

THE DOCTRINE OF ADOPTION

by

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ABSTRACT
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“When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. But the more I called Israel, the further they went from me.”
Hosea 11:1, 2 (NIV)

This paper stems from my personal life experience regarding adoption natural and spiritual. Regarding the natural component, my wife and I, nine years ago adopted a five-year-old orphan from Latvia. The journey of inviting her into our family structure has been one of the greatest challenges of our lives. Regarding the spiritual component, I have been pastoring for 23 years, and have invited many people into the “family” structure of our church. The intention of this thesis is to explore adoption both spiritually and naturally and the challenges inherent in both. It is the contention of this paper that there is overlapping and shared patterns to be learned from both that bear application in our lives.

This thesis is broken down into four chapters: Chapter 1) God’s expressed nature where an exploration of the Doctrine of Adoption will examine the theological underpinnings supporting the notion that adoption stands at the summit of God’s purposes for fallen humanity. This paper will explore God’s relational essence by examining the following theological concepts: the Trinity, the concept of a Divine Pattern, the concept of Imago Dei, and the Logos, or Incarnation of Christ. A study of the Doctrine of Adoption will follow. In order to perform a theological examination, concepts such as Justification, Sanctification, and

Regeneration will be looked at to see how they serve as a foundation for the Doctrine of Adoption.

2) An exploration into the historical perspective of a section of Hosea, as well as pertinent New Testament passages, Romans 9:8; Ephesians 1:3, 11; John 1:12; and 1 John 3:2¹ showing how these passages express the Doctrine of Adoption.

Chapter 3 is a literature review on natural adoption, highlighting the caution that adoptive parents face as they offer unconditional love and acceptance to an individual who may not be capable, for various factors, to receive, embrace and walk in that love.

Chapter 4 will be an exploration of the church as God's adoptive family.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are taken from the New International Version.

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CHAPTER 1

GOD'S EXPRESSED NATURE

An Exploration into God's Essence

Since the dawn of creation, God has relentlessly pursued humanity in a desire for intimacy. Mankind has responded to His overtures with both acceptance and continuous rejection. This paper will explore God's pursuit of mankind, a concept called the Doctrine of Adoption.

The exploration of the Doctrine of Adoption begins with a look into the underlying philosophies supporting the notion that adoption stands at the summit of God's purposes for fallen humanity. One must begin by exploring theologians' statement that God is relational in essence, and that adoption is a natural desire borne from that essence. For the purposes in the first section of this paper, this paper will explore the validity of God's relational essence by examining the following theological concepts: the Trinity, the Divine Pattern, and the Logos. A look at the theological concept of the Trinity is the beginning place for studying God's essence.

Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity emphatically states that God has always existed in relationship. The mystery of the Trinity seems to clearly point to the theological truth that

God is fundamentally a relational being.² In his book, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, Eugene Peterson ventures into a description of the connection between the Trinity and God's relational essence. "A conceptual attempt to provide coherence to God as God is revealed variously as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in our scriptures. Trinity is not an attempt to explain or define God by means of abstractions, but a witness that God reveals himself as personal and in personal relations."³ In C. Baxter Kruger's book *The Great Dance*, he goes so far as to say that God exists exclusively in relationship. He says, "When we recite the Nicene Creed or the Apostle's Creed and affirm that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, we are saying that there has never been a moment in all eternity when God was alone...The Father, Son and Spirit created the human race so that what they have together could be shared with us..."⁴

Drawing a link between God's relational essence and His desire to adopt he states, "It is no accident that when the apostle Paul was grappling with the eternal purpose of God for humanity, he chose the word adoption to describe it. The basic idea of adoption is to include. It means that one who is foreign, outside the family circle, is drawn in grace and love into the family circle. And the purpose of that act of adoption is so that the outsider can share in the

²C. Baxter Kruger, *The Great Dance. The Christian Vision Revisited* (British Columbia: Vancouver, Regent College Publishing, 2000), 18.

³Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), Introduction.

⁴ Kruger, *The Great Dance*, 18, 20.

family's life. That whole mind-boggling act of creation is driven by the desire to share the great dance with us."⁵

Through these theologians one can see that the concept of an orphan, or one who spiritually or naturally stands alone, appears to be a contradiction to the plan and purposes of God since humanity is patterned after His nature; His nature includes relationship. Jesus' unique relationship with God serves as the model for the believer's relationship to Jesus."⁶

Therefore, it is logical to conclude that man's desire to be in relationship with God and with one another stems from God's relational nature, thereby producing His desire to adopt mankind into His family. Humanity was created to be in relationship, primarily with God and secondarily with those He places around one another be it natural or spiritual family. When humanity is not in right relationship with God, the angst or revelation of our aloneness invites a sinner to seek the safety and intimacy of God. Therefore, it appears that the Creator has placed this desire in our heart because of His own desire to adopt us and include us in His family. Through the Trinity, we see God's desire to bring mankind into fellowship with Him and with one another, or His "desire to share the great dance with us."⁷

⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁶ Carey Newman, "Ephesians 1:3—A Primer to Paul's Grammar of God," *Review & Expositor* 95 (winter Ebsco Publishing, 1995): 94.

⁷ Kruger, *The Great Dance*, 20.

As Kruger says, there never has been a time when the Godhead was “alone” and we as image bearers of God exist in relationship as well.⁸

Image of God

God’s stated intention for humanity is found in Genesis 1:26, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’” This stated intention of the Creator “has puzzled theologians throughout the Church’s history. What exactly does it mean to say that humans bear or reflect the image of God?”⁹ If man is called to bear the image of God how is that concept reconciled with how far man actually achieves that goal in an observable fashion today? A brief scan of today’s headlines be it either print or media, coupled with Genesis 1:26-28, could erroneously lead one to extrapolate an impression of God based upon the depravity of man. W. Sibley Towner, in the *Interpretation* article “*Genesis 1:26-28*,” commenting on this inconsistency wrote; “Can it be that all of us alike- the saints, the sinners, the able, the differently abled, Christians, jihadists, atheists- are in some way “clones of God,” who, to those who have eyes to see, display God’s likeness?”¹⁰ Simplistically, to image God is to represent Him on the earth today. For the believer to image God is to learn who He is, His being, His essence, His

⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁹ Janell Johnson, “Genesis 1:26-28,” *Interpretation* 59 no 2 (April 2005): 176-178.

¹⁰ 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): 431-356.

communicable attributes, and His reasoning, and to extrapolate those truths into fallen humanity to the best a transformed person can conceivably do. All humans are image bearers of God. Towner again comments; “The Bible emphasizes that human beings are distinct from the wholly other God, their creator. And yet the writer in Genesis would have us believe that something in us is an icon of God. The daring and audacious testimony of that writer establishes the fundamental premise upon which all further biblical anthropology is grounded”¹¹ Man simply as man is a reflection of the Godhead. In observing culture the obvious conclusion is that the present condition of man and God’s intention must be reconciled. Wayne Grudem, in *Systematic Theology* addresses this paradox by first defining the image of God. “The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God. The expression refers to every way in which man is like God”¹² He goes on to write that God’s image is distorted but not lost;

However since man has sinned, he is certainly not as fully like God as he was before. His moral purity has been lost and his sinful character certainly 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. Though man is still in the image of God, in every aspect of life some parts of that image have been distorted or lost.¹³

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 442, 443. He lists five aspects of our likeness to God: 1) moral aspects; 2) spiritual aspects; 3) mental aspects; 4) relational aspects; and 5) physical aspects. Ps 445-449

¹³ Grudem, 444.

Towner adds to this by observing; “Sin and rage, human frailty and perverseness can obscure or distort the capacity- indeed, the inborn need- for relationships with God, people, and the world around us. That cannot be doubted. But human nature, shaped in the divine image, remains constant. That is the biblical witness.”¹⁴ Though fallen, man still reflects the image of God. God’s image is further portrayed by the next sequence in the Genesis narrative. God formed the man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the very breath of life and the man became a living being (Genesis 2:7, 8). God Himself stooped down, lowered himself to humanity’s level and breathed the very breath of God into man. This is not a portrayal of a distant God wanting to relate to mankind on a casual, detached level, but a God deeply involved with His Creation.

Divine Pattern

The exploration into God’s essence continues by examining the idea of a Divine Pattern. Scripture reflects that His servants are lovingly invited to follow God in His pattern of building. Moses followed a pattern in the establishment and giving of the law, Noah followed a pattern in the construction of the ark, Solomon followed a pattern in the building of the temple, and the New Testament Church all followed the pattern established by God Himself. God’s pattern is one of relationship.¹⁵ Upon the inception of the created order, the first negative thing that God commented on was the aloneness of Adam (Genesis 2:18); it

¹⁴ Towner, 431-356.

¹⁵ Exodus 25:9, 40; Numbers 8:4; Genesis 6:22; 1 Kings 5:5; Acts 7:44; Romans 12:2; Philippians 3:17; 2 Timothy 1:13; and Hebrews 8:5.

was not good for man to be alone. His corresponding relational interactions with Adam in the garden bear out God's relational nature. Adam was unable to pattern the Godhead without a relational helpmate. God, from the inception, wanted man to walk and partner with Him in the work He was doing on the earth. All of this speaks of the foundational aspect of the Divine Pattern; the relational nature of the Godhead.

Contrary to a worldview that portrays God as an absentee landlord, disconnected and detached from humanity, the Bible portrays a God of relational involvement and integrity. This pattern is established from the start of Scripture. This is a pattern of intimacy and attachment to the created order reflected further when Adam and God walked together in the cool of the garden to maintain that relational tie (Genesis 3:8). However, sin breached the emerging relational bond and connectivity that God shared with both Adam and Eve. The fact that they were hiding shows the depth of their understanding that they had violated relational familiarity (Genesis 3:8). The pattern of continuing to warn man about sin is extended to Cain as God warned him of impending sin (Genesis 4:7). Why warn if the consequences of that sin (aloneness, isolation, and relational distance) were not significant events to be avoided? The Psalmist reflects this pattern by stating, "He places the lonely in families."(Psalm 68:6). That family, as patterned in the New Testament, is the church. The portrayal of God through these Old Testament Scriptures paints a clear picture of God's relational essence. This relational essence is expressed through His desire to invite mankind to partner with Him, which is a pattern of relationship.

Logos

This paper has examined God's essence through the concepts of the Trinity and the Divine Pattern that He invites His creation into. However, the fullest expression of God's involvement with mankind through relationship is seen in the incarnation of Jesus and the concept of the Logos. Nash, in his book *The Word of God and the Mind of Man* defines Logos as "Jesus Christ, the eternal Logos of God, [who] mediates all divine revelation and grounds the correspondence between the divine and human minds"¹⁶ John's gospel and his discussion of the Logos was written in opposition to the Greek philosophy (Gnosticism) of their day which affirmed that any deity, or Logos, was far removed from the physical, temporal universe and was relatively uninterested in human affairs, struggles, and joys.¹⁷ For example, the Jewish Philosopher Philo's concept of Logos is especially lacking in the personal or soteriologic traits so prominent in the Christian account of Jesus. In contrast to the Greek concept of Logos being impersonal and distant, the Word of God chiefly indicates that God's desire is to make Him, Jesus, known.¹⁸ The Logos becomes clothed in humanity.¹⁹ By means of the Word, God creates, preserves and reigns over all things and

¹⁶ Ronald H. Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1982), 59.

¹⁷ Robert E. Tourville, M.A., *Complete Biblical Library—New Testament Study Bible John* (Springfield, Missouri: World Library Press Inc.), 567.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 567.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 571.

through the Word He also transforms the universe.²⁰ He becomes like us to redeem us. All of this gives ample evidence to the truth that God is in His essence a relational being and not a distant, far removed deity who spun the world into existence and left humanity to its own devices and desires. Baxter dispels this notion of the Christian God creating humanity and subsequently abandoning it when he says, “The Christian God is not self-centered, not a taker at all, but a giver, and he thoroughly despises the idea of being untouchable. From the very beginning, from before the beginning, God is not indifferent towards the human race or indecisive about its future. He has staggering plans for us.”²¹ Nash states, “John describes Christ as the agent through whom God brought the world into existence. Paul also describes the preexistent Christ as the mediator of creation (1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16). The cosmological Logos continues to act as the intermediary in God’s sustaining relationship to the world.”²²

In the exploration into the Trinity, one finds that the Father gives all that He is to the Son and in return the Son gives all that He is to the Father, and the Holy Spirit is equally involved as well.²³ Playing out the image of God relationally is the best hope we have in

²⁰ Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1951), 268.

²¹ C. Baxter Kruger, *Jesus and the Undoing of Adam* (Jackson: Perichoresis Press, 2000), 16.

²² Nash, 66.

²³ Verna EF Harrison, *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* (1991): 35. no 1

helping a fallen world to “see” the invisible God. The church is called to image the Trinity.²⁴ Through the Logos, it is observed that God’s desire is for our relationships with one another to be of the same quality as His own. In fact, Jesus tells us that He wants us to share the relationship He has with the Father.²⁵ If the church can mirror the pattern of relationship observed in the Trinity for the lost to witness, it would be a powerful tool to advance His Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven (Matthew 6:9-13). When Jesus told those listening to Him to follow Him, He expected them to follow Him in every area of their lives.²⁶ This includes the representation of His nature expressed in the Godhead. Being in the image of God is to be understood as a mirroring of the Father, a mirroring of the Son and a mirroring of the Holy Spirit, so that to be authentically human means to reflect in all of our relationships the pattern established in the Godhead.²⁷ This is a task that is of course difficult but God never asks men to do anything that He has not demonstrated in His own eternal Being.²⁸

²⁴ Nona Verna Harrison, “Human Community as an Image of the Holy Trinity,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 46, no 4 (2002): 350.

²⁵ James Moulder, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* (n.p. March 1974), 19. No 6

²⁶ Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 10:38; Luke 9:23; and John 21:22.

²⁷ Thomas A. Smail, *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (n.p. March 2003), 28

²⁸ Kevin Conner, *The Church in the New Testament* (Chichester: Sovereign World, 1989), 218.

Repentance, Justification, Sanctification and Regeneration

This paper has examined the nature of God as portrayed through the Trinity, Imago Dei, the concept of the Divine Pattern, and the Logos, and all have illustrated the relational nature of God clearly. One can observe that inherent in God's nature is relationship and His desire to include us in His relationship. Now that this exploration has been completed, there must now be an examination into the theological doctrine of Adoption. In order to perform a theological examination, this paper must first examine the concepts of justification, sanctification, and regeneration to see how they are a foundation for the Doctrine of Adoption, moving from those into an overview of keywords found in the New Testament passages of Romans 9:8; Ephesians 1:3, 11; John 1:12; and 1 John 3:2, to see how these passages express the Doctrine of Adoption. Through examining these passages, the research will show how God's heart is expressed as desiring to adopt in the New Testament.

The study of the great doctrines of the Christian faith can at times be a labor in frustration. One can spend their entire life wrangling over the subtle nuances of biblical terms and concepts and lose the essence of what the Word of God is trying to convey to His church. It is necessary in the study of the Doctrine of Adoption and the framework it establishes of God's relational nature, to at least become familiar with three foundational tenets of the Christian faith. These three tenets are justification, sanctification, and regeneration. All three point to a restoration of relationship between God and humanity. All three doctrines build upon one another like a ladder with the top rung being that of the Doctrine of Adoption. This section is not intended to demean or marginalize these tenets and

their significance in the believer's life, but to highlight that their subtle nuances point to a more comprehensive view of our positional acceptance and birthright before God. The purpose of this section is also to establish a foundation that man, while not initiators, has a reciprocal relationship in experiencing the fullest expression of these tenets of our faith.

