev 21:1-22:5). The death and resurrection of Jesus secures victory over death (1 Cor 15:54-57). Just like in the garden, God will once again live among his people (Rev 21:3). The curse pronounced in Genesis 3 will finally be removed (Rev 22:3), and there will be no more suffering (Rev 21:4). Jesus has suffered on behalf of his children, and through

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[40] David Powlison, "The Sufficiency of Scripture to Diagnose and Cure Souls," *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* 23, no. 2 (2005): 2-14.

[41] Powlison, "The Sufficiency of Scripture," 5.

his resurrection he has conquered death.

God is sovereign over all difficulties and unpredictable experiences. He was sovereign over Jesus' sufferings (Acts 2:23; 4:27). He was sovereign over Job's sufferings (Job 1:12; 2:6). He is sovereign over the difficulties of his adopted children (John 21:18-19; Acts 9:16; Rom 8:28-29; Rev 6:10-11). Moreover, he is wise and good, promising never to allow any trial to be more than a child of his can bear (1 Cor 10:13). He is the stronghold, the refuge, and the strength for his children (Ps 46:1-3).

When children do face life's difficulties, transitions, and unplanned events; parents must help their children understand that these events are expected (Matt 10:24-25; 1 Pet 4:12; Phil 1:29; 3:10; Rom 8:22-23; 2 Tim. 3:1, 12), and do not mean they are on the brink of losing their family.[42] The doctrine of adoption protects children from interpreting their difficulties as the withdrawing of God's love from them (Rom 8:35-39). Parents communicate through regular teaching and modeling the permanent relational reality of adoption to provide them with security. Furthermore, in the midst of such difficulties, adoption teaches children to confidently approach God for mercy and grace to help in their times of need (Heb 2:17-18; 4:14-16). He is a present help and that is where the security in the midst of fear is founded (Ps 23:4; 34:18; Isa 43:1-5; 1 Pet 4:14). Rather than trusting self and having a sense of control, children are best served by entrusting themselves to their affectionate and faithful God and this is best shaped by their parents who model and teach such truths through the way they navigate the uncertainties of life and consistently teach those truths to their children.[43]

Purvis' work shows nothing less than a genuine care and compassion for adopted children and commends others to do the same.[44] As the TBRI method rightly

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[42] Lowe, "Counseling the Adopted Child," 44.

[43] Adams, *Theology*, 139.

[44] See Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 1-20 and Karyn B. Purvis, Sheri R. Parris, and David R. Cross, "Trust-Based Relational Intervention: Principles and Practices," in *Adoption*

affirms, a pivotal component to genuinely and compassionately caring for their adopted child is parents who listen well to their child.[45] Philippians is instructive here. Paul teaches believers to have the same humble mind Christ has by considering others more significant than themselves (Phil 2:3). Parents apply that in their listening. They care about the content of what their child is saying, seeking to understand the child as a physical and spiritual being. In addition, they also listen for the emotions of the child.[46]

As mentioned earlier, emotions are helpful gauges to the child's perceptions—their beliefs and desires.[47] To understand their children and know best how to attend to their needs and instruct them appropriately requires good listening.

Incumbent upon believing parents is to help their children by first asking God for wisdom when helping them learn how to navigate their lives with its difficulties and transitions. Parents show compassion and mercy on what their children are experiencing (Rom 12:15; Job 2:11-13), seeking with humility to understand the child's perspective about his experience (Prov 18:13). Moreover, parents regularly pray for their children (Rom 12:12; 2 Cor 1:11), comfort them (2 Cor 1:3-7), encourage them, and show them patience (1 Thess 5:14). Frequently amid challenging times, the most comforting answers at times are simple presence, help, silence, and tears.[48] Parents help their children develop strength and control by persuading them to depend on God, love God, and love others (Mark 12:30-31).

Factbook V: The Most Comprehensive Source For Adoption Statistics Nationwide (Alexandria, VA: National Council For Adoption, 2011), 503. The scripts that Purvis and her colleagues provide as guides for parents clearly show the sincere care they have for adopted children and their parents.

[45] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 84.

[46] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 71.

[47] Bob Kellemen, "Emotions: Why Do We Feel What We Feel?," RPM Ministries, accessed August 1, 2018, https://www.rpmministries.org/2014/03/emotions-why-do-we-feel-what-we-feel/.

[48] Donald A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord?: Reflections on Suffering and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 249.

