

men do and dream, the whole lives of men, inspired and blessed by the Church.

And finally, the Church displays the image of the ideal Servant Jesus in so far as its work in time means suffering. The proof that the Church is redeeming men is its suffering. Suffering binds the Church to the here and the now of saving men, for suffering is never something in the abstract. But the suffering of the Church not only indicates its involvement with the history of mankind; it is also the earnest of the glory to come at the Parousia. It is the unique paradox of the Church that it can rejoice in its adversity, mindful, as Barnabas and Paul, 'that we have to undergo many hardships to get into the Kingdom of God' (Ac. 14:22). The Church never forgets that the triumph of the Resurrection likewise belongs to the Suffering Servant.

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HUIOTHESIA: THE WORD AND THE INSTITUTION

The word *huiiothesia* (adoption) appears five times in the epistles of St Paul.¹ Since he is the only New Testament writer to use this particular term, in fact the only inspired author to do so, as the word does not occur in the Septuagint either,² the question naturally arises: where did St Paul get it? Did he coin it as a suitable expression of his own idea? Or did he find it ready-made for him in the language of the day? And what about the institution itself? What custom, if any, does St Paul have in mind? Of what is he thinking as he formulates his doctrine on the Christian status?

There is no doubt that throughout the Old Testament Israel as a whole is metaphorically called Yahweh's son.³ Likewise the kings were often called sons by Yahweh.⁴ In the later sapiential literature⁵ even the individual is called 'son of God.'⁶ The purpose of this essay,

¹ Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5

² L. Cerfaux, *La Théologie de l'Eglise* (2nd ed., Paris 1948), p. 24. A quick glance through the various biblical lexica will show that all writers treating the word *huiiothesia* are agreed on this. The term is not listed in E. Hatch and A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and the other Greek Versions of the Old Testament* (Oxford 1897-1906).

³ cf. Ex. 4:22f.; Deut. 14:1; Ps. 73:15; Is. 1:2-4; 30:1-9; 43:6; 45:11; 63:8; Jer. 3:14; 31:9-20; Os. 2:1; 11:1

⁴ cf. 2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 28:6; Ps. 2:7; 89:28

⁵ cf. Sir. 4:10; Wis. 2:16ff.

⁶ Further examples of this metaphorical usage and its development can be seen in H. Strack-P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash* (Munich 1926), vol. III, pp. 15-20.

however, is to inquire whether by using the word *huiiothesia* St Paul is thinking only of this metaphorical relationship between Yahweh and His creature or whether he has something more concrete in mind.

The study of history reveals that the practice of taking an outsider, of incorporating him into a family, considering him as one's own child and bestowing on him all the rights and obligation of a son existed among many of the peoples of the ancient Near East, for example in India,¹ Babylon² and Nuzu.³

Greek literature and inscriptions preceding the Christian era show that the term *huiiothesia* and the corresponding institution were known among the Greeks from at least the fifth century before Christ from the time of Pindar (522-433 B.C.) and Herodotus (484-425 B.C.).⁴ Nor did *huiiothesia* denote merely an imaginary occurrence; the practice itself was a common event among the Greeks of that time. This is evident from the frequency with which the formula 'A., son of B., *kath' huiiothesian* de son of C. . . ' occurs in the pre-Christian inscriptions of the Aegean islands.⁵

References to *huiiothesia* are also found in the papyri dating from the early centuries after Christ.⁶ From an example taken from one of these papyri we can at the same time ascertain the notion of *huiiothesia* as the accepting of a stranger and establishing him as one's own son and imposing on him all the rights and obligations of sonship. We may cite P. Oxy. IX, 1206, 8 (A.D. 335): 'We agree, Heracles and his wife Isarion on the one part, that we have given away to you Horion, for adoption our son Patermouthis, aged about two years, and I Horion on the other part, that I have him as my own son so that the rights proceeding from succession to my inheritance shall be maintained for him.'⁷