In order to fully understand the reciprocal component of man's relationship with God, this paper will first examine the concept of repentance, beginning with performing a brief overview based upon Millard Erickson and Louis Berkhof's definitions of repentance. From there this paper will continue an exploration into God's essence with a discussion of the theological concepts of justification, sanctification, and regeneration.

Repentance

Relationship does not exist unless two parties are fully engaged with one another in a reciprocal manner. The Encarta dictionary defines reciprocity as: “Something done mutually or in return; a relationship between people involving the exchange of goods, services, favors, or obligations.”²⁹ Reciprocity is essential for any relationship to be successful. Biblically speaking, reciprocity is the divine balancing act of allowing God to do His part and embracing the responsibility that man has to do his part. Reciprocity begins in our relationship with God with the term repentance. In *Christian Theology*, Erickson defines repentance as “The aspect of conversion is the abandonment or repudiation of sin; this is what we mean by repentance. It is based on a feeling of godly sorrow for our sin.”³⁰ He goes on to further define godly sorrow saying, “Real repentance is sorrow for one’s sin because the wrong done to God and the hurt inflicted upon him. This sorrow is accompanied by a genuine desire to abandon that sin. In the case of true repentance, there is regret over the sin even if the sinner has not suffered any unfortunate personal effects because of it.”³¹ It is important to notice the relational component highlighted in this definition. Sin is always in the context of relationship. In its essence sin always has a relational context to it. In order to restore relationship that has been violated by sin, a change of heart must occur on two fronts.

²⁹ *World English Dictionary*© Encarta® 1999 Microsoft Corporation.

³⁰ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), 975.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 950.

The person committing the violation must acknowledge the wrongdoing and change their ways, and the person violated must have a clear path of restoration available. In God's case, the clear path is the cross of Jesus and the acknowledgment of wrongdoing on behalf of the violator is called repentance. In a masterful definition, Berkhof defines three components of repentance when he said, "First, there is an intellectual element. There is a change of view, recognition of sin as involving personal guilt, defilement, and helplessness. Secondly, there is an emotional element. There is a change of feeling, manifesting itself in sorrow for sin committed against a holy and just God. Lastly, there is a volitional element, consisting in a change of purpose and inwardly turning away from sin, and a disposition to seek pardon and cleansing."³² He continues to emphasize this divine balancing act between God's part and man's part when he says, "But though God is the author of conversion, it is of great importance to stress the fact that there is a certain co-operation of man in conversion."³³

Justification

John 1:14 tells us, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." How does He make His dwelling among us and draw us into a relationship with Him?

Justification, sanctification, regeneration, and adoption are all theological terms that establish the pattern of restoration with a holy God. Like varying shades of the same color

³² Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1932), 486.

³³ *Ibid.*, 490.

they all have similarities yet they have slight and subtle differences. While fundamentally they all lead to the same end, it is not the “splitting of hairs” that leads us to explore the sublime delineation between both their definition and their timeline in the life of the Christian.

The Doctrine of Justification is all about relationship and the terms of building that relationship. It was Calvin himself who declared that justification is “The principal hinge on which Christian faith depends.”³⁴ In justification, God turns toward human beings and initiates a relationship that fallen humanity is incapable of initiating on their own.³⁵ Justification in the objective sense is the eternal act of God by which He accepts as not estranged those who are indeed estranged from him by sin; it is a reflection of His mercy and grace toward fallen humanity. Historically speaking, we owe a great debt to Martin Luther who brought this theological principle to the forefront through the Reformation. Luther discovered, as a point of revelation, that when Paul talks about God justifying, he had in mind not so much God’s condemnation of sin as His acquittal of the sinner. The distinctive feature of the gospel is not what it says about God’s justice in passing sentence on human wickedness. Rather, the distinctive feature is what the gospel says about God pardoning the

³⁴ John H. Leith, *Basic Christian Doctrine* (Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 1, 87.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 191.

wicked. The judge can also pronounce a verdict of “not guilty,”³⁶ based upon the introduction of another set of factors, for example Christ standing in our place for our sin.

Therefore, Luther formulated the basis or idea that justification is a forensic or legal idea conceived in terms of law and viewing God as judge. In justification, God declares to the reprobates and penitent believers that they are not, and never will be, liable to the death that their sins deserve, because Jesus Christ, their substitute and sacrifice, tasted death in their place on the cross, a death that even if occurring could not have paid the price necessary to satiate the demands of a holy God.³⁷ He takes those who were strangers to His promises and makes them one with Him (Ephesians 2:19). It is at its core essence a restoration of a relationship, relationship which has been breached and severed by offense (sin). Because justification is a legal or forensic term in which the sinner, by God’s grace and mercy is declared restored and forgiven. While positionally accurate in its restorative principles, the term justification lacks the intimate familial endearment that the term adoption conveys. It is one matter to stand before the judge and have one’s penalty forgiven and wiped clear from one’s record, which is justification, and it is quite another when that same judge wraps his arms around the offender and takes him home to live with him. To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the father is greater.³⁸

³⁶ James D.G. Dunn and Alan M. Suggate, *The Justice of God* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 7, 8.

³⁷ J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 207.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 187,188.

Justification has to do with the way in which the death of Jesus bears upon the life and death of humanity. It brings to light the change in human status and condition that derive from the just act and mercy of God.³⁹ The doctrine of justification describes God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ as the act through which man, in himself unrighteous, is truly brought into harmony with God, apart from his ability to make it happen. Justification operates as a gift of righteousness, which makes human beings acceptable to God.⁴⁰ The timeline of this is at conversion, which inaugurates a new standing before God. Man is justified; declared righteous in God's sight.⁴¹

Justification is foundational to our establishment of a relationship with a holy God who cannot and will not accept us in our sinful condition. Justification can, like any legal proceeding, be sterile, unemotional and devoid of a relational context since it is by nature legal. With God, there is always a progressive level of understanding and revelation.

Sanctification & Regeneration

This paper recognizes the balancing act of man's role and God's role in the process of sanctification, conversion, justification and regeneration. This paper agrees with Wayne Grudem who defines regeneration as "A secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual

³⁹Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian Faith* (UK: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 142.

⁴⁰Gerald O'Collins and Edward G. Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2000), 41

⁴¹Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Michigan/UK: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, Regent College Publishing, 2002), 436.

life to us. In some elements of the application of redemption we play an active part but in the work of regeneration, we play no active role at all.”⁴² Conversion is that life-changing encounter with the triune God, which inaugurates the process of forsaking one’s old ways as a fallen creature and living in accordance with God’s design for human existence.⁴³ This event is only the beginning of a process of transformation into Christ-likeness, which extends throughout eternity. Viewed from the human perspective, it is man’s cooperation or partnership with the Holy Spirit in living out a daily life of regeneration, justification, freedom, and power, which is attained through conversion, so that man can grow in Christ-likeness and service to God.⁴⁴ To be conformed to the image and likeness of God is both an event and a process. Like much of the Christian journey, sanctification must be held in a divine sense of balance and delicate understanding. One can observe that humanity cannot allow the reality that people look dimly in a mirror to taint the overall tapestry of the majesty and mystery of God in the redemptive process. Focusing too much on sanctification causes one to lose sight of the deep truth that humanity is justified before a holy God based upon no merit of their own, and yet standing upon that timeless truth, believers do partner with the Holy Spirit in a journey toward biblical maturity.

In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian who died at the hands of the Nazis at the end of World War II, man must also be on the offensive against “cheap

⁴² Grudem, 699.

⁴³ Grenz, 433.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 440.

grace.” Cheap grace, he said, is what one has when there’s little or no response to God’s work in the world. Cheap grace is what one has when one hears of God’s love in Jesus Christ and then doesn’t do much of anything about it. Bonhoeffer wrote that God’s grace is costly. Precisely because it is so costly, it demands a costly response from us.⁴⁵ Otherwise, it becomes cheap grace.⁴⁶

In other words, the individual must do their part in sanctification, different from justification in which they have no role at all to play, beyond our confessing and repenting. There can be confusion in theology in the subordination of justification and sanctification to each other. Forgiveness can become so significant to the Christian that sanctification is forgotten, and sanctification can become so important that the need for forgiveness is likewise forgotten.⁴⁷ Estrangement speaks of a breach in a relationship, and there is a healing that occurs first in justification, is processed in sanctification, and finds its logical conclusion in adoption.

Erickson defines regeneration in this context, “Conversion refers to the human being’s response to God’s offer of salvation and approach to the human. Regeneration is the other side of conversion. It is completely God’s doing. It is God’s transformation of

⁴⁵Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 45-47.

⁴⁶Douglas J. Brouwer, *Remembering the Faith* (Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 121.

⁴⁷ Leith, 187.

individual believers, his giving a new spiritual vitality and direction to their lives in order that they may accept Christ”⁴⁸ Regeneration, or new birth, is God’s ultimate response to man’s problem of alienation.⁴⁹ This alienation or estrangement has multiple levels to its breadth and scope. There is primarily an alienation that sin has caused between God and humanity, and secondly there is alienation between humanity. The relational aspect of our sanctification bears the greatest application for the believer’s life. This repair occurs on two fronts: one between God and the sanctified and the other with those around the sanctified. Sanctification is a process validated and lived out in the context of those relationships around the believer. For example, baptism’s secondary implication is a public inauguration in the community of believers, which signals the beginning of a public declaration, and evidence that justification and regeneration has occurred in the individual’s life. When Jesus restored, or justified, the demon-possessed man, He sent him home to live out his justification and emerging sanctification before the very people he was alienated from, his family (Mark 5:19). Jesus restored him in two areas of his life, vertically with his God and then horizontally with his family. The demon-possessed man had to make the choice to not follow the fanfare and crowds that accompanied Jesus and to live out his regeneration in the context of community. It is this process of sanctification that is lived out and evidenced by those around us that validates change. Sanctification is decisively carried out in the community of believers. In mediating our fellowship with God, the Spirit also brings us into

⁴⁸ Erickson, 955.

⁴⁹Grenz, 434.

community with one another and with all creation. People are not saved in isolation, or in order to enjoy an exclusive relationship with the triune God. Rather, through conversion the Spirit brings man to participation within a community, comprised of the disciples of Jesus who are new creations of God.⁵⁰

Doctrine of Adoption

Various commentaries shed a varying light on the order, scope, and extent of adoption in the believer's life.⁵¹ Through the study of adoption as a doctrine, this paper will begin to formulate its most comprehensive understanding of the heart of God toward lost and fallen humanity. Wayne Grudem, in his book *Systematic Theology*, defines adoption as “an act of God whereby he makes us members of his family.”⁵² At its very core and essence adoption is a reflection of the Father heart of God. Baxter frames up the heartbeat of adoption saying, “The Christian God is interested in relationship with us, and not just relationship, but union, and not just union, but such a union that everything He is and has, all glory and

⁵⁰ Ibid., 439.

⁵¹ *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Moody Press, 1957), 23. This book frames up adoption this way. “Adoption, this term as used in a theological sense commonly denotes that act of God by which he restores penitent and believing men to their privileges as members of the divine family, and makes them heirs of heaven. Adoption, it appears, taking the Scripture teachings as a whole, while not the same as our justification, is necessarily connected therewith, as forgiveness would be empty without restoration to the privileges forfeited by sin. Adoption and regeneration also are two phases of the same fact, regeneration meaning the reproduction of the filial character, and adoption the restoration of the filial privilege”.

⁵² Grudem, 736.

fullness, all joy and beauty and unbridled life is to be shared with us and to become as much ours as it is Him.”⁵³ Of course this quote must be taken in balance because God can never share his incommunicable attributes with humanity. Adoption involves a change of both status and condition. In the former sense, adoption is a declarative matter, an alteration of our legal status. We become God’s children. We enjoy what is designated as the spirit of sonship. Through adoption, the Christian is able to look affectionately and trustingly upon God as Father rather than as a slave driver and taskmaster.⁵⁴ Man’s adoption also involves reconciliation. Not only has God forgiven him, but man has also been reconciled to Him and no longer carries enmity toward Him. God has shown His love for humanity by taking the initiative in restoring the fellowship damaged by sin.⁵⁵

Adoption also involves the Father’s goodwill. In his book, *Christian Theology*, Erickson writes, “He is ours and we are His, and He through adoption extends to us all the benefits his measureless love can bestow.”⁵⁶ Adoption is a window into the heart of God. A true biblical understanding of adoption reveals the richness of the concept. The deeper individuals have insight and revelation into the Doctrine of Adoption, the more they are overwhelmed with its magnitude, scope, inclusion, and therefore its true cost and

⁵³ Kruger, *Jesus and the Undoing of Adam*, 17.

⁵⁴ Erickson, 975.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 976.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 978.

responsibility. Adoption, by its very nature, references a relationship that is not natural therefore requiring effort, energy, kindness, mercy, compassion and desire to initiate and process the adoption. Adoption is the highest privilege than can be bestowed on a person, as they are lovingly included and invited into God's family. Through the Doctrine of Adoption, we see an extraordinary manifestation of God's mercy and love to His people.

The Doctrine of Adoption formulates its strength from the fountainhead of God's desire to portray Himself as Father. God's relationship to mankind with its Old Testament application was a type and shadow of His portrayal in the New Testament (1Corinthians 13:12); "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." Unless the context of the Old Testament is understood, the significance of its New Testament revelation could be lost. One can fully appreciate the apprehension of embracing the portrayal of God in the Old Testament depending upon one's interaction with him and one's heart's condition. For example, Moses and Joshua did not struggle while Achan did. The emphasis of the Old Testament was dominated by thoughts of God's holiness portrayed by quaking mountains, lighting, and stern warnings of impending death if the laws were violated.⁵⁷ Those who were in relationship with this holy God clearly understood their boundaries. As a reader or student of the bible approaches Jesus in the New Testament it is critical to understand that the God of the Old Testament is both loving and holy and the representation of the God of the New

⁵⁷ Exodus 19:16; 20:18; Psalms 43:3; and 48:1.

Testament is both loving and holy as well. Jesus presented a marked paradigm shift as He stepped into history to be the image of God and he presents God as Father, both to Himself as well as fallen humanity. One of the greatest privileges of man's adoption is being able to speak to God as a good and loving Father. Man is to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven," (Matthew 6:9) and men are to realize that they are "no longer slaves, but sons." (Galatians 4:7). Therefore, man can now relate to God not as a slave relates to a slave master but as a son to a Father.⁵⁸ The model of His fatherhood is about adoption.⁵⁹ John Murray writes about this inclusion and acceptance, coupled with his thoughts on the subtleties of these words and their meanings;

By adoption the redeemed become sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty; they are introduced into and given the privileges of God's family. Neither justification nor regeneration expresses precisely that. Adoption is, like justification, a judicial act. In other words, it is the bestowal of a status, or standing, not the generating within us of a new nature or character. It concerns a relationship and not the attitude or disposition which enables us to recognize and cultivate that relationship. God never has in his family those who are alien to its atmosphere and spirit and station. Adoption, as the term clearly implies, is an act of transfer from an alien family into the family of God himself. This is surely the apex of grace and privilege. It staggers imagination because of its amazing condescension and love. Adoption is concerned with the fatherhood of God in relation to men. God becomes the Father of his own people by the act of adoption.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Grudem, 739.