Interacting with Adopted Children with a
Loving and Compassionate Disposition

As mentioned, Purvis is clear in her commitment to address the problems of adopted children. She makes this clear through the stated purpose of the book and through the numerous case studies and testimonies.[49] Her commitment imitates God's character, especially as displayed through the doctrine of adoption. God is affectionate and intentional about ministering to children from difficult places. Adoption is about removing children from the family of Satan and placing them in God's family. Parents imitate such affection when they come alongside their children with love and compassion, recognizing them as created in the image of God who have been marred by sin both spiritually, and physically through their experience.

Adoption emphasizes relationship. As discussed in chapter three, Paul's use of adoption in Galatians, Ephesians, and Romans renders unequivocally the legitimate, permanent, and intimate filial relationship between God and believers (Gal 4:1-7). Additionally, God reveals his comprehensive involvement in adoption from prior to creation to the eternal state (Eph 1:4). Parental involvement is intimately linked to the doctrine of adoption and Purvis rightly emphasizes parental involvement as an integral component to the care of adopted children.[50] For parents to dynamically live out the doctrine of adoption they intentionally spend personal and dedicated time with their children. Parents engrave God's wisdom on the hearts and minds of their children with painstaking care (Deut 6:6-7).[51] And as Merrill elucidates, parents make God's wisdom indelible by constant repetition.[52] This is especially critical with children who have been

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[49] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 19-20, 22, 47-48, 73-74, 128-29.

[50] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 1-20.

[51] Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 167.

[52] Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167.

displaced from their biological family. Purvis strongly encourages parents to be the primary people who interact with their children and this fits well within the theological framework that God has ordained parents to shape their perspectives through modeling and instruction, which requires consistent interaction between parent and child (Deut 6:7ff; Prov 1:8–9; 1 Thess 2:7–12; Eph 6:4).[53]

Purvis provides helpful recommendations for how parents can lovingly interact with their children. She gives practical suggestions like gentle and affectionate touching along with physical activity.[54] She relates this kind of interaction to helping adjust the physiology of the child, which does help the child think and respond well to his circumstances.[55] Caring for a child's physiology helps the child think better about his circumstances, interpret them, and then respond to them.[56] Parents may see this as a way to help their children respond well to their teaching and to the commands of the Lord. This is a way for them to spur their children to behave appropriately (Heb 10:24) and aid in not making any provision for their sin (Rom 13:14). It is the fruit of the Spirit and biblical love on display (1 Cor 13; Gal 5:22-24) as they teach their children to live out the privileges of adoption in pursuit of Christlikeness (Rom 8:12-14).

Furthermore, this helps the child guard his own heart. Consider the teaching of Proverbs 4:23, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." Likening the heart to a spring head or source of water, the author exhorts wise people to protect and watch over one's heart with tremendous care.[57] He conveys the idea of a military outpost standing guard and providing protecting against enemy attacks. The wise

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[53] Tripp, *Shepherding*, 10.

[54] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 194.

[55] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 160-63.

[56] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 21-32.

[57] Peter A. Steveson, *A Commentary on Proverbs* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 2001), 63.

person protects and watches over what the heart of man is exposed to. Since believing parents are aware of the sinful disposition of the hearts of their children, they are careful not to expose their children to experiences that may excite those sinful dispositions (Rom 13:14). This may be compared to the advice of Solomon's bride when she says not to "stir up or awaken love" three times in the Song of Solomon (Song 2:7; 3:5; 8:4). Thus, wise parents will pay close attention to interact with their children in such a way that spurs their child to good deeds with a sensitivity to the hindrances that exist due to their experience and the weaknesses of their physiology. This is a practical implication of how adoptive parents perceive and interact with the duality of their children as created in the image of God, attending to their children as psychosomatic unities.

Another helpful recommendation by Purvis is for parents to pay close attention to their children's verbal and nonverbal communication.[58] This is an excellent observation and recommendation of the TBRI method. Attuned to the heart of their child, knowing what the fruit of fear looks like, parents practice responding with patience and gentleness to get to the child's heart.[59] While the TBRI method seeks to adjust the child's physiology, the believing parent will do this by also recognizing the dynamic nature and effect of the child's heart, always keeping in mind the correlative relationship between the material and immaterial aspects of the child. Proverbs 20:5 is explicit about the importance of parents having as part of their ongoing strategy to consider the heart of their child, "the purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out." This means that parents must do more than determining any physiological problems, but must also seek to understand the motives, wants, and thoughts of their child's heart, for while his experience does skew his perspective, so does the sinful disposition of his heart. Proverb 20:5 is ambiguous about whether the

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[58] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 184-86, 207-8.