In like manner a study of Roman history reveals that adoption was an accepted institution among that people in the times of Cicero

¹ S. Many, 'Adoption' in *Dictionaire de la Bible*, F. Vigoroux (Paris 1899), vol. 1, col. 229

² D. J. Theron, 'Adoption in the Pauline Corpus' in *Evangelical Quarterly* xxviii (1956), p. 7. A. van den Born, 'Adoptie' in *Bijbels Woordenboek*, etc. (Roermond 1941), col. 27

³ W. H. Rossell, 'New Testament Adoption, Graeco-Roman or Semitic?' in *Journal of Biblical Literature* lxxxi (1952), p. 234

⁴ G. Wilkuis and L. Grimm, *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum in Libros Novi Testamenti* (Lipsia: Zehl 1903), *sub voce*

⁵ A. Deisman, *Bible Studies* (Edinburgh 1901), p. 239

⁶ P. Benoit, 'Nous gemissons, attendant la délivrance de notre corps' (Rom. 8:23) —Melange Lebreton—in *Recherches de Science Religieuse* xxxix (1951), p. 270. H. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Dictionary* (new edition, Oxford 1925-40), *sub voce*. F. Preisigke, *Wörterbuch der griechische Papyrusurkunden* (Berlin 1927), *sub voce*. F. Zorell, *Novi Testamenti lexicon graecum* (editio altera, Paris 1931), *sub voce*

⁷ J. Moulton and H. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, illustrated from the papyri and other non-literary sources (London 1926-9), *sub voce huiiothesia*

(106-43 B.C.), Virgil (70-19 B.C.), Tacitus (A.D. 55?-117?) and Suetonius (2nd century A.D.), since all these writers refer to it.¹

Etymology

For the etymological explanation of the word *huiiothesia* the writers in the various lexica are quite uniform in noting the first occurrences of the term, its meaning and later usage. Thus the writers in Liddell-Scott, though they do not analyse the word into its component parts, insinuate its derivation by developing the notion of *huiiothesia* through the verb form *huiiotheteō*, to adopt as a son, and the verbal adjective *huiiothetos*, adopted as a son.² H. Stephan also qualifies the notion of *huiiothesia* by referring to the verb *huiiotheteō*, where he stresses the notion of action in *theteō* (poicō) as against the notion *huiios phusei*, son by nature.³ Fr Zorell explains the term as *huiion thesthai tina*, *huiios thetos*.⁴ *Huiiothesia* is accordingly defined as *adoptio*, *adoptatio*,⁵ *die Annahme an Kindestatt*, *die Adoption*,⁶ 'adoption, the receiving into the relationship of a child.'⁷

So much for the etymological derivation of the word. It is a different matter to discover what the term means in actual practice. What thing or action is signified by *huiiothesia*?

Adoption among the Greeks

Concerning adoption among the Greeks, T. Rees writes: 'In Greece a man might during his lifetime, or by will to take effect after his death, adopt any male citizen into the privilege of his son, but with the invariable condition that the adopted son accepted the legal

¹ W. J. Woodhouse, 'Adoption, (Roman)' in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hastings (Edinburgh 1908-21), vol. 1, pp. 11-14. J. S. Candlish, 'Adoption' in *A Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1, p. 40. S. Many, op. cit. T. Rees, 'Adoption' in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (5 vols., Chicago 1915), vol. 1, p. 58. W. H. Rossell, *JBL* LXXI (1952), p. 233.

² *A Greek-English Dictionary*, *sub voce*. The verb *huiiotheteō* is also found in the papyri.
³ *Thesaurus Graecae Linguae* (Paris 1829), *sub voce*. cf. also J. Steinmueller, 'Adoption' in *Catholic Biblical Encyclopedia—New Testament* (New York 1949), p. 8.

⁴ *Novi Testamenti lexicon graecum*, *sub voce*

⁵ F. Zorell, loc. cit.