⁵⁹ As a natural father looking at a child who is an orphan the Holy Spirit expanded my heart to include Caroline into our family. My thought pattern was simply, "If God did this for me I could allocate the grace to turn around and accept Caroline into our family."

⁶⁰John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1955), 132, 133.

“Adoption is actually quite simple; in adoption God makes us members of his family.”⁶¹

Adoption is the act of a generous father, taking a son to his bosom and endowing him with liberty, favor, and a heritage.⁶² It is the joyous celebration for the believer when realization comes toward the span of what adoption carries and conveys to believers. One’s spiritual adoption is his entrance point into the family of God. It is where new status in a family is given. The stigma of orphans as being isolated or abandoned is jettisoned and they are given not only a new name but new privileges as well.⁶³ This is an important concept and principle that this paper will examine in the section on natural adoption since it is foundational to so much pain inherent in the adoptive journey. Adoption is the recognition and affirmation by man of his sonship toward God.⁶⁴

⁶¹Grudem, 739.

⁶²T. Rees, “Adoption,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia—Volume 1* (Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), 54.

⁶³Robert A. Peterson, *Adopted by God* (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2001), 109.

⁶⁴Gunton, 143.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF HOSEA AND KEY WORDS IN NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES

Next this paper will examine adoption through an historical perspective as seen in the Old Testament book of Hosea. This process will be divided into two sections. First, an overview of the book of Hosea, continuing with a study of Hosea as a person, and next examining the major themes presented in Hosea, concluding the first section with a look at God's heart as a Father and His intentions for His children as depicted in Hosea. Secondly, and lastly, we will break down key scriptures in Hosea that clearly exhibit God's essence and desire toward His people.

As God seeks to adopt the nation of Israel, He offers the reader many glimpses into His heart through the prophet Hosea. The purpose of this section is not to do a through exegesis to the Book of Hosea, or to attempt to contextually understand Hosea's relationship with his wife Gomer, but rather to continue the stated theme of God's relational nature to His creation and their response to God's covenant loyalty. The primary metaphor in Hosea is marriage; however the principles bear a significant application in our study of adoption. Both have a central focus on relationships and how they are initiated, fostered, and maintained. The principles imbedded in both adoption and marriage, of choosing, relational fidelity, reciprocity, and values can be cross-referenced. We will begin by focusing on Hosea 2:14- 3:2 to see the character and essence of God portrayed through these Scriptures and how Israel responded to that love. We will once again see God's inclusion of us and our definitive yet responsive role in that reciprocal process.

Hosea's marriage to a woman who would become a harlot should be taken quite literally. As James Newsome Jr. said in his book, *The Hebrew Prophets*, "The very outrageous nature of the deed caused Hosea's prophetic words to contain a weight and base of authority."⁶⁵ The account of Hosea's experiences is literal, not allegorical, which provides the fullest comprehension of the magnitude of what God experiences because of His covenant people.⁶⁶ The weight of the action that God calls Hosea to experience adds both credibility and authority to the book of Hosea. Although it would be "safe" to reduce the story to mere allegory, it would be biblically inaccurate. This action would be safe because it would allow the reader to compartmentalize the heinous representation of Hosea's wife as a pattern of man today. It would also allow the reader to dumb down the deep emotion that Hosea must have experienced and thereby thwart the reader's understanding of God's deeply felt emotion for His people. Just as the biblical principles of justification, sanctification, and regeneration are all theologically sound, they do not resonate in the depth of our being as the word adoption does. While it is one thing to reason about justification and sanctification, it is a little more intimate to discuss adoption and the personal ramifications of that in one's life. Hosea forces the reader to deeply feel and understand fundamental core issues necessary to fully grasp the Father heart of God. If one attempts to tame or domesticate the book of Hosea, one will miss the fullest expression and purpose behind the book.

⁶⁵James D. Newsome Jr., *The Hebrew Prophets* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), 33.

⁶⁶David Allan Hubbard, *Hosea* (Pasadena, California: Tyndale, 1989), 52.

Overview of Hosea

The book of Hosea portrays the biblical truth that God is in His essence a relational being. The life and ministry of the prophet Hosea is a look at the love of God and man's readiness to push that love away, time and time again. Hosea is a book about relationship. It begins with the illustration and example of the prophet marrying a woman even though he was aware that she would certainly violate the covenantal bonds. Hosea's central passion and focus was relational. He moved as a living example from his personal relationship with his wife to reflect the relationship that Israel had with Jehovah; a relationship that was inaugurated by Yahweh and jeopardized from the beginning by Israel's forgetfulness.⁶⁷ Hosea was the first of the prophets to point towards the marriage paradigm as a precursor to the church being wed to the future Messiah and so marriage becomes a central theme in the book. Hosea was a prophet called by God to marry Gomer, a harlot who continually left the loving home Hosea had provided to return to her life of prostitution. From her intimacy with Hosea, and others as well, they would have children who would turn from God, and trigger firsthand an expression of God's passion for his covenant people.⁶⁸ Hosea continued to love Gomer, seeking to draw her back into intimacy with him regardless of her lack of reciprocity to return that love and remain faithful to their covenant bonds. In this book, the unfailing love of God is portrayed in the metaphors of husband, father, and physician.⁶⁹ Through Hosea, God spoke graphically to a nation running from His presence. Hosea's preaching focused on Israel's

⁶⁷Ibid., 20.

⁶⁸Ibid., 19

⁶⁹Elaine Padilla, *The Love That Never Fails* (Living Pulpit, 2005).

breach of her covenantal relationship with God, mixing the pure worship of the Lord with the idolatry of the surrounding peoples (religious syncretism), and on the impending judgment.⁷⁰ Israel's faithlessness is contrasted with God's abundant love.⁷¹ In Israel, God's steadfast love contrasts to His people's lack of it. The intended relationship between God and man simply does not exist at that time.⁷² Hosea portrays and speaks of the infinitely loving-heart of God. All through the long years of history, from Egypt on and despite what He has done for them, Israel has rejected God's love. The nation deserves no mercy. Yet God still shrinks from destroying them. He is torn between love and justice, neither of which can be denied.⁷³ This becomes the intensely prophetic nature of Hosea's preaching. Part of the calling of Hosea was to (in seed form) establish the foundational component of the cross of Christ. In a type and shadow form, Scripture has imbedded principles throughout its pages all pointing toward the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus. From Adam and Eve to Abraham and Isaac, the story of Jesus is woven throughout the text. Hosea brings these truths to a new level of comprehension and biblical understanding.

⁷⁰R.C. Sproul, ed., *New Geneva Study Bible*, (U.S.A., Thomas Nelson Inc. Publishing, 1995), 1357.

⁷¹Newsome, 42,43.

⁷²Geoffrey W. Bromily, ed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume Two* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), 765.

⁷³*Zondervan Handbook to the Bible*. (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids Michigan 1999), 487.

Hosea as a Person

It is very significant to understand from the onset that Hosea was a real man, living in community with people. Hosea had dreams, fears, hopes, expectations and plans. This is mentioned because at times the tendency of Bible readers is to gloss over the human component of the messenger of God. Because he lived in community with others, Hosea would have naturally experienced all the human traits that went along with what God was calling him to do: embarrassment, shame, broken dreams, and confusion as to why God was structuring his ministry this way. These are important truths to wrestle with if one is to understand the depth of the message that Hosea was called to speak for Jehovah. Hosea could have easily chosen to be like other prophets such as Moses, Jeremiah and Jonah, who temporarily ran from their responsibility and evaded their vocations, but fortunately for history he did not.⁷⁴ Faced with the calling to marry a harlot and with the unbelievable message that God has a bride, Hosea made no protest but willingly fulfilled his call before the God he represented.⁷⁵

The fact that God used him at the level He did, in spite of his humanity, amplifies the truth inherent in the Trinitarian model once again. In the Trinity there is a distinct delineation between the roles of all three persons. In the uniqueness of that personhood, the Father carries out His role, the Son His role and the Holy Spirit His role. The Father does not try to be the Son, and likewise the Son does not try to be the Father. Each person of the Godhead is honored and respected for the various roles they play and are honored in those roles accordingly. God chose Hosea to deliver a unique message at a

⁷⁴ H.D Beeby, *Hosea: Grace Abounding* (Grand Rapids. Eerdmans), 14.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

unique season in time, and He used the heart condition, temperament, style, and courage of the man He chose. God used him to deliver a radically complex message of His unconditional love and favor towards man. Hosea himself is a sign to the people.⁷⁶ Hosea, as a man, was possessed by an awareness of having been called by God; a knowledge that dominated his activity. Hosea was also held by intense love for his people and his personal life symbolized that traumatic predicament. The determined grip of God on His elected people provided the courage for the prophet Hosea to prophesy to a decaying society, pronounce divine judgment, and build a bridge between God and Israel. To be caught up in one's mission was normative for the prophets. Hosea took this stewardship to a new level of biblical and personal commitment. However, it was not without personal cost.

Hosea's Full Involvement

Getting fully involved in one's calling and ministry invites the potential of risk and suffering. In Hosea's life, God used his personal involvement to shape his public ministry at a level that would ultimately reflect the character and essence of the God he was called to speak for. God used pain and suffering as the means by which Hosea's heart was borne more closely to God.⁷⁷ To effectively mirror the image of God in any aspect of ministry one must grasp the relational component of the being of God. To mirror simply His law or justice would not give a full spectrum of His beauty or majesty. To mirror only His mercy without presenting the cost for man to receive His grace would

⁷⁶ Hubbard, 53.

⁷⁷ Hassell C. Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Moody Press Chicago. 1986), 84.

render the sacrificial pattern of God shallow. The biblical prophet lived in two worlds; the first was the normative world of living among the people he was called to minister to, and the second was the supernatural world of revelation emanating from his or her relationship with Jehovah. It became incumbent upon the prophet to become personally involved with both parties: God and man. Hosea needed to feel the pain of brokenness and unfaithfulness of the people to understand the full joy in restoration. Due to the familial relationships that Hosea portrays, the emotions and pain is intensified.⁷⁸ What better way to feel what God feels than to touch a common thread of human emotions consistent with the human condition than that of family? As is true of believers today, Hosea had to become emotionally involved in the cause of God to best reflect him.⁷⁹ Hosea was human with real emotions, and out of that humanity one can imagine he felt real anger and battled bitterness and frustration over the reprobate nature of his audience. One can only imagine that his human flesh wrestled with the burden of the fullness of what God was asking him to do with his personal life. A prophet, by nature walks at times more in the future than the present. It must have been vexing for his soul to initiate a covenantal relationship with a woman that he knew would betray him. Hosea was asked to marry a woman who was pure at the time but he knew the outcome of God's prediction.⁸⁰ Since God is in His essence a relational being, it is crucial for those who desire to be in a relationship with Him at any substantive level to become less self-absorbed and more outward focused. A sign of transformation and biblical maturity is

⁷⁸ Hubbard, 45.

⁷⁹ Packer, 40.

⁸⁰ James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets—Volume 1* (Michigan: Baker Books, 2002), 17.

the believer's ability to partner with God on the earth, to feel what He feels, and to care about what He cares about. To circumvent this process of feeling and intimacy is to fall short of representing God in the earth today. God speaks to fallen humanity through the words and truths of Scripture. Hosea reflects that partnership well. Hosea presents to the reader a portrait of the emotional and heart felt commitment reflective of having a relationship with God. Through Scripture, God is opening His heart to man, lovingly inviting them to join with Him and enlisting them as covenant partners. In his book, *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer says: "Knowing God is a matter of personal involvement. Your mind, your will and your feelings, must get involved. To get to know a person you have to commit yourself to them and their interests, and be ready to relate yourself with their values and heart and concerns. Without this your relationships will only be superficial and flavorless."⁸¹

One must not lose sight of the fact that knowing God is an emotional relationship as well as an intellectual and volitional one; it would not be a relationship if emotions were not involved. One must become emotionally involved in the victories and passions of God's cause in the world. The Psalmist pens it this way: "I cry rivers of tears because nobody's living by your book!"⁸² Hosea embodies this concept as an example for the church historically. God choose to have Hosea experience normative aspects of relationship: rejection, frustration, anger, judgment, restoration, shattered intentions, personal pain, anguish, hope and joy. Hosea had to experience these emotions personally with Gomer in order to understand what God went and continues to go through with

⁸¹Packer, 39.

⁸² Peterson, Psalm 119:136.

fallen humanity. In his book, *The Hebrew Prophets*, James Newsome writes about the conflict God experiences with fallen humanity saying, “In an amazing statement the struggle with Israel becomes an internal conflict within Yahweh. The result of this strife is that Yahweh cannot utterly destroy this people since to do so would be a violation of Yahweh’s own being”.⁸³ Personal involvement and risks were all part of the execution of Hosea’s call. In this regard Hosea took a great risk, and suffered personal anguish, which again reflects the turmoil that, sadly, is normative for God. The great presupposition behind Hosea’s message is the intimate relationship existing between Yahweh and His people Israel. Yahweh is Israel’s God who had entered into a covenant relationship with them. Hosea paints a vivid picture of Yahweh’s heart in turmoil, wavering between judgment and mercy.⁸⁴ Hosea accurately portrays a God who desires to be in relationship with man and bestows upon His creation a love that man does not deserve, nor can they merit it. It is also a love that grows and is sustained by relationship.

Themes of Hosea

There are many major themes scattered in the metaphors, word pictures and illustrations that characterize the preaching of Hosea, all of which highlight the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, and the reciprocal nature involved in those complex interactions. God has established a relationship with Israel; they are His and they belong to Him. Through Hosea and his marriage to Gomer, God portrays the reality that Israel would reject His love and violate the covenantal bonds they made to Jehovah. However, God is relentless in His pursuit of His wayward and rebellious bride. Hosea’s

⁸³ Newsome, 42.

⁸⁴ Bromily, *ISBE—Vol. 2*, 764.

conviction of the indestructibility of Yahweh's love is so great that he believes not even Israel's sin can snuff it out.⁸⁵ Although God's covenant people have rejected Him and tested the boundaries of His love, God continues in unbelievable mercy to reach out and restore them to Himself. Hosea shows us that He does this due to His nature, as a God desiring a relationship with His people.

The Fathering of God

God is unyielding in His intentions of wanting to be a father to Israel, which is another prominent theme in Hosea. Israel was not an orphan dislodged from its own narrative but had a past, in which Yahweh had expressed His overflowing love for His people by calling them out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1). With tender nostalgia, He recalls his infant son's younger days as He taught Israel how to walk, taking him with bonds of love. Motivated by love, Yahweh had called Israel out of Egypt, spoken tenderly to and cared for him in the wilderness, and secured him in the land of Canaan.⁸⁶ Hosea is a book which repeatedly displays the divine pattern of God's desire to be in intimate involvement with His creation, regardless of their response or acknowledgment of that relationship. God used Hosea to express His relationship to His covenant people and to see their response to that covenant.⁸⁷ Hosea calls wayward Israel to return to the Lord in order to reestablish the intimate relationship she had.⁸⁸ The book of Hosea is

⁸⁵ Newsome, 40.

⁸⁶ Bullock, 98.

⁸⁷ Sproul, 1358.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

foundationally based on the truth that there is a relational tie between Yahweh and Israel that cannot be broken either by Yahweh or by the rebellion of Israel.