[59] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 6.

purpose of one heart and the discernment of another are separate individuals or the same person. It is best to take this as both.[60] Thus, the parent learns the skill of discerning the issues of their own heart while also attending to the heart of their child.[61]

The instruction in this Proverb must not be unappreciated. The author is likening the heart of man to that of a deep well of water. One cannot merely lean over and scoop up a drink of water. This is a deep well, requiring work and effort to draw out the water that lays deep in the earth. Likewise, it will take effort, intentionality, and discernment for parents to understand the thoughts and intentions of their child's heart.[62] The insightful and skillful parent gains insight into the nature, motives, and worshipful heart of their child and brings that to the surface for both the parent's and child's awareness through regular use of Scripture and insightful questions. This regular interaction will help adoptive parents accomplish the unique task of parenting a child with a uniquely hindered perspective of himself, of relationships, and of God by understanding specifically how that child's perspective is skewed and how to help shape godlier and healthier perspectives and responses to his experience.

A word of caution is needed, though. While Scripture certainly elevates the importance of the heart; it does so, keeping the material and immaterial closely connected. While the TBRI method may overemphasize the material at times, believing parents may overemphasize the heart, inadvertently undervaluing the physiology and experience of their child. It is critical that parents not neglect the helpful recommendations of Purvis and ignore the biological and experiential components of their child. Believing parents recognize their children's nature as both material and

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[60] Rowland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 150.

[61] Tripp, *Shepherding*, 3-8.

[62] Derek Kidner, *Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1964), 129.

immaterial. Thus, parents care well for their child by addressing the biological weaknesses of their child and work at creating a trusting, comforting, and warm relationship with their child through playful engagement and loving interaction that includes listening, responding, and physical activities.[63] Subsequently, they create an environment that helps spur their children to good deeds, helping them interpret their experience and respond to their circumstances by recognizing their heart's correlative function, what they desire, want, and worship (Prov 4:23; Mark 7:20-23). Thus, parents will influence their children to perceive their experience in a healthy and godly way by caring for their children with a loving and compassionate disposition. They do this by maintaining mindfulness of the correlative function of their child's body and soul.

**Providing Regular Guidance through
Instruction and Discipline**

What goal the parents set for their children influences what their children think about their own purpose in life. This purpose is shaped by the regular guidance that parents give their children. The primary way of guiding their children is through instruction and discipline, especially since for adopted children the design for godly, healthy modeling is uniquely broken and their perspectives are uniquely hindered by both the personal sinfulness that all people share as well as the specific errors adopted children absorb from their situation. Purvis provides much practical help in this area and she is to be commended for the value she places on instruction in the practice of parenting.[64] She rightly contends for the regular involvement of parents in their children's lives and for parents' authority in the relationship.[65] While TBRI's method of proactive teaching and responsive discipline concur with Scripture, it does differ in content, values, and motive

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[63] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 141-43.

[64] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 73-88.

[65] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 79.

(Deut 6:6-7; Eph 6:4). Nevertheless, Purvis offers helpful recommendations that believing parents can implement in their instruction and discipline of their children.

One, believing parents should see the wisdom in Purvis' observation how proactive instruction minimizes the need for responsive discipline.[66] King David testifies to this in Psalm 32. Psalms 32 and 51 tell the inside story of events narrated in 2 Samuel 11–12. David had committed adultery, lied, and then played a part in a murder. After some time, he was stricken with guilt and misery. Somewhere between nine and twelve months passed. Nathan confronted David, and he finally came clean and dealt with his guilt. David confesses his sin in Psalm 51. He appeals to the Lord, understanding the nature of his sin, and desiring a change in his whole person. In the middle of that confession, David seeks the privilege of being a lesson to others. He promises that he will teach transgressors God's ways that they will return to God (Ps 51:13). David makes good on this promise by writing Psalm 32. He reflects on his experience and seeks to instruct believers on repentance. This is the context and occasion in which David writes Psalm 32.

David testifies about the misery he experiences by delaying his confession in verses 3-4.[67] David knows better, but rather than following through on what he knows, he learns the lesson the hard way. His silence had cost him greatly, resulting in tremendous trouble. His misery brought about by not following what instruction he had been given was full-orbed, affecting not only his soul, but his mind, emotions, and body.[68] Keeping

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[66] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 175-96.