⁶ W. Bauer, *Griechisches-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, etc. (4te. Auflage, Berlin 1952), *sub voce*. This work has been translated into English by W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago 1957).

⁷ H. Cremer, *Biblical-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, translated from the German of the 2nd ed. by William Urwick (Edinburgh 1878), *sub voce*. The English words, 'adopt', 'adoption', are manifestly derived from the Latin *adoptare*. cf. Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (5th ed. Springfield: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1942), *sub voce*. The Latin *adoptare* in turn is a compound form of *ad+optare*, to choose, elect, select. cf. *The Classic Latin Dictionary* (Chicago: Follet, 1941), *sub voce*; also C. M. DuCange, *Glossarium ad scriptores medii et infimae latinitatis*. . . (Niort: Favre, 1883-1887), *sub voce*. The latter defines *adoptare* as *omni voto optare*.

obligations and religious duties of a real son.'¹ What was the background of this practice?

A comprehensive description of adoption among the Greeks is given by W. J. Woodhouse.² According to his analysis, adoption as an institution among the Greeks was the result of a need created by their system of family organisation. It was the rule in both Greek and Roman law that the family property could not be obtained without the obligation of *cultus*, nor the *cultus* without the property or some share of it. It was imperative that the family should not die out, and the family *cultus* thus become extinct. Both the corporation of the *gens* (the clan) and the State itself were directly interested in the perpetuity of the family. It was, however, a principle equally fundamental that the family and the *cultus* could be continued only through male heirs; a daughter could not continue the *cultus*, because on marriage she passed into her husband's family. A legitimate son was consequently the prime desire of marriage. The institution of adoption was therefore a necessary outcome of the desire to perpetuate the family and the family *cultus* whenever there was no natural-born son in the family.

Adoption among the Romans

A good description of the Roman attitude toward adoption and the consequent practice is given by J. S. Candlish,³ who stresses the following points. Among the Romans the rights of fathers over their sons (*patria potestas*) was extreme and almost despotic. A son was held in his father's power somewhat as a slave was owned by his master. The rights of the father did not cease when the son became of age or founded a family of his own. As long as the father lived, his rights could be terminated only by certain legal proceedings analagous to those by which slaves were sold or redeemed. The term *mancipatio* was applied to a process of this kind; it was used indiscriminately, whether a man parted with his son or his slave or with some other object. A person simply could not be transferred from one family to another, or put into the position of a son to any Roman citizen, without a formal legal act. This act was looked upon as a kind of sale of the person involved, whereby the real father gave up his rights to his son and the latter's filial obligations, and a kind of buying out by the person who adopted him. In the event that the person to be thus adopted was not in the power of his natural father, as in cases where the father had died, but was independent (*sui juris*), then only a solemn

¹ op. cit., vol. I, p. 58

² op. cit., vol. I, pp. 107-10

³ op. cit., vol. I, p. 40f.

act of the sovereign people could place such a person in the position of a son to another. This act was of such a nature and considered of so great importance that it could be given by the people only when they were sovereignly met in their religious capacity (*comitia curiata*). The reason for this was that each family had its own religious rights, and the person to be adopted must first be freed by public authority from the obligation to fulfill his duties toward the one family before he could assume a similar responsibility toward another. This assumption to himself of the religious obligations of another family by the person adopted was properly called *arrogatio*; whereas the taking of such another person as his own son by an heirless man was strictly denoted by *adoptio*. The latter though itself not requiring an act of legislation, had to be regularly attested by witnesses. Adoption, when thus legally performed, put a man in every respect in the position of a son by birth of him who had adopted him. He possessed the same rights and owed the same obligations.

Adoption in the Old Testament

Whether adoption was practised among the Jews during any time in their history is an open question. There are five episodes in the narrative of Old Testament history which seem to have some similarity with the commonly accepted notion of adoption. In the order of their appearance the first occurs in Gen. 15:1-3, where Abram answers God's promises of great reward by stating that he himself has no children, and that therefore the steward of