The Intention of God – Hosea 2:14-3:2

Hosea 2:14-3:2,

Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. “In that day,” declares the LORD, “you will call me ‘my husband’; you will no longer call me ‘my master.’ I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked. In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety. I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD. “In that day I will respond,” declares the LORD— “I will respond to the skies, and they will respond to the earth; and the earth will respond to the grain, the new wine and oil, and they will respond to Jezreel. I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called ‘Not my loved one.’ I will say to those called ‘Not my people,’ ‘You are my people’; and they will say, ‘You are my God.’” The LORD said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.” So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley.

The staggering reflection of God’s character and relational intentions are found in Hosea 2:14- 3:2. It constitutes one of the most profound portrayals of the intentions of the heart of God towards a lost and rebellious people. The strength of this passage finds its foundation in the preceding verses where Israel had forsaken the Lord by committing the vilest adultery, and judgment is pronounced through the names of Hosea’s children: Jezreel (place of judgment), Lo-Ruhamah (she has received no compassion), and Lo-Amni (not my people). Yet, a ray of hope is held out when God states that the Israelites

will be like the sand on the seashore.⁸⁹ It is to a lost, rebellious, insubordinate people whom the prophet Hosea addresses in chapter 2:14. The people of Israel are not doing well in relationship to Jehovah. Hosea began his prophecy at a time when the judgments of God were abroad and when God was contending in a more immediate way with his sinful people.⁹⁰ It is a picture of a people who have run from the boundaries and safety of a relationship with a God who redeemed and restored them. It is not simply a people who have become complacent in their relational fidelity with God but have willfully scorned, mocked, and abused the blessings he has given so mercifully to them. Their defiance extended to the burning of incense to the Baals and their pursuit of other lovers. It is from this relational breach that God, through Hosea, declares His intention. God does not turn a blind eye to her apostate nature and gloss over their sin; rather He faces it head on with full and complete understanding and makes a stunning transition with the word “therefore.” Therefore is a word which by definition means “pertaining to a sequence of events, referencing to that which precedes, a marker of a point of time following another point of time.”⁹¹ The word therefore is a looming word of impending judgment based upon the past performance of an apostate Israel. God makes a declarative statement that shows His full cogitative understanding of their sins and condition before Him. It would seem that because of Israel’s abandonment of every covenantal principle they understood,

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1359,1360.

⁹⁰ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. IV – Isaiah to Malachi* (New Jersey: Revell Company), 1118.

⁹¹ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*. electronic ed. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997

God would reciprocate in the same manner and abandon and forget her.⁹² However, the opposite occurs as He allures her back to Himself through displaying His glory to her.

Israel unwittingly asked to see the glory of the Lord through their sin, and He showed it to them through the prophet Hosea. In his book, *The Mediation of Christ*, Thomas

Torrance comments on this glory revealing moment in their history:

The covenant between God and Israel was not a covenant between God and a holy people, but precisely the reverse. It was a covenant established out of pure grace between God and Israel in its sinful, rebellious and estranged existence. Hence no matter how rebellious or sinful Israel was, it could not escape from the covenant love and faithfulness of God. Even if Israel persists in adulterating its relationship with God, he will not divorce Israel, for the bonds of God's steadfast love retain their hold upon Israel and lock it into a relationship with God which will finally triumph over all estrangement and bring about reconciliation and peace.⁹³

The implications and significance of this chapter of Hosea are staggering if the reader has an understanding of its historical context. The fact that God chooses to establish a relationship at all with a fallen people is reflective of His deep commitment to walk in relational fidelity with a people who don't deserve His grace and mercy. The most telling reflection of God's stated intention to be with Israel lies in the Hosea passages that portray God as seemingly incapable of allowing Himself to walk away from her. The word "therefore" is strategically placed for Israel to grasp how fully aware God was of her condition and yet how deeply He loved her. His love for her was not based

⁹² Ibid., 1130. Henry Commenting on this concept writes "Fitly therefore is that which notes the connection immediately following with a note of admiration: Behold I will allure her! When it was said, she forgot me, one would think it should have followed, "Therefore I will abandon her, I will forget her, I will never look after her more." No, therefore I will allure her. Note, God's thoughts and ways of mercy are infinitely about ours; his reasons are all fetched from within himself and not from any thing in us; nay his goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious"

⁹³ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1992), 27.

upon her performance, merit, or good behavior but rather rested solely on His grace and mercy. The word “therefore” is actually used three times in Hosea 2. All three times this word builds into a conclusion that has a surprise twist for the reader. The first time, her harlotry is declared, and the prophet declares the intention and frustration of God by concluding that God has had enough. He declares that God is blocking her path of destruction by bordering her rebellion through the metaphorical use of thorn bushes to block her path. The second time, it is declared that judgment will come when the provision comes. The reader could assume that by the third use of the word “therefore”, a full expression of judgment would be rolled out. Instead, the reader is startled by a series of promises including a second Exodus and a new betrothal and marriage with each promise highlighted by the declarative statement “I will.”⁹⁴ The expectation of judgment is shattered, as God presents not a pronouncement of judgment but grace that is wholly unconditional and abounding.⁹⁵ God’s fullest intention is realized only when Israel is at its lowest point relationally with Jehovah.

While Hosea stood in the office of a prophet, glaring at the apostate nature of Israel while simultaneously pronouncing the intention of Jehovah to betroth Himself to her, he must have experienced a deep conflict of emotions. It is one thing to have a captive audience longing for the covenant of God and it is another to have a people running from Him. All the while, God does not remaining stationary but is actively running after His people. This is biblically portrayed in Luke 15 with the restoration of the prodigal son. The Father did not wait until the son was cleaned up to restore him; yet

⁹⁴ Hubbard, 83.

⁹⁵ Beeby, 27.

he did require repentance, for the son had to turn to God before the father could embrace him. He actually embraced him in his filth and restored him to sonship (Luke 15:20-24). Hosea was setting the stage for a more complete understanding of the most profound revelation into the character and love of God. Torrance comments not only on this principle but its intended conclusion in his book *The Mediation of Christ*,

The more fully God gave himself to this people, the more he forced it to be what it actually was, what we all are, in the self-willed isolation of fallen humanity from God. Thus the movement of God's reconciling love toward Israel not only revealed Israel's sin but also intensified it. That intensification, however is not to be regarded simply as an accidental result of the covenant but rather as something which God deliberately took into the full design of this reconciling activity, for it was the will and the way of God's grace to effect reconciliation with man at his very worst, precisely in his state of rebellion against God. That is to say, in his marvelous wisdom and love God worked out in Israel, a way of reconciliation which does not depend on the worth of men and women, but makes their very sin in rebellion against him the means by which he binds them for ever to himself and through which he reconstitutes their relations with him in such a way that their true end is fully and perfectly realized in unsullied communion with himself.⁹⁶

The reality that God would use the sinfulness of man for His redemptive purposes is thematically correct and applied all through scripture. God fully gives Himself to humanity and His intended hope is that humanity would reciprocate by fully giving itself to Him. His full intention, however, is only fully activated when man is at his worst. At his worst man finally realizes that he has nothing to offer God. To return to God any point prior to that, our human proclivity would be to present to Him our good works and good deeds as a means of indulgences to buy our place back relationally. Mankind is restored to a holy and just God under one condition and God chooses it. He does not even withhold his love completely from the sinner in his present sinful state, though the latter's

⁹⁶Torrance, 28, 29.

sin is an abomination to him. Even in the sinner He recognizes his image-bearer.⁹⁷ It does not depend on man but fully depends on God.

If God allures reprobate Israel, what could their ultimate relationship reflect if her heart is engaged with Him? Therein lies God's fullest intention and hope for the relational bonds He is longing to forge, maintain, and foster. Spoken as a prophet under the grace of God, Hosea was used to communicate a fuller expression of the father's heart of God. Hosea 2:14-3:2 plainly declares God's intention for his broken and rebellious people. It is a picture of the depth of restoration and hope that God holds out for his people as they walk in deep covenantal bonds with Him.

Now that we have looked at an overview of Hosea, a study of Hosea as a person, and explored the Father heart of God and His intention for His people, we will move on to the second and final portion of our study into this Old Testament book. The following three passages from Hosea contain key words and themes that reflected God's stated intention as a relational being longing to restore covenantal relationship with His people through adoption.

Battle Between Gods—Hosea 2:14

Hosea 2:14 says, "Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her."

We have already looked at the significance of the word "therefore." We will now explore the word "allure." By definition it means, "The power to attract; enticement."⁹⁸ The

⁹⁷Berkhof, 71.

⁹⁸Noah Webster, "Allure," *American Dictionary of the English Language Volume I*, (New York: S. Converse, 1980).

statement that God is speaking through Hosea is one of captivating the hearts of the people who are currently distracted and captivated by false and shallow things. They have allowed their hearts to be allured by false gods and now God is declaring, “I will allure.” He is seeking to posture her heart to be single minded and focused on Him. Once again we see that God is always working according to a divine pattern. He has always gone head to head with the prevailing idols of the cultures that distract and falsely captivate the hearts of his people. This systematically challenges their illusionary power and the cultural worldview that was being propagated around their false worship. Hosea was faced with a battle, framed around what god or gods will capture the allegiance and loyalty of the people? The basic idea of the word allure “is be open, spacious, wide, and might relate to the immature or simple one who is open to all kinds of enticement, not having developed a discriminating judgment as to what is right or wrong”.⁹⁹ Even though Israel is deep into idolatry and Baal worship, God remains supremely confident while faced with this battle. He has the ability to allure her and lead her into the desert, away from the distractions of idolatry, and not rebuke her but speak tenderly to her and speak the language of her heart. Of all the times a rebuke would be applicable it would be here, but God’s stated intention is to allure Israel into a place of seclusion and isolation with Him and then speak tenderly to His bride, even though she did not warrant such love and affection.

⁹⁹ R. Laird Harris, Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999, c1980), 742

A Hopeless Valley and Remembrance—Hosea 2:15

Hosea 2:15 says, “There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt.”

This is a passage of restoration, reality and hope. Hosea speaks restoration in the giving back of Israel’s vineyards and a reversal of the calamity that occurred in Achor. The restoration is exemplified by the people singing, which as Henry said, “...plainly refers to that triumphant and prophetic song which Moses and the children of Israel sang at the Red Sea.”¹⁰⁰ That triumph was another place of restoration and victory for the people of God. This restoration is against the backdrop of Achor, which at its essence is a story about relationship. The valley of Achor was the place of trouble for Israel. Due to the willful and stubborn hard heart of Achan, thirty-six men lost their lives in a battle that should have been a simple victory for them. However, God did not look upon one man alone and judge him individually. He looked at the one man, in relationship with the entire nation, and judged the entity and not just the individual. Joshua 7:1 says, “The Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things.” All of Israel was held liable for the actions of one man’s willful rebellion. Joshua gets a leadership lesson in the essence of community when God informs him that, “Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things, they have stolen they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions (Joshua 7:11).” God is reasoning from the whole, not the part. God’s expectation and hope was that the nation of Israel would have acted, thought, and reasoned as one

¹⁰⁰Henry, 1132.

relational group of people. Since God, as a triune being acts with one unified purpose and direction, it is reasonable that as image bearers and representatives of Jehovah on the earth we would do the same. Even though their understanding of the Trinity was extremely limited prior to the incarnation of Jesus, the Israelites still possessed knowledge of the plurality and oneness of God. God appears to be stressing the fundamental component of His being and His relational essence. Man has a responsibility to a larger whole and cannot simply think of himself and his needs, wants, lusts, and desires. One can only imagine the grief and bitterness that would have arisen with the loss of thirty-six men, not only from the nation but also the individual families who had lost loved ones. This would have produced a hopelessness and despair upon the people that would have remained with them as long as they were in community together. The stories would be told from generation to generation about the valley of Achor. The suspicion that one man's hard heart and disobedient spirit could cost them everything becomes the backdrop to the promise in Hosea of restoration in the Valley of Achor. Eventually, Achan was judged for his sin. Corporate consequences reinforce the calling to walk in covenant community, realizing that actions affect not only the individual but others as well.

Covenant Keeping God—Hosea 2:16-20

Hosea 2:16-20 says,

It will come about in that day," declares the LORD, "That you will call Me Ishi and will no longer call Me Baali. For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, so that they will be mentioned by their names no more. In that day I will also make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety. I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in

lovingkindness and in compassion, and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD.

This passage highlights the covenant language that assures and promises the redemption and purchase of the prostitute nation. By definition, a covenant is an unchangeable, divinely initiated legal agreement between God and man that stipulates the conditions of their relationship.¹⁰¹ What is pertinent for this discussion is that man cannot negotiate with God or change the terms of the covenant; he can only accept or reject them.¹⁰² In Hosea, one finds the nation of Israel unable to renegotiate the fulfillment of God's promises; regardless of their journey into sin. The establishment of God's covenant with man is based on the initiative of God and even if historic Israel failed, God would honor His promises.¹⁰³ The last statement contains both a "yes" and "no" statement. God will always keep his promises but not all of Israel would be the recipient of those promises. From the marriage language to the covenant over creation, the prophet begins to issue a series of covenantal promises to the people. This passage highlights one of the most impressive examples of the covenantal love of God for Israel.¹⁰⁴ In ancient times a covenant conveyed the idea of a treaty in which the two parties were bound by it. If one of the parties failed to fulfill its obligations, the other party would be excused from fulfilling the contract. However, Hosea portrays how the unfailing love of God goes beyond the normal bonds of a covenant and is contradictory to

¹⁰¹ Grudem, 515.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Bromily, *ISBE*, 792.

¹⁰⁴ Padilla, *The Love That Never Fails*.

the legal expectation. This highlights the concept discussed earlier about the subtle delineation between justification, regeneration and adoption, and the truth that adoption goes beyond the legal process. Hosea is portraying a picture of a God who could act one way, enforcing His judgment and punitive retribution, and although it would be within His scope and justice, He is choosing to act in a different manner. The manner He does act in is consistent with His true nature. Of the six types of covenants mentioned in the Bible, five of them are found in Hosea. These are: the Adamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, an allusion to the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant and a slight reference to the New Covenant.¹⁰⁵ In Elaine Padilla's book, *The Love That Never Fails*, she says, "The mention of each of these covenants in Hosea denotes the enduring quality of the willingness of God to love people from beginning to end, a divine relationship with humanity throughout history."¹⁰⁶ It is a twist of irony that God used the covenantal obedience of Hosea to highlight the covenantal abandonment of Israel. He did this in order to show all involved that Israel was incapable of upholding her covenant obligations.

¹⁰⁵ Hosea 1:10; 2:14-23; 2:15; 3:5; 4:6; 6:7; 8:1; and 13:14.

¹⁰⁶ Padilla, *The Love That Never Fails*.

The Covenant Language Reinforced Through the Marriage Paradigm

Hosea 2:16, “‘In that day,’ declares the LORD, ‘you will call me “my husband;” you will no longer call me “my master.”’”

Hosea was the first of the writing prophets to capture the betrothal aspect of God to humanity, fully expressed through Jesus.¹⁰⁷ Notice the confidence and intention of God as He declares, “In that day...you will.” Again, God is supremely confident of the allurements of His love and covenantal promises to draw back, and with this language, finally keep His people relationally loyal to Himself. The introduction of the term husband can be construed as the fullest expression of the relational essence of the nature of God and speaks with richness and depth of the covenant language. It is a word of intimacy reflective of the fullest hope, aspirations, and intention of the father heart of God. It speaks of the profound truth that not only would God create humanity but He would also allow His Son to marry His created order, even in her sinful condition.