[67] Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1906–1907), 278. Briggs shows how David's testimony displays the correlative function of body and soul and how they affect each other. He says, "Although he did not in fact suffer scourging of his body, he did in fact suffer from the bruising of his soul by the experience of the divine anger, so that his bones felt as if they had been severely scourged."

[68] Briggs, *Psalms*, 278.

silent about his sin affected his entire being.[69] David eventually submits and confesses his sin in verse 5. As a result, he experiences the joy of having his sins forgiven (Ps 32:1-2, 5, 11). His experience of learning the hard way prompts him to counsel others, "therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found. . . ." (Ps 32:6). He counsels others to waste no time going to God to confess sin. Or, listen to counsel and do not learn the hard way. If David had listened, he would have not experienced the resultant misery and been in need of the Lord's discipline.[70] Parents protect their children from the miserable consequences of unwise decisions and inappropriate behavior when they are intentional and proactive in their instruction. Children do not have to learn the hard way.

Certainly, believing parents will differ in the content that they proactively teach their children. Their source for wise living is not societal norms, but the Word of God (Eph 6:4). Parents are responsible for faithfully and accurately living and teaching the Word (Deut 6:1,2; 2 Tim 2:15). The hope of believing parents is that their children will trust Christ, observe Scripture, and thereby live wisely. Children must learn to apply biblical truth to every issue of life. Parents teach their children the fear of God (Prov 9:10). This means helping them develop a conscious awareness of God so that they understand what it means to live life in his presence (Prov 15:3; Ps 139:1-4). Developing this involves teaching them about the character, attributes, and works of God (Jer 9:23-24; John 17:3; Phil 3:10), worshiping God (Ex 34:14; Ps 29:2; 150; John 4:23-24), and pleasing God (1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 5:9, 15; Gal 1:10; Col 3:22-23; John 4:34; 5:30). This includes teaching them about how to choose friends, hobbies, whether to go to one activity or another. Teach about the future: how and when to buy a car, how to choose a

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[69] Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 151.

[70] James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1–41: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 282.

college, how to choose a profession, what to look for in a spouse, etc. Believing parents help children make wise decisions that are pleasing to the Lord.

Furthermore, parents teach their children about submission and obedience to authority (Eph 6:1-2; Rom 13:1-7). When an adopted child believes he is illegitimately a child, he may question whether obeying his parents is required. Thus, submission and authority are particularly important topics for adopted children to understand. God's authority is limitless, and his children obey him in all things. He has given limited authority to human institutions and children must understand God's requirement for them to honor and obey these finite, fallible institutions. In recognizing and obeying these God ordained authorities, they are obeying God (Rom 13:1-7). This includes parents (Exod 20:12; Prov 1:8; Eph 6:1-3; Col 3:20), spiritual leaders (Heb 13:17), government (1 Pet 2:13-15), and employers (1 Pet 2:13-14). And, children must be taught that submission like all other behavior and attitudes are ultimately a matter of the heart (Prov 2:1-7).

Parents teach submission and obedience, like other topics, by precept and example. They dynamically live out the doctrine of adoption in the way they practice submission and obedience themselves. They are children of God and they have the daily opportunity to show their children what submission and obedience of a child to a parent looks like. They cheerfully acknowledge the roles of authority such as church leadership and government. They obey the traffic laws. Wives willingly submit to their husbands. Fathers speak with respect about their employer, church leaders, and government officials. Since obedience is ultimately a matter of the heart rather than mere external behavior, the wise parent looks for opportunities to demonstrate the need for true, inner change. When a child fails to submit and obey, parents can teach them about human depravity and their need for a Savior.

A third topic for parents to teach their children is how to deal with sin (Prov 8:13a). They learn how to deal with their own sin (Prov 3:7; Matt 7:3), receive

forgiveness (1 John 8-10), and seek reconciliation (Matt 5:23-24).[71] Parents teach their children to learn from failure and encourage them to be ready for the next time, helping them see what proper responses would look like. Purvis provides excellent counsel when she speaks about including "re dos" in one's instruction.[72] However, more than training the child how to respond rightly, re dos help the child understand the grace of God through Christ that there is mercy and forgiveness for sins committed. This models for the child that even when they get it wrong, they can get it right through their response to the wrong committed. Moreover, re dos help the child apprehend the "put on" and "put off" principle of biblical change (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:8-13). Other topics for instruction will include biblical communication (Eph 4:29; Prov 15:2), how to love and serve others (Phil 2:3; 1 Cor 13:4-7), and how to deal with desires, expectations and disappointments (Prov 15:16). There are many more topics which need to be studied and prepared by parents to teach their children. In general, parents are discipling their children so that they understand God's standards and their inability to live by them in their own strength. While an adopted child's perspectives are shaped by his own sin and experience, parents help reshape those perspectives with God's Word and wisdom, helping him perceive himself, relationships, and God in a godlier and healthier way. With God's help, parents guide their children to Christ, who is sufficient for all that they need. Every facet of a parent's teachings centers around pointing the child to Christ, for Christ is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

Unquestionably, proactive instruction by parents is critical to shaping the lives of their children. Nonetheless, Purvis is right when she insists that there is more to parents' instruction than how to skillfully navigate life.[73] Instruction also includes helping

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[71] Tripp, *Shepherding*, 118-25.

[72] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 97.

[73] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 73-74.

children develop values that drive that motivate them to live wisely. Believing parents, of all people, should understand the importance of this since they know that the heart of the child plays a significant role in affecting how children perceive and respond to their experience. This means that parents help their children develop a theological identity when they themselves dynamically live life motivated by the value of their adoption in Christ (Eph 4:1), the mutual love between them and God (Eph 5:1-2), and the desire to please him (Eph 5:10). Parents who wisely instruct with those valuable reasons underlying their lessons will equip their children for a lifetime.

Furthermore, they will help their children connect their behavior to their relationships. When they choose inappropriate behavior, they are not merely choosing to do one activity over another, but they are making a value judgment to either love, please, and worship their father, who has adopted them to be his child, or love, please, and worship themselves. These value lessons help children truly understand what choices they are making when they choose how to perceive and respond to their circumstances. Purvis is right when she contends that practice with values provides children with tools and the skills to resolve real-life circumstances and issues appropriately.[74] When proactive strategies are practiced regularly, troublesome behaviors do become less frequent. For their perspectives were designed to be shaped by the perspectives modeled for them by parents, and the theology of adoption laid out in the previous chapters help to remedy the errors of perception an adopted child may suffer from and those godlier and healthier perspectives shape the child's response to his experience.

Finally, Purvis' inclusion of responsive discipline in the role of parenting for teaching children is commendable.[75] Although, believing parents will differ from TBRI

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[74] Purvis, et al., "Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI): A Systemic Approach to Complex Developmental Trauma," 373.

[75] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child*, 119.

in instruction and discipline, because they instruct and discipline for the purpose of bringing up their children *in the Lord*,[76] the recommended practices will help believing parents accomplish their goal for the love of God and their parents. A component of the command given to parents in Ephesians 6:4 that has not been mentioned is the command for fathers not to provoke their children to anger.[77] There is no reason for responsive discipline to be carried out in any other way than love. This is the essential characteristic of the believer (1 Cor 13:4-7; 2 Pet 1:7; 1 John 4:16). God's adoption of his children is done with affection and joy. His children are a delight to him. He treats them with care, grace, and compassion. Both Purvis' recommended levels of response and IDEAL are helpful.[78] Not every inappropriate behavior merits the same level of response and following Purvis' method will help parents avoid provoking their children to anger by responding disproportionately to the inappropriate behavior. Believing parents remember that discipline is part of bringing their children up in the Lord, not punishing them for the inconvenience they may have caused the parent.[79] Believing parents use discipline to help shape godlier and healthier perspectives and responses. Thus, parents dynamically live out the doctrine of adoption when they keep the intimate and filial relationship as the theological framework that guides their discipline. IDEAL practices help parents communicate godly wisdom and apply appropriate discipline in a concrete way for them to understand. When IDEAL is complemented with parents who bear the fruit of the Spirit and biblical love, they avoid provoking their children to anger, provide a nurturing and loving environment, and secure their children to the permanent filial relationship they

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[76] Author emphasis.

[77] For a list of twenty-five ways that parents provoke their children to anger, see Lou Priolo, *The Heart of Anger: Practical Help for the Prevention and Cure of Anger in Children* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 1997), 30-51.

[78] Purvis, Cross, and Sunshine, *The Connected Child,* 96-97.

[79] Tripp, *Parenting*, 63-70.

have with their parents and with God.