Hosea 2:19, 20 says, “I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness and you will acknowledge the Lord.”

Like the usage of the word “therefore” in previous verses, this verse amplifies the intentions of God for Israel and prophetically speaking, the Church. Although God has always been faithful, this passage makes a formal declaration of His faithfulness to His people.¹⁰⁸ God gives them the most sacred promise and security imaginable telling them

¹⁰⁷ Henry, 1117.

¹⁰⁸ Derek Kidner, *The Message of Hosea* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 35, 36, and 37.

that He will love them, protect them and provide for them, that He will do the part of a husband to them, and that He will incline their hearts to join themselves to Him and will graciously accept them.¹⁰⁹ Realizing the proclivity of His people toward sin, God knows He can expect nothing from the bride. Pointedly she is not asked to make any vows.¹¹⁰ Three principles are significant to notice in this vow: the permanence of this union, the intimacy of it, and the fact that it owes everything to God.¹¹¹ This of course must be held in balance that man still retains a responsibility in the relationship.

Hosea 2:23 states, “I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called ‘Not my loved one.’ I will say to Hosea called ‘Not my people,’ ‘You are my people’; and they will say, ‘You are my God.’”

Hosea brings to full circle the restorative component of the nature of God. He speaks of the reversing of the name of the children of Israel, an establishment of the hope that initial judgment can be turned, and an expectancy that light can be seen through a cloud of pending doom and gloom.

Hosea 3:1 continues, “The LORD said to me, ‘Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.’”

The overview of Hosea will conclude with Hosea 3:1. One can only imagine Hosea’s exasperation, perhaps thinking that God was done with requiring him to endure more shame, more embarrassment, more rejection, further humiliation and deeper pain.

¹⁰⁹ Henry, 1134.

¹¹⁰ Beeby, 30.

¹¹¹ Kidner, 34.

The text alludes to this with the word “again.” Once again Hosea would have to face all of these old feelings mentioned in order to represent Jehovah at a deeper level. Hosea would have realized what was being asked of him. The “again” in God’s command faced the fact that the old wounds would have to be reopened and that what had happened once might happen yet again.¹¹² This is why Hosea captures the tension within God’s love as he refuses to ease the pain of the relationship by quitting.¹¹³ Hosea would have experienced public humiliation at a level he had not yet experienced when he went to buy her back from slavery. Derek Kidner explains this humiliation in his book *The Message of Hosea* when he says, “You became a slave through debt and slaves were always sold naked. Thus when Gomer was put up for sale her clothes were removed and the men of the city were there to see her nakedness and bid for her.”¹¹⁴ Her nakedness was once held private between Hosea and Gomer, and although later shared with other lovers, was now spectacted by the community Hosea was a part of. Hosea’s shame and personal cost has reached a new level.

Concluding this section, James Boice, in his book *The Minor Prophets* pointedly states,

At this point Hosea owned his wife. She was his property. Instead of seeking vengeance, he put Gomer’s clothes on her, led her away into the anonymity of the crowd and claimed that love from her that was now his right. Moreover as he did so he promised no less from himself – Go show your love your wife again. God steps into the marketplace of sin and buys us out of sin’s bondage by the death of Christ. We are Gomer. We are the slaves sold on the auction block of sin. The

¹¹² Ibid., 40.

¹¹³ Ibid., 41.

¹¹⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets Volume 1* (Michigan: Baker Books, 2002), 34.

world bids for us. The world bids fame, wealth, prestige, influence, and power—all those things that are the world's currency. But when all seemed lost, God sent Jesus His Son into the marketplace to buy us at the cost of his life. Jesus states, I bid the price of my life and blood. There was no greater bid than that.¹¹⁵

Key Words and New Testament Scriptures

This paper has explored adoption through an historical perspective as seen through the Old Testament book of Hosea and continued with an overview of the book of Hosea, followed by a study of Hosea as a person, and then examined the major themes presented. This paper concluded the first section with a look at God's heart as a Father and His intentions for His children as depicted in Hosea. Continuing on, key scriptures in the book of Hosea which clearly exhibited God's essence as a relational being and His desire for His people were examined.

To further our exploration into the biblical concept of adoption, this work will now perform a brief overview of four key words found in portions of New Testament scriptures, which highlight both the doctrine of adoption as well as the relational component of the nature of God. After each key word is explored in the contextual understanding it was first written, this work will then bear its application to the topic at hand: adoption. This paper will begin with the passage of Romans 9, continue with Ephesians 1 and Colossians 1, and conclude with excerpts from John and Romans 8. The passages and key words were arranged in this particular order due to the principles they exhibit and the way they build upon each other. Each New Testament passage exemplifies a unique building block in the adoptive process. The strength of these four passages is reflected in the principles that are deeply imbedded in each one. Each

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 36.

passage stands on its own but each uniquely reflects the relational essence of God's nature and its expression found in the adoptive journey.

Promise—Romans 9:8

Romans 9:8 reads, “In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.”

Romans 9:8 establishes a level of comfort that promises inclusion, irrespective of the birthing process. Thomas R. Schreiner, in his commentary *Romans* writes,

Both verses 7 and 8 restate the main thesis of verse 6b: the seed of Abraham are not the physical children of Abraham or the children of the flesh, but they are the children of Isaac and the children of promise. Both verses 7 and 8 begin with a negative statement informing the reader what is not the case: the children of God or the seed of Abraham are not merely physical descendents of Abraham. Then a contrasting statement explains what is the case; the children of promise are the true children of God.¹¹⁶

This article highlights the significant component of adoption; birth order and placement do not limit nor prohibit the promises of God for the adoptee's life. Keener writes in *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* about this inclusionary aspect of God as well, “Most Jewish people believed that their people as a whole was saved, in contrast to the gentiles. Paul argues here that ethnicity is insufficient grounds for salvation.”¹¹⁷ If the promises of God were only to be attained via birth there would be no hope for those that were orphaned and in need of adoption. This is important to note because in natural adoption as well, orphans often struggle with the concept of being “different” since they are not biologically connected to the family. Similarly, the believer can often question their

¹¹⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998), 495.

¹¹⁷ Keener, *The IVP Bible Background—N.T.*, 432.

value and worth in terms of being partakers of the family dynamic of God if perhaps they bear a deep awareness of how sinful they really were in contrast to the “presented” righteousness of those who were raised in the church family.

Although God confers a new identity upon the believer at conversion, like natural adopted children, it is often difficult to receive. We see further from this Scripture that we must always apprehend the promises of God by faith in the promises and veracity of God. The promises are “addressed to people, most commonly specific individuals who are chosen by God. Abraham is the most frequent addressee (Gal 3:18; Rom 4:13; Heb 6:12–17; Acts 7:17), then Isaac and Jacob (Heb 11:9), the patriarchs (Rom 15:8; Acts 26:6f.), Sarah (Heb 11:11), the prophets (Heb 11:32f., in connection with the heroes of the OT), and finally the Israelites (Rom 9:4). According to Eph 2:12 the Gentiles were excluded from the promise. The addressees who are mentioned are types in the context of the idea of promise and point toward Christians, who as believers are the essential recipients and bearers of the promise (Gal 3:22; 2 Cor 7:1; Acts 2:39). Thus the idea of fulfillment accompanies the concept of promise”¹¹⁸

This gift is given by God and rests in God alone. “The Scriptures depict God as the One who alone is true and powerful in effecting the fulfillment of promises. The NT points to Jesus Christ as the great fulfillment of God’s promises. The Pauline corpus provides the most prominent witness to the centrality of the concept of promise in earliest Christianity.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Translation of: Exegetisches Wörterbuch Zum Neuen Testament. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990-c1993), 2:13-16.

¹¹⁹ Bromily, *ISBE*, 981, 982.

This work has briefly demonstrated that the promises of God are not based upon our being born into the family naturally, but God choosing to graft us in. There exists however a fine balance regarding promises. While acknowledging the believer's dependence upon the gift giver, there is a dimension of human will and faith invoked in the journey to assure the implementation of the promises. All relationships by their nature and definition have a level of reciprocity involved in them. Although it is a delicate balance, the church does have a partnership with God. Principally, God established this divine partnership to allow us share in the Trinitarian model of inclusion and to be image bearers of His glory and majesty in the earth (Genesis 1:28; Matthew 28:19). It is evident throughout Scripture that God does His part and He lovingly invites us to do our part as well. If people are either lacking in awareness of those promises or possess an inability to secure those promises through faith, the promises can elude them. The recipient's elusion of the promises does not cast a disparaging shadow on the giver of the blessings found in being in God's family: inclusion, inheritance, covering, and protection. The recipient's lack of openness can be the force that blocks the promises' full enactment in their lives. There is a danger inherent in both natural and spiritual adoption of blaming the "parents" for the adoptee's apprehension to grab hold of the provision of adoption. The parents in a natural context find themselves the focus of blame and misplaced anger due to the adopted child's laziness in doing the hard work necessary to allocate the promises into their lives. So often the church, in her spiritual laziness, blames God for her failure to walk in the promises that He has so freely and readily provided for her. It is a far simpler process, though more costly in the end, to shift blame onto either the parents

or to God rather than assuming liability for one's inaction. Adam and Eve first presented this pattern of inaction to us as they blamed everyone but themselves for their sin.

Choose—Ephesians 1:3-5, 11-12

Ephesians 1:3 reads, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.” Verse 11 reads, “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.” This paper will now explore two commentaries that provide an overarching theme of the magnitude and scope of Ephesians 1:3 that catches the spirit of the key word “choose.” The word choose can not be obscured or hidden in the text and it is this paper's intention to magnify and amplify with these authors the depth, scope and significance of this passage and where they lead to. Commenting upon this scripture Newman writes “Ephesians 1:3 is a crucial text for three, interrelated reasons. First, Ephesians 1:3 is a condensation of the theologically loaded and rhetorically complex passage beginning in verse 4 and stretching to verse 14 of Chapter 1. Second, through an (intentional) echo of Genesis 12:1-3, Ephesians 1:3 begins a serious conversation with this lynchpin of the Hebrew Bible. By doing so, Ephesians forces a series of profound and controversial re-readings upon the letter's recipients, both ancient and modern. Finally, and most importantly, Ephesians 1:3 functions as a window into the thought-world of the great apostle Paul. Ephesians 1:3

betrays the grammar of Paul's way of doing theology."¹²⁰ Spring boarding from

Newman's comments this paper explores Francis Foulkes who writes;

Now after his brief greeting, and before he expresses his thanks for the welfare of those to whom he is writing, the apostle goes straight into one great paean of praise—one long sentence, impossible to analyze, in which each successive thought crowds in on the one before. There is no predetermined order in the enumeration of the blessings; the contemplation of one leads naturally to the next—election from the very beginning, sonship by adoption; redemption, which means forgiveness; insight into God's all-embracing purpose; the privilege of becoming his people.¹²¹

Through these scriptures we see that from all eternity, the Father cherished, in His own mind, a plan that was to be carried out in Christ.¹²² After Paul's pronouncement that Jesus blesses us in the heavenly realm, he moves into the fundamental concept found in adoption, the concept of choosing. Choose by definition means "to choose, with the implication of supernatural or divine intervention or guidance—to choose in accordance with the will of God".¹²³ The concept of being chosen finds its place in all cultures of the world in multiple arenas. Life is a painful process of various degrees as we work through the emotional damage that occurs when we are not chosen. For the natural orphan, being chosen opens up a world of potential with a family. Orphans become very animated when a prospective family arrives at an orphanage, because they seem to know that their

¹²⁰ Newman, 89.

¹²¹ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians* (Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 53, 54.

¹²² Accordance Bible Software (OakTree Software, Inc.), 2006.

¹²³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament : Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989), 1:362.

charm, smile, and wit could be their ticket into a new life.¹²⁴ Natural orphans realize that if they are chosen it will be because of their personal merit, a polar opposite of God's choosing of us, which is based upon His character and will. For the natural orphan, the concept of being wanted by someone is a compelling motivation. To be chosen, a natural orphan needs to be made available for adoption. This availability is based upon history, visitation, rights, reason they were placed in the orphanage in the first place and a list of other criteria that must be satisfied for them to even be considered "adoptable."

At one time the orphan had a family and then became displaced; he/she was "given up" for adoption into a new family. The same is true spiritually but with a slightly different twist. In the case of the believer's adoption into God's family, however, the devil does not "give up" his children for adoption or release them willingly. God, out of His mercy and eternal plan of election, takes a person out of the family and kingdom of Satan and places them in His family and kingdom (Colossians 1:13-14). Being chosen is fundamental to one's emotional well being in life. Being chosen conveys worth, dignity, hope, a future, inheritance and abundant life.

Another dimension to the concept of being chosen or choosing is the motivation of the person adopting. In natural adoption, the motives may be noble but there can also exist a mixture of personal need driving the decision to adopt. For example, a childless couple may not feel fulfilled unless they have a child. However, in spiritual adoption, God has no need of humanity. Therefore, He adopts with the purest of motives, according to His pleasure and will. His adoption of us is based on His predetermined plan and purpose for our lives. His adoption runs in full accordance with the expression

¹²⁴ A very common observation for anyone who has done orphanage ministry.

of His father's heart toward man. The *Expositor's Bible Commentary* says it this way, "We discover the grounds of this gracious action are the nature of God himself. Behind the fulfillment of his perfect will there lies His pleasure, which brings Him satisfaction because it represents the expression of his being."¹²⁵ This truth speaks of His gracious disposition towards us.¹²⁶

Become— John 1:12

John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." F.F. Bruce, commenting on this passage writes, "This divine birthright has nothing to do with racial or national or family ties. It is spiritually irrelevant to be descended from Abraham in the natural order if one is not a child of Abraham in the only sense that matters before God – by reproducing Abraham's faith."¹²⁷

In spite of the many who rejected the Word, there were some who received him. This provides the initial definition of believe by equating it with receive. When we accept a gift, whether tangible or intangible, we thereby demonstrate our confidence in its reality and trustworthiness. We make it part of our possessions. By being so received, Jesus gives to those who receive him a right to membership in the family of God. Become indicates clearly that people are not the spiritual children of God by natural birth, for we cannot become what we already are. This verb implies a change of nature.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Accordance Bible Software (OakTree Software, Inc.), 2006.

¹²⁶ Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D. - #2307 ed., *The Complete Word Study – New Testament*.

¹²⁷ F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John* (Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 38, 39.

¹²⁸ Frank E. Gaebelien, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Michigan: Zondervan, 1981), 32.

John 1:12 demonstrates that inherent in our spiritual adoption there is a need for each adoptee to receive for oneself. We also see that just as in natural adoption, there is a process that is followed for every new son or daughter. In natural adoption, the person is first chosen, either through an agency or orphanage. This process can take years of work and heartache. Visits are arranged, compatibility is determined, legalities are processed, and once satiated the adopted person goes with the new family (believing she/he has been adopted) and then begins the long and arduous assimilation into becoming a son or daughter of the new family. While legal adoption can be accomplished in a short process with the courts, emotionally it is a much more difficult journey. This parallels the stated theme of this thesis. God's fullest intention to those who receive Him may not be realized, not due to any fault of His own, but due to a lack of faith and trust on behalf of the recipient. As stated previously, justification is an event, through which man is made righteous before a holy God. Sanctification and regeneration, are both events as well as processes. Adoption builds upon the legal component of justification by adding a faith ingredient that partners with the plans and purposes of God for the adopted person. Faith is a prerequisite to justification as well as adoption. Becoming is a process that speaks of a transference from one condition in life to another.