Conclusion

Parents positively influence their child's perception of his own adoption experience by modeling for him the doctrine of adoption as an aspect of salvation in Christ. Through a background study of adoption in biblical times with an emphasis on the Roman family experience and an exegetical study of υἱοθεσία as used by Paul in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians, the biblical theology of adoption provides a robust understanding of a believer's identity, providing the assurance of the permanent, intimate, and filial relationship of believers and God as father.

Children are made in the image of God as material and spiritual beings who perceive the world around them, and their perceptions are skewed by their personal sinfulness and experience. Children, like all people, are responsible moral agents that are nevertheless conditioned by their surroundings. This is a spiritual and physiological reality that must be factored into the adoptive parents' approach. Accordingly, the doctrine of adoption shapes parents' understanding of their children's nature as inherently sinful and in need of salvation and sanctification, remedying their children's skewed perspective. The gospel is their focus and the Word of God is their authority, and they interact with the knowledge provided by human reason and discovery with biblically informed discernment. They are motivated by glorifying God and faithfully stewarding their children out of love for God and their children. In practice, they are committed to bringing up their children toward maturity by the instruction and discipline of the Lord.

Believing parents recognize their God ordained role to shape their child's perspectives through instruction and modeling to help shape godlier and healthier perceptions of their experience. They realize that due to the adopted child's experience, the design for godly, healthy modeling is uniquely broken, and the child's perspectives are uniquely hindered. For within the adoption experience, adopted children have a

broken sense of identity in relationship and fallout in their responses in the present situation.

Therefore, believing parents have the unique opportunity to instruct and model the doctrine of adoption to help remedy any errors of perception their adopted child may suffer from due to their unique experience, biology, and sinful nature. When the doctrine of adoption is dynamically lived out by adoptive parents, they give the framework for bringing restoration to the child's self-perception in relationship. When this is done the adopted child recognizes his need for restoration through Christ. The doctrine of adoption teaches the child to rest assured that God has restored him through redemption made possible by Christ. God affectionately and joyfully chooses him to be his child. This filial relationship is permanent and will never be severed. God will never leave.

Thus, as created in the image of God and adopted by God, the child's identity is in God and is informed by what God says about him, not by what he thinks about himself or what others think of him. Due to his relationship he is no longer obligated to follow the values and culture of his previous family as a child of Satan. Instead, he has the privilege of living according to God's values and culture, pursuing Christlikeness in his lifestyle.

Though, being a child of God does not mean he is immune from trials and suffering, but in their midst, he knows that his father is sovereign, wise, and good. He is not afraid of difficulties or suffering, for he knows that they do not threaten his filial relationship with God. Indeed, his father will use his trials to train him how best to live for him, which he joyfully desires to do. Moreover, his father is his refuge, his strength, and is always with him through his trials and suffering, supplying him thoroughly with all he needs to respond to his difficulties in a way that pleases his father.

Due to his relationship with God, he has unimpeded access to God and the intimate privilege of addressing him as father. Furthermore, he is an heir of God and joint heir with Christ. He is confident in God that he will inherit all that is his and enjoy his

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relationship with his father and all his blessings forevermore. This is the authentic identity of the adopted child of God and this is how adopted children may perceive themselves and their adoption experience, enjoying all the privileges and responsibilities of being a legitimate, permanent, and intimate child of God.

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING THEOLOGICALLY THE EXPERIENCE
OF THE ADOPTED CHILD IN COUNSELING

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This dissertation argues that parents positively influence a child's perception of his own adoption experience by modeling for him the doctrine of adoption as an aspect of salvation in Christ. The particular focus within the adoption experience will be the adopted child's broken sense of identity in relationship and the fallout in the child's responses in the present situation. This dissertation argues that the doctrine of adoption, dynamically lived out by adoptive parents, gives the framework for bringing restoration to the child's self-perception in relationship. The key element of the doctrine on display in the parent's conduct toward the child is the filial permanence of God as father.

This thesis conducts a literature review to show the key themes of the adoption experience. Key themes are considered in the frameworks in which they are presented before critically engaging with them from a theological standpoint. Next, a biblical theology of adoption is presented, which will acknowledge the cultural practice of adoption in the Roman culture of the apostle Paul's day that informs a proper understanding of his use of υἱοθεσία (adoption). Third, an analysis of the leading literature on caring for adopted children is conducted using David Powlison's three epistemological principles as the framework for evaluating and critiquing. Lastly, the relationship the theology of adoption has to adopted children is presented, advancing a theology of the experience of adopted children, especially focusing on one's conscious awareness of adoption and how that informs one's self-perception.

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