Sons—Romans 8:19-21

Romans 8:19-21 states, "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God." Schreiner writes, "Why are believers groaning? Because they await their

adoption. It is not surprising that adoption is located in the future here, for this fits Paul's already-but-not-yet eschatology in which the blessings of the future age are already ours and yet they become ours fully only at the day of redemption and resurrection."¹²⁹

It is clear through this Scripture that God's original intent from the garden to the restoration of fallen humanity was to have a people who reflected His image on the earth. Adam and Eve were originally intended to walk with God in intimacy and populate the earth with relational fidelity and knowledge. Although the created order became marred by sin through Adam's federal headship, God's intention remained steadfast and constant. F.F. Bruce in his commentary on *Romans* writes, "As we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. The adoption here is the full manifestation of the status of believers when they are invested as sons and daughters of God and enter on the inheritance which is theirs by virtue of that status."¹³⁰

In this scripture Paul encompasses the perspective to include the whole creation, which is here personified as longing for the time when the sons of God will enjoy the consummation of creation's deliverance from its fallen state. "Eager expectation" is a picturesque term describing a person leaning forward out of intense interest and desire. The creation longs to share the glorious freedom of the children of God.¹³¹ Both God and creation long and wait for God's fullest intention to be recaptured and realized on the earth in the redeemed community of believers. Kruger, in his book, *Jesus and the Undoing of Adam* describes it saying, "The existence of the universe and of the human race within it is not an accident. The Triune God created the world as the first act of a

¹²⁹ Schreiner, 439.

¹³⁰ Bruce, 164, 165.

¹³¹ Accordance Bible Software (OakTree Software, Inc.), 2006.

vast and inconceivable gracious scheme to lift the human race in to the circle of the Trinitian life itself. Creation serves the higher purpose of adoption.”¹³²

It is hoped for and expected in both natural as well as spiritual adoption that the adoptee will begin to reflect the values, characteristics, and priorities of the family they are adopted into. The context of this scripture is predicated on the lavishing dimension of God’s love toward us. That love is portrayed through the title “children of God,” which implies a sense of belonging and inclusion. While there is an eschatological dimension to this passage there is also a very current reality as well. God’s stated intention for His children will be realized in the age to come, but His desire is that heaven will come down in this current age. Though man can now be God’s children, the unveiling of man’s identity or the complete revelation of his nature still lies in the future. They will become like Him. Man shall be conformed to the likeness of His Son as they are being transfigured into his likeness—from one degree of glory to another.¹³³ As stated earlier, it is the intended goal of every adoption, either spiritual or natural, for the adopted individual to begin reflecting the values, dreams, and hopes of their adoptive family. Spiritually, this truth is reflected in the transformation of the individual as they become more like Christ in attitude, compassion, lifestyle, and aspirations. Naturally, the new family longs for a shared value system in terms of ethics, family dynamics, and commonality.

In conclusion, varying weight is placed on each of these pillars throughout the adoptee’s life, both spiritually and naturally. However, the four pillars exemplified in this

¹³² Kruger, *Jesus and the Undoing of Adam*, 33.

¹³³ Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:49; and 2 Corinthians 3:18.

study are all central to the adoptive process. Through this exploration this paper has shown the ways that the doctrine of adoption is reflected in the New Testament, and examined the similar and dissimilar implications of this reality for spiritual and natural adoption.

Now that there is a solid theological, scriptural, and historical foundation for the doctrine of Adoption and its role in the believer's life, this paper will explore the ways that adoption is played out on a natural basis. This will be done through a contemporary literature review in order to see the similarities and dissimilarities of spiritual and natural adoption.

CHAPTER 3

NATURAL ADOPTION OVERVIEW

A *Google* search of the word adoption brings up 462,000,000 hits in under a minute. It is a heart wrenching experience to read story after story of people longing and hoping to adopt a child into their lives regardless of the issues they will be facing. People post their pictures, stories, journeys all in hopes of attracting a child into their lives; a decision they have decided will bring completeness or wholeness. Childless couples, whose dreams have been shattered by infertility, couples whose dreams have been put on hold, hope in desperation for a child to come to them. It is an eye-opening experience to look on the internet and see the vast industry that has spawned over broken hopes and dreams of adoption. In their naiveté and nobility couples think that by bringing this unwanted child into their home that the child will thank them and everyone involved can live happily ever after. Most parents adopt out of the purest motives. They want to love a child who has been abandoned. They want to help a child who needs them. “Adoptive parents need to understand that their child comes to them with a long, unhappy history that all the love in the world cannot erase.”¹³⁴ They want to parent a child who has no family. Their greatest wish is to fulfill their own needs to parent and to save a child from a life alone.¹³⁵ It is the goal of this section to frame up some overarching issues involved in adoption, focusing on international adoption since that is the most problematic. International adoptions are most problematic due to the fact that the issues inherent in

¹³⁴ Gregory C. Keck, PhD. and Regina M. Kupecky, LSW, *Adopting the Hurt Child* (Colorado Springs: Pinon Press, 1995), 54.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

international adoptions can masquerade behind the nobility of rescuing an orphan from a geographic location and bringing them to America.

Adoption took on an international flavor with the advent of television. Television changed the face of adoption from a country problem into an international issue highlighted with a turning point in 1990. After a steady decline that began in 1986 and continued through the Cold War years, the numbers of children adopted from foreign countries suddenly reversed their downward trend and burst back into prominence when the plight of thousands of institutionalized children in former eastern bloc countries were exposed by the western media.¹³⁶ By the end of 1990, the hollow faces and pleading eyes of these children had entered the living rooms and hearts of every Western family that had a television set. Thousands of western families rushed to Eastern Europe to adopt its abandoned children. Returning airplanes were so full of adopted children and their new parents they were dubbed “the baby flights.” International adoption had begun its renaissance of the nineties.¹³⁷ Today there are approximately fifty countries that allow their young citizens to be adopted by parents from other countries.¹³⁸ That renaissance was and has not been without its deep complications. Adoption should be a very simple process. A family decides that it has the financial and emotional capacity to invite an individual into their family dynamic to make a difference in all of their lives. Adults decide to include a needy person into their family. They satisfy the necessary screening and fiscal hurdles necessary and they welcome the individual into their family. While

¹³⁶ Barbara B. Bascom, MD. and Carole A. McKelvey, M.A., *The Complete Guide to Foreign Adoption* (Pocket Books Simon and Schuster, 1997), ix..

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Keck and Kupecky, 100.

pre-adoption classes may enlighten parents about loss issues and adjusting to a new home, they cannot possibly prepare them for the child who may not respond to their love.¹³⁹ The entire process of state and federal accreditation, psychological profiling, visa requirements, attorney fees, countless documents and emotions all point to the overwhelming desire of the adoptive parents to take a person, who is without a family, into a family. The amount of energy required up front to make an adoption work is staggering. It is established that way to eliminate the faint-of-heart or those parents not committed to the process. The recipient of this unconditional and altruistic gesture may be blind to their own external circumstances (since he or she knows no other) and they are certainly blind to the historical hope the adopted parents and family have invested into making this relationship work.

Adoption, by its very nature is including in a family unit an individual who without the adoption would remain isolated, alone, abandoned and orphaned. It is an inclusive decision; the adopting person(s) notes and makes the conscious decision to give the adoptee the gift of a family. The choice is not made to treat the orphan and stranger as such but rather, to lovingly embrace and encompass them into the family unit. It becomes incumbent upon the recipient to take full advantage of that generous offer. In natural adoptions, this can be an immensely difficult journey due to past hurts, pain, dysfunction and trauma. It is this hurt and trauma that formulates the bedrock of the challenges found in the journey of adoption. Marshall Schechter, a psychiatrist in private practice in Beverly Hills, California, reported in 1960 that adoptees were 100 times more

¹³⁹ Ibid., 16.

likely than non-adoptees to present a range of serious emotional problems.¹⁴⁰ It is essential for all involved; natural family, parents, friends, teachers, and health care providers to have a full and complete handle on the issues that adopted children face; ideally prior to the adoption. Bascom and McKelvey, in their book *The Complete Guide to Foreign Adoption*, list the four most common long-term problems in all foreign adopted children: 1) Attachment Disorder, 2) Hepatitis B, 3) Challenged children: physical disabilities acquired due to birth defects, chronic health conditions, sensory handicaps, and 4) Developmental disorders.¹⁴¹ A new vocabulary must be learned to understand the emotional baggage that the adopted person is bringing into the family dynamic. Terms like Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD),¹⁴² Conduct Disorder,¹⁴³ and

¹⁴⁰ Marshall D. Schechter, "Observations on Adopted Children," The Adoption History Project, 1960 [online; available from <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~adoption/studies/SchechterOAC.htm>; Internet] accessed 5 October 2006.

¹⁴¹ Bascom and McKelvey, 4.

¹⁴² Facts for Families, "Children With Oppositional Defiant Disorder," (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, No. 72, December 1999 [available online <http://www.aacap.org/page.ww?name=Children+With+Oppositional+Defiant+Disorder&ion=Facts+for+Families>], accessed 5 October 2006. In children with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), there is an ongoing pattern of uncooperative, defiant, and hostile behavior toward authority figures that seriously interferes with the youngster's day-to-day functioning.

¹⁴³ Glossary of Symptoms and Illnesses, "Conduct Disorder," (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, No. 33, 2006 [available online <http://www.aacap.org/page.ww?name=Children+With+Oppositional+Defiant+Disorder&ion=Facts+for+Families>], accessed 5 October 2006. Teenagers with conduct disorder have a repetitive and persistent pattern of behavior in which they violate the rights of others, or violate norms or rules that are appropriate to their age.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD),¹⁴⁴ Mood Disorders, Depression or Bipolar Disorder, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD),¹⁴⁵ Attachment Disorder (AD), and Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD).^{146 147} These terms, while foreign concepts to most healthy family units, must at least become familiar to look for the signs of dysfunction and lack of family integration with the adopted child. Often the landscape of adoption is littered with a central focus of attachment or bonding issues. Bascom and McKelvey state that what dominates the “mental health problems in foreign adoptees is “reactive attachment disorder” (failure of the adopted child to make emotional attachments to his new parents) and a combined disorder of attachment failure with

¹⁴⁴ Facts for Families, “Children Who Can’t Pay Attention/ADHD,” (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, No. 6, July 2004 [available online <http://www.aacap.org/page.ww?section=Facts+for+Families&name=Children+Who+Can+%27t+Pay+Attention%2FADHD>], accessed 5 October 2006. The ADHD child often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities, often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities, often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly, often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish tasks.

¹⁴⁵ Facts for Families, “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD),” (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, No. 70, 2006 [available online <http://www.aacap.org/page.ww?section=Glossary+of+Symptoms+and+Illnesses&name=Post-Traumatic+Stress+Disorder+%28PTSD%29>], accessed 5 October 2006. PTSD can occur when a teenager experiences a shocking, unexpected event that is outside the range of usual human experience. The trauma is usually so extreme that it can overwhelm their coping mechanisms and create intense feelings of fear and helplessness.

¹⁴⁶ Facts for Families, “Reactive Attachment Disorder,” (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, No. 85, December 2002 [available online <http://www.aacap.org/page.ww?name=Reactive+Attachment+Disorder&ion=Facts+for+Families>], accessed 5 October 2006. Reactive Attachment Disorder is a complex psychiatric illness that can affect young children. It is characterized by serious problems in emotional attachments to others and usually presents by age 5. Severe colic and/or feeding difficulties, failure to gain weight, detached and unresponsive behavior, difficulty being comforted, preoccupied and/or defiant behavior, and inhibition or hesitancy in social interactions are all symptoms of a RAD child.

¹⁴⁷ Bascom and McKelvey, 7.

pervasive development delays.”¹⁴⁸ RAD is the failure of a child to make emotional attachments to parental figures, usually due to neglect or abuse during the first two years of life or from repeated bonding breaks with caregivers, such as multiple moves within foster-care home system.¹⁴⁹ RAD left misdiagnosed or untreated has severe consequences for both the adoptee and the family whom adopted.¹⁵⁰ Losses prior to adoption impact the quality of attachment in adoption with subsequent developmental delays occurring as a result of interruptions in the normal developmental process.¹⁵¹

Normative Attachment Process

It is an obvious statement to make that adoption always involves losses and that all adopted children have experienced loss or they wouldn't need a family. This loss has a subsequent impact upon the bonding process. This paper will now examine what is the normative bonding process. The process of attachment and what is a normative child development time line and what is missing in the life of the adoptive person is the bedrock of most of the issues adoptees face. When there is a breach in the process of attachment; disorder occurs. Attachment is an emotional bond or tie to somebody or something. Attachment is a necessary process for survival; an infant is totally dependant upon parents or caregivers for everything pertaining to life and death. Infants lack any ability to care for or nurture themselves. When an infant has a need, food, soiled diaper,

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 6, 7.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 21.

¹⁵⁰ My family received a misdiagnosis regarding Reactive Attachment Disorder that cost of years of treatment and progress.

¹⁵¹ Keck and Kupecky, 17.

fatigue he or she expresses that need through crying or throwing an infant tantrum. In a healthy normative situation a parent or caregiver responds to that need. The infant cognitively realizes that the need will be met and they can relax and trust in the ability of their caregiver to provide for them. It is this repetitive process that bonding, trust, security and attachment is nurtured. This process of bonding occurs through eye contact, holding, feeding and it occurs hundreds of thousands of times during the first three years of life.¹⁵² For the healthy person, reared in a functional environment, normal attachment and bonding occurs as needs are met. A child's first 18-36 months are critical for the process of bonding. It is during this time that the infant is exposed in a healthy situation to love, nurturing, and life sustaining care. The child learns that if he has needs someone will gratify that need, and the gratification leads to the development of his trust in others.¹⁵³

For the orphan and adopted individual, when crying goes unmet or a diaper unchanged, fear and insecurity get rooted in the individual and deep survival mechanisms are instilled that potentially hinder and paralyze them in their ability to bond and form connectivity or attachment with other individuals. Nancy Thomas, who's Christ like character as reflected in her raising of over 100 children with RAD, frames the foundation of attachment disorder saying,

When this initial attachment is lacking, children lack the ability to form and maintain loving, intimate relationships. They grow up with an impaired ability to trust that the world is a safe place and that others will take good care of them.

¹⁵² Nancy Thomas, "What is Attachment Disorder/Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD)?" Families by Design, September 17, 2005, [available online <http://nancythomasparenting.com/rad/html>] accessed on 5 October 2006.

¹⁵³ Keck and Kupecky, 48.

Without this sense of trust, children believe that they must be hyper vigilant about their own safety. Unfortunately, their idea about safety prevents them from allowing others to take care of them in a loving, nurturing manner. They become extremely demanding and controlling in response to their fear. Emotionally they believe that if they do not control their world then they will die.¹⁵⁴

Relationship & Risk

The fruit in the life of the adopted person bears witness to their assimilation in the perspective family. At adoption the disenfranchised person is placed into a family unit. It is at this point where the real work must begin. Relationships require risk – risk incurred with all parties involved in the journey of adoption. A righteous and noble act such as a adopting an orphan child may not result in the desired outcome because of the traumas from the past even though they occurred at such a young and tender age. That orphan may not be capable to connect with the family in a bonding relationship that is reflective of the original intent of the parents that generated the adoption in the first place. It is the obvious contention of this thesis that the core of adoption revolves around the concept of relationship. The central thrust of relationships is based on the concept of reciprocity, which simply states, “you give me something in return for my giving you something.” It is this pattern of reciprocity that the orphan is lovingly invited into. For adopted children, there must be reciprocity to grow and jump the hurdles that this new family dynamic requires.

Orphans can be stunted in their ability to give at all; for an orphan to give incites their vulnerability and therefore that risk is too great to take. The essence of any relationship is based on successful reciprocity. The health of the adoptive process is predicated upon this principle. The question then becomes a matter of how the adopted

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

does his or her part to engage in reciprocal relationships? Since the key ingredient to any relationship is a clearly defined conscience, the sense of right and wrong, and a sense of guilt if a relational infraction has occurred, it makes the journey with orphans precarious at best. How do you deepen a relationship with someone if one party in the relationship is incapable of feeling remorse or sadness when they violate the bonds of that relationship?

Role of the adoptees in adoption

The most significant components necessary for the adoptee in the process of adoption are desire and hard work. Desire is the precursor to hard work since it forms the necessary motivation for the hard work necessary to push through the trauma and pain built up from years of neglect and aloneness that predicated their being orphaned in the first place. Desire in an orphan is difficult to read since their mind has been etched with a survivalist mentality. Survival is a skill set that they needed at one time to stay alive; there is celebration for that skill because the orphan would not have made it through the pitfalls of life without that skill set, however, it is a long and arduous journey to get the orphan to replace that skill set with another once it is not needed anymore. This process of letting go of one skill set to be replaced by another is the journey every orphan must face. Their desire to move beyond survival must be a goal established for them. For any successful adoption to occur, desire and hard work must work in tandem, on all sides of the equation; on the part of the adoptive family and on part of the person being adopted.

Engagement in reciprocal relationships

For the orphan, relationships are hard to formulate. Since their hearts are so broken and they are afraid to risk again, they have very few close friends and as we have seen, have great difficulty forming an attachment with anything or anyone. To do so would put them out of control and thus threaten their very existence as a person. They feel it is safer to live life alone than to bond or connect with anyone or anything. It is not until the orphan is in need that an engagement in reciprocal relationships can occur. Again their pain threshold is so great from years of trauma and neglect that great

measures must be taken to achieve health and wholeness in their lives. Normative parental disciplines, such as deprivation of privileges, are not optimal in the life of a child with attachment issues because they are simply not attached to anything at all. For example, remove a bike from a healthy ten year old as a punishment for a relational infraction and change will quickly come. Remove a bike from a ten year old with attachment issues and there will be no reaction due to the fact they have not connected with that bike so therefore there isn't any loss to them. Extrapolate this principle into real issues such as connectivity with siblings, parents, and authority figures and one can understand the intense dilemma that faces both the parents of these children and the children themselves as they move through life longing for substantive relationships with those around them.¹⁵⁵

Adoption and Control Issues

Every person at some level wrestles with issues of control in their lives. In a spiritual application it manifests itself with giving control over to God and His rulership in our lives. In a normative, age appropriate, and developmental journey life teaches us that control must be given up for a greater benefit. A child may reason thinking, "If I give up my right NOT to do my homework I will get a good grade and then privileges and rewards will come into my life." This progressive scale moves on, as we get older with issues as mundane as getting to work on time to the right to drink and not drive. All of life is a give and take in the arena of control and relinquishing it.

¹⁵⁵ We experienced this reality in two dramatic fashions as we placed Caroline in two different residential facilities over the course of three years. Each time we dropped her off in a new location with people she had never been with, leaving her adoptive family and all the security it offered her she never emoted at all. Not a tear, not any affection, simply a flat line survival non-attachment attitude and reality.

For the orphan, this central focus of who is in control is foundational to their acting out and power struggles and it is all based on the trauma the orphan has experienced. “Traumatized children are in a bind: they do not want to rely on others in life, but they cannot meet their needs or achieve their wants without others. This is the ongoing and usually, unsuccessful paradigm for these children. If they are interested in you, or more precisely, in what you can do for them, they will often resent you because they need you.”¹⁵⁶ The challenge for adoptive parents is that raising a traumatized child is so often counter intuitive. They may think that love is enough to heal. While noble, it is naïve. Hurt children are often so frightened by intimacy they will go to any lengths to avoid it. They are afraid to love because people in their past, those who should have loved and protected them, instead, hurt and abused them. Their deep assumption is that their adoptive parents, like everyone in their past, will hurt them and leave them too. When that happens, it will be much easier to be left by people they hate.¹⁵⁷ In adoptions, a loss of control early on in the life of the adoptee results in the person reliving the deep-seated emotions they felt when they were abandoned. The byproduct of this loss of control is a hyper-vigilant need to control all of life around them. The world becomes safe for them if they are in control of all of life. The person does not have the ability to develop nor connect in normal healthy relationships. Which results in the formation of an attachment or bonding issue. Their inability to connect in a meaningful manner to those that are reaching out and extending love to them is thwarted and stunted. Without an understanding of this fundamental, orphan issue, any parents who adopt will fall into the

¹⁵⁶ Dave, Ziegler, PHD., *Traumatic Experience and The Brain* (Phoenix, Arizona: Acadia Publishing, 2002) 83, 83.

¹⁵⁷ Keck and Kupecky, 195.

trap of assuming that since they “rescued” the child, they should reciprocate with honor, manners, and a heart of thankfulness; after all their new parents could have left them alone and abandoned. Like all mental and emotional conditions it is difficult to remember that there is a real problem since, on the outside, the orphan may appear to have it all together. Charming and cute are two words most used with orphans; this is one of the means that they control and manipulate both people and their environment.¹⁵⁸

Their inability to form attachment and bond in healthy relationships will haunt them into their adult lives and perpetuate the cycle of sin and dysfunction passed on by the parents who originally abandoned them in the first place. This ungodly pattern goes against the stated pattern of not being alone and being in community with one another. There is potentially much pain on both sides of the relationship in adoptive situations and it all finds its central focus on the ability of the adopted person to attach or bond with their adopted family. Since the primary foundation of all adoptions is a loss, it is incumbent upon those seeking to adopt to do the hard work necessary to understand the issues that frame up the challenges of natural adoption. Keck and Kupecky stated, “A child who managed to survive by using his wits and lying, cheating, stealing, acting offensive to prevent sexual advances, remaining quiet when questioned, etc., will not release those mechanisms easily. He may not even be able to see how those behaviors are wrong, for

¹⁵⁸ Foster W. Cline, MD., *Understanding and Treating The Severely Disturbed Child* (Evergreen, CO: Evergreen Consultants in Human Behavior 1979), 87-109. This book presents a listing of the evidence of RAD in a child’s life; superficially engaging and charming behavior, indiscriminate affections toward strangers, lack of affection with parents on their terms, little eye contact with parents, on normal terms, persistent nonsense questions and incessant chatter, inappropriate demanding and clingy behavior, lying about the obvious (crazy lying), stealing, destructive behavior to self, to others, and to material things, abnormal eating patterns, no impulse controls, lags in learning, abnormal speech patterns, poor peer relationships, lack of cause and effect thinking, lack of conscience, cruelty to animals, preoccupation with fire.

without them he believes he would have died.”¹⁵⁹ Because he trusts no one, he never learns to identify with other people and cannot develop compassion, empathy, love or any of the other positive emotions that result from interaction.¹⁶⁰ “The types of problems that adoptive parents see in their children are most likely the result of breaks in attachment that occur within the first three years. And they are problems that impair, and even cripple, a child’s ability to trust and bond or attach to other human beings.”¹⁶¹

Narratives

For the adoptee, the narrative of life is a great angst. They have been torn or disengaged from their past, their present is a skill of survival, and to hope and dream of a future is too elusive. To the traumatized child the past and the future are of little importance because the only relevant time is the present. These children have difficulty distinguishing the past from the present. “The child struggles to distinguish traumatic events in the past from fears in the present, due to the robust traumatic memories imprinted in the child’s brain.”¹⁶² Essential people are missing from the narratives of the orphan, making it difficult at best to feel connected.”¹⁶³ “Three general principles form the basis of a traumatized child’s inner working model of the world. Survival is foremost. Second, there is a great deal of bad for any good you can find in the world.

¹⁵⁹ Keck and Kupecky, 27.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 49.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 29.

¹⁶² Ziegler, 102.

¹⁶³ Betty Jean Lifton, *Journey of the Adopted Self* (Basic Books, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 1994), 37.

Finally, immediacy: it is now or never, you cannot count on getting another chance.”¹⁶⁴

For the adoptee there is a void of a concrete narrative, painfully reminded by the loss, often of baby pictures, relatives, familiar people who bear a resemblance to the adopted person, common language for an international adoptee, and memories to tie them to the past. They languish in a present filled with secret places tucked away to which they can escape and fantasize about.¹⁶⁵ They dream of a past where they were protected, a present where they belong and a future that they hope in. Freud called this the family romance.¹⁶⁶ Adoptee fantasies serve a different purpose from those of the non-adopted; they are an attempt to repair one’s broken narrative, to dream it along.¹⁶⁷ And while the adopted family longs to replace their broken narrative with a healthy model, the orphan rejects their advances because the fear of risking again is just too painful. What is formulated in the heart of the adopted person is a deep anger that finds its expression in culturally inappropriate ways.

¹⁶⁴ Ziegler, 99.

¹⁶⁵ Lifton, 60.

¹⁶⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Collected Papers 5*, “Family Romances, 1909,” (New York: Basic Books, 1959), 74-78 [available online from The Adoption History Project, <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~adoption/archive/FreudFR.htm>] accessed on 5 October 2006. “There are only too many occasions on which a child is slighted, or at least feels he has been slighted, on which he feels he is not receiving the whole of his parents’ love, and, most of all, on which he feels regrets at having to share it with his brothers and sisters. His sense that his own affection is not being fully reciprocated then finds a vent in the idea, which is often consciously recollected from early childhood, of being a stepchild or an adopted child. The latter stage in the development of the neurotic’s estrangement from his parents, begun in this manner, might be described as “the neurotic’s family romance.”

¹⁶⁷ Lifton, 62.

Anger that adoptees have built up over the years can erupt as uncontrollable rage. There is an unexpressed anger that they are adopted; anger that they are different, anger that they are powerless to know their origins, anger that they cannot express their real feelings in a family climate of denial. When this anger is allowed to build in a child over the years, it will eventually surface as aggression-stealing, setting fires, destroying property-and if left unresolved as violence.¹⁶⁸

The solutions to this bleak future are, 1) possess a through understanding of the complex emotional issues surrounding the adoptee, 2) have a strong and understanding support network of friends, counselors, and support people around the adoptive parents, 3) Manage expectations and futuristic hopes and dreams, 4) revisit the original intention of the adoption on a constant basis. If all four of these can be held in a healthy and realistic manner there is a far greater expectation of a successful adoption occurring than if all involved in the complex journey of adoption have idealized the process.

Chapter Conclusion

This paper will now conclude this section on the literary review by drawing a spiritual application that bears relevance to this paper's discussion. A reiteration of some key components to natural adoption and their application and transference into spiritual adoption will be explored.

Adoption portrays a glimpse into the heart of God and what He goes through as mankind, through adoption, is invited into His spiritual family; the church. That process is reflected profoundly in natural adoption in two major ways, 1) as this research has concluded, due to the amount of time, energy, money, and emotional investment necessary to achieve a successful adoption, 2) man, even in a fallen state, reflects the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 91.

image of God by embarking upon the journey of adoption and thus whether by omission or commission reflects that image.

It is essential to remember that adoption, both spiritual and naturally, share two essential ingredients to remain balanced: 1) adoption is a journey and 2) both share a centrality around the word relationship. Adoption is not an event but a journey, a journey mankind is invited into spiritually by a God who represents Himself to us as a Father and naturally by the adoptive parents who choose to include the person into their family dynamic. The Doctrine of Adoption and natural adoption both share as a central focus the word relationship. As stated, God restores to relationship lost and fallen humanity through His grace and mercy. While any add mixture of human effort serves to nullify this unconditional grace, extended from God toward fallen humanity, there still is a reciprocity that is required to maintain and deepen the relational fidelity between God and man. All the relations which God establishes with His children are of a reciprocal kind, as He makes very clear in presenting Himself to us as One who hears and answers prayer and who gives us the freedom to come personally before Him with our petitions. Jesus exhibited this in His own filial relation with the Father, into which He incorporates us thereby making His own relation as Son to the Heavenly Father the ground and pattern of our reciprocal relations with God.¹⁶⁹ The journey of adoption is the laying aside of old pattern and habits that at one time were necessary. This requires a tremendous amount of hard and difficult work. The work ethic necessary to attach, connect, and be in relationships of reciprocity is a complex and difficult journey that is not for the faint hearted. Yet for God to have His way in the individual, it is a necessary journey.

¹⁶⁹ Torrance, 11.

In a spiritual context the desire that the believer faces to grow in Christ-like attitude and complexion is predicated only upon their desire to do so. While recognizing the complex role of human will and desire versus the Holy Spirit's impetus in the heart of the believer, there exists a balance of both in divine tension.

Lastly, adoption in both spiritual and natural contexts, restores the narrative to a person's life. Our postmodern culture has successfully removed the patterns and purposes behind life's situation and circumstances by eliminating the Author of life. Life simple cannot make sense with out an Author behind both our pain and confusion. Only in a biblical worldview do the three time frames of past, present, and future coalesce

CHAPTER 4

THE CHURCH AS GOD'S ADOPTIVE FAMILY

The word church can be as potent as the word adoption. God chose to identify Himself using family terms (Ephesians 3:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18) that due to their commonality would elicit strong emotion, either positive or negative, from its intended audience. From an academic perspective, Louis Berkhof defines the church as, “consisting of those who are partakers of Christ and of the blessings of salvation that are in Him. The reformed conception is that Christ, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, unites men with Himself, endows them with true faith and thus constitutes the Church as His body.”¹⁷⁰ While a sound answer, it can be perceived as sterile and devoid of the communal relational component that is deeply reflective of the triune nature of God. The church is by its visible nature, made of people who have “A bond [that] exists between all who are in Christ that is unique and transcends all other human relationships.” This relationship exists between people because they share a common relationship to Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9).¹⁷¹ This common bonding into a covenant community, wrapped around words like brother, sister, father, honor, one another, us, we, etc., are not easily reflected because community is not easily reflected. Again, quoting Eugene Peterson, “Community is intricate and complex. It consists of many people of various moods, ideas, needs, experiences, gifts and injuries, desires and disappointments, blessings and losses, intelligence and stupidity, living in proximity and in respect for one another, and

¹⁷⁰ Berkhof, 553.

¹⁷¹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974), 588.

believingly in worship of God. It is not easy and it is not simple.”¹⁷² The lack of ease and simplicity as reflected in our culture presents a challenge for the church to mirror and pattern the relational component of the Trinity. All theology finds its practical life application in some form or fashion. For example, how a person reasons biblically regarding the correct approach to the handling of personal monies (i.e. tithing, giving, mission’s work) is more reflective by examination of their checkbook than their verbal presentation ever will be. The church cannot embrace a working understanding of the Trinity and not reflect the principles inherent in that foundational doctrine. This paper has demonstrated that God in His essence is a relational being. There are logical ramifications and an outworking of His nature displayed on the earth. By theologically and practically embracing the concept of God’s relational nature, man is invited to find its practical application in his vertical relationships so that he might effectively display God’s glory and that God would be honored. Eugene Peterson writes, “By insisting that God is a three-personed, Father, Son and Holy Spirit – God inherently relational, God in community – we are given an understanding that God is emphatically personal. The only way that God reveals himself is personally. God is personal under the personal designations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and never in any other way: never impersonally as a force or an influence, never abstractly as an idea or truth or principle. And of so, of course he can’t be known impersonally or abstractly.”¹⁷³ God seeks to adopt His orphaned children as a reflection of His nature. It is based upon man being an image bearer of God that a consideration of adoption for the disenfranchised person is even

¹⁷² Peterson, *Christ Plays In Ten Thousand Places*, 252.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 304.

considered. God adopts to include man into the shared community and fellowship that has always existed in the Trinity. The church expresses this principle as well when it assimilates new believers into its established community. The church community can struggle with the process of adoption just as the natural family can. Fundamentally the issues can run concurrent in both the dynamic of the natural family as well as the spiritual family: the church. Issues such as rejection, connectivity, bonding, and relational reciprocity are common denominators in both spheres. The church has sadly struggled in this arena when spiritual orphans are suddenly adopted by God and placed in the church and the established “family” can’t handle it because the new adoptee doesn’t look, think or act like them. Church history is riddled with the “older brothers’ and sisters’” inability to embrace the one who God has suddenly chosen to adopt. The prodigal son’s older brother was deeply troubled and angry (Luke 15:28) at his father’s display of forgiveness and restoration to a younger brother whom he felt did not warrant such grace. His inability to connect with his father’s heart was reflective of a lack of intimacy between himself and the father he lived with. This pattern can be reflective in the church today simply because it is too easy to walk into church in a participatory mode and completely bypass the heart of God by going through the perfunctory motions of connecting with the community of believers, worshipping, and listening to preaching, and yet never connecting in an intimate way with the God behind all those activities. “People can think correctly and behave rightly and worship politely and still live badly – live anemically, live individualistically, self-enclosed lives lived bored and insipid and trivial lives.”¹⁷⁴ One can easily embrace justification, sanctification, and regeneration stopping

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 229.

short of adoption and missing the heart connectivity that is implicit in the familial language of adoption. Again these words can be safe, clinical, and easily embraced without feeling and pathos. The framing of the word adoption does not allow the emotions to be avoided. This emotionally stopping short has relational implications for all involved. How does one turn and embrace those around if those relationships are predicated only upon legal terms and language. The intimate language of the New Testament, words like brother, sister, father, us, we, and household all find their deepest expression, purpose and meaning from the language of the Trinity not from the language of an attorney. The church is expected to express the character of God. This expression is most appropriately achieved through the concept of the family and the language inherent in that representation. “When we are baptized into the community in the name of the Trinity, our lives become relational in a more thoroughgoing and deeper way than ever, not only with God but with the membership of the baptized.”¹⁷⁵

Ideally the church should be all about inclusion because it is a reflection of God, who is all about inclusion. He includes man in the shared life of the Trinity, He longs for restoration with man by giving him a gift of repentance, He fashions an eternity together with those He has chosen, all of this to include humanity. The adoptive family gives the orphan many things; they bestow a new name upon them, they give them an existing family to connect with, give them a narrative, and include them in the fullest expression to the dynamic of the family. They withhold nothing from them even though they have not earned nor deserve this grace. The church, as it is the practical expression of God’s inclusion for the now adopted person, has the opportunity to do the same. The adopted

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 304.

person walks into a new community of people where his/her expectation is to find a people who are image bearers of the invisible God. As they look around they find that they now have older brothers and sisters, younger siblings, relatives who have different skin colors, different languages, different shapes and sizes but all sharing the same name. They have a family now who can help them through the challenges of life that at one time they faced alone. Most significant they all share the same father since the promises of family are not limited to those born naturally into the family. The divine pattern is now fully extended to fallen humanity via the agency of the church. God's stated intention upon the creation of Adam, that it was not good that he was alone, is now implemented through the redemption of Jesus and expressed through the community of believers. Redemption and original intention have now come full circle. As fragile and broken as the church has and can be, it is still God's primary vehicle for relational connectivity and His choice to eradicate what was the first negative component of His created order; the aloneness of Adam. "The church represents the new creation and bears witness to the whole world that God will bring to completion the recreating activity that has called the church into being."¹⁷⁶ Christianity cannot be fully understood in purely individualistic terms. R. David Kaylor in *Paul's Covenant Community* writes, "The freedom preached by Paul was a freedom to participate in community, rather than an individual freedom."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ R. David Kaylor, *Paul's Covenant Community* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1988), 23.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Conclusion - Go and Love Again

A face down containment hold becomes necessary for a child that is acting out in an aggressive, violent manner. While administering this to our adoptive daughter, the Holy Spirit impressed upon my wife and I simultaneously that Caroline needed to come back to live with us after a two year absence where she lived in a residential treatment facility specializing in attachment disorder. The timing was providential and we both gained a brief glimpse into what Hosea must have felt when God asked him to go back and love Gomer again. God was asking us to go and love her again, even though we really did not want to because to the risks involved. For us it was like a Hosea “therefore” moment. At Caroline’s worst, God had extended to us the grace needed to take her back in our family. The timing of this became pivotal as this extension of grace and unconditional love actually became the deepest place of risk for Caroline to journey to in her emotional commitment to us. She would rather have us gone from her life than connect with us.¹⁷⁸ Her deepest anxiety was playing out in the drama of her life simply because we refused to go away. For both of us it became a struggle of wills. For her, in her brokenness and wounded heart, could she risk and trust again? For us, it was a struggle to image the character and nature of God to a lost daughter. She was hoping for us that we would fall for the behavioral issues and reject her again; by focusing on her actions and not the heart issue and pain causing the action, we would in essence be letting

¹⁷⁸ Caroline’s exact words were “I would rather the two of you be dead than have to deal with this.” 7/1/2006

her “off the hook” by allowing her to divert us away from what was central to the issue: unconditional love.¹⁷⁹

Caroline and pastoring have taught me that God never allows our initial rejection of Him to deter Him, He always looks past the rejection and behind the pain at the real issue and ministers to our core issues in our fallen nature. The defense mechanisms that people throw up at first blush are a diversion tactic to block their need to be in relationship with God and one another. If one allows distractions to divert him from the substantive issues, they are left undealt with and growth and community does not occur. To be successful in the adoptive process, be it either as a parent or a pastor, the management of expectations is essential. This paper will briefly explore this concept of managing expectations from two perspectives: parents and pastors.

For the journey as Christians, who are attempting to reflect the character and nature of God, adoption can be a soul wrestling experience; at times it becomes more about what is in us that God is after rather than the adoptee. This is true for both the parent and the pastor. I painfully remember sitting with Dr. Dave Ziegler an expert in adoptive issues and as a smile slowly crept across his face he told me, “This is all about you now Garry, every relationship you have people give something back to you.

Caroline does not have the ability to give back – this will teach you how to love

¹⁷⁹ I wish we had learned this lesson much sooner. Caroline’s acting out became increasingly more serious as she got older and as her old patterns did not get her the drama she was hoping for. By the time Caroline was 11 she had been to the Police department 3 times, suspended from school twice for threatening to kill her teacher, and then a classmate, been to the hospital for a drug overdose, caught lying, stealing and had become physically abusive to family members. Her entire behavior was based upon the principle of diversion. Her plan was to get us to focus on external things, thus getting angry and mad at her and then she did not have to deal with the mental and emotional challenges in her life.

unconditionally, a valuable lesson as a minister for you to learn if you want to represent Christ.” I realized that what was a stake was my ability to love regardless of her ability to give something back.

Parents

For parents involved in the adoptive process, a fresh reminder of the original intention of parents must be constantly monitored. For the parents, the simplistic goal of giving a person a better chance at life is foundational to success, getting in the way of that goal and thus making life far more complex is the altruistic goal of getting a daughter or son in the process. Adoptive parents must face the reality that while they are hoping for a connected and bonded son or daughter the adoptee’s personal history may be thwarting that process.¹⁸⁰ Every adoptive parent has hopes and expectations for their adopted child, this is normative and good. Without this hope why adopt in the first place? There must however be a fine balance of hope and reality. Parents can’t give up and yet they can’t give in. They can’t withhold their love and yet they must guard and protect their hearts so they have something left for others around them. They must deftly manage the expectations for their adopted child even though they might be expectations they can have for biological children. Normative concepts like success in school, values, and long term relationships must be hoped and prayed for like Abraham “in Hope and against Hope he believed (Romans 4:18).” And yet, somehow, expectations must be monitored and guarded since the adoptee will actually use those expectations as a means to manipulate and control the parents. Last October we were visiting Caroline in Oregon

¹⁸⁰ My wife made the humorous comment at the height of our troubles with Caroline “I thought I was getting Shirley Temple but instead I got Attila the Hun.”

for her 13th birthday. It was a horrible visit, her desire to work hard was non-existent, and counseling was a waste of everyone's time. We approached her one last time during that trip, on her birthday, in hope against hope. As we said goodbye I walked toward the car and kept dreaming and hoping for a prodigal daughter moment where she raced across the pumpkin patch, with tears in her eyes, wanting to become more than a hired slave. I glanced over my shoulder mustering up all my faith and hope and found not a running daughter but an empty field. To say it was not painful would be a lie. To feel the sting of rejection again, to experience the hurt and anguish in my heart was painful. It is at moments like that when the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit reinforces the call to Hosea, "Go and love again."

Pastors

For pastors involved in the adoptive process (ministry), they start with the purest of motives, "Let me give my life vocationally to the cause of Christ and find significance." "Let me pursue this noble and lofty goal and my life will make a difference on the earth." The unexpected turns and twists along the road can discourage the strongest of ministers. Ministers start out with the purest of motives, the noblest of intentions; naively they think that by doing the right thing, God will bless, people will appreciate and ministry will be received. To watch the expansion of the church down the street while your ministry remains stagnant is a journey filled with emotional distress. To pour your heart and soul into people and then have an eldership terminate you without cause, is a shattering of dreams and expectations. The challenge is to revisit the original intention after being rejected time and time again. To still feel the same refreshing component of serving people, one must revisit the original intention of why one was in

ministry in the first place. As a pastor, all too often I have watched people reject God again and again and turn back to sin and its illusionary promises. My deep pain and disappointment are but a shallow representation of how their decision to break the relational integrity between themselves and the God who shaped them, grieves the heart of God. Yet, as image bearers of God pastors cannot allow people and the decisions they make, however poor and foolish, shape and determine the extent and limitations of their ministry. I painfully remember a conversation with a couple that had been attending our church for four years. It started off fairly promising. "Pastor we love the church, our four children love the youth group, we have never felt more connected to people, we have grown more in the four years we have been here more than any other place, but God is moving us to the church down the road." At that moment I faced a choice, to feel rejected and withdraw my support and love or share in my relational fidelity with them. I felt confusion but I would NOT withhold and I would honor what they felt the Lord was calling them to do. If I did the former I would be violating the office of a pastor and misrepresenting the image of God to this family. I succeeded in doing the professionally responsible act at the moment but winced a bit as risk reemerged with others who desired to walk in relationship, whether with myself or the church I serve in. I had to make the decision not to allow my fears, my insecurities, and my relational pain and confusion to determine the boundaries of my ministry. For pastors, this scenario is played out countless times in the normative course of their role. How a pastor handles the rejection and the shattering of dreams and hopes actually determines the well being of all involved.

Life as a minister would be far simpler and controllable if we could simply withdraw and hide behind big theological terms when dealing with people. We are not

allowed to, however, and instead we model Christ-likeness to them. Jesus became one with us to identify with us and share in our journey called humanity. He lovingly invites us into what He has always experienced; life in community with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and while managing His expectations, He has a hope we can reflect Him well. It is at moments like that when the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit reinforces the call to Hosea, “Go and love again.”

This paper will conclude by re-referencing Berkhof’s comments regarding repentance and how it finds its practical outworking in both natural and spiritual adoption. Berkhof defines two components of repentance when he states, “First there is an intellectual element. There is a change of view, recognition of sin as involving personal guilt, defilement, and helplessness.”¹⁸¹ For both the natural and spiritual orphan this is a difficult place to come to. Sin and development issues harden the conscience and provide the grounds for a deep reluctance to assume personal liability for their actions. This chimes in to a current, cultural worldview of victimization, which eliminates any personal liability. As a result, relational reciprocity is a difficult journey to begin. But, begin it must, for the intention of adoption both naturally and spiritually is to take the person who is alone and to assimilate them into relationship. The adoptee bears the responsibility of having faith and therefore trusting in those they are now in relationship with. The success and time frame of this, as we have looked at, is contingent upon the historical indicators and the will and volitional aspect of the adoptee. Free will and choice cannot be violated in the process and personal responsibility cannot be glossed over by an adoptee taking on a victim’s mentality. While acknowledging that they may

¹⁸¹ Berkhof, 486.

not be responsible for what happened (abandonment) to them, they are responsible for their present and future decisions, which is in part determined by the amount of desire, and hard work that they put into the restoration and growth process. Secondly, there is an emotional element.¹⁸² There then must be a change of feeling, manifesting itself in sorrow for sin committed against the person they are in relationship with; parents or God. This change of feeling, coupled with sorrow, finds its logical manifestation in the engagement of the risk necessary to push past the pain and submerging of any feelings to be in true community with people. While attempting to explain this principle to Caroline, I asked her when she felt joy and happiness. Because she is fearful of feeling *anything* her response of surface joy and pleasure wrapped around movies and things was not a surprise to me. To be in relationship one with another is to feel deep emotion for and with people; to share in celebrations and support them in their life's disappointments. This is very difficult if a person is unable to feel anything. The concept of perichosis is that when one weeps the other tastes salt.¹⁸³ This reflection of the Trinity is what we again, are called to model. To paraphrase Berkhof, "Although God is the author of adoption, it is of great importance to stress the fact that there is a certain co-operation of man in adoption."¹⁸⁴

Since the dawn of creation, God has relentlessly pursued humanity in a desire for intimacy. Mankind has responded to His overtures with both acceptance and continuous rejection. The continuous acceptance component brings honor and glory to Him by

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Kruger, *The Great Dance*, Introduction.

¹⁸⁴ Berkhof, 490.

reflecting His character and image on the earth. The continuous rejection component triggers a vivid demonstration of the essence of His being by His continued pursuit of fallen humanity. For those considering natural adoption, please do. Natural adoption mirrors the heart of God toward those in need. Do it however with your eyes fully open to the issues and the journey that adoption involves. Naiveté and nobility will thwart the process and elongate the pain. For those in ministry, the same can be said. Naiveté and nobility can get in the way of the journey of giving one's life to people. It is natural to withdraw one's heart after getting rejected, time and time again. To withdraw emotionally is to give those we serve a shallow representation of the nature and essence of God. The study of theology provides many escape clauses to mask pain: big words, safe doctrines, and high pulpits to hide behind. Jesus stepped into our world and felt what we felt to become one with us. Success in ministry demands we do the same. We, as the Church, rest in supreme confidence that God's fullest intention for man will never be thwarted. God's adoption of us into His family, the church, will have its desired result; man restored to the image of God. May we not lose hope and expectation, and may we forever hear the admonition spoken to Hosea in every arena of our lives, "Go and love again."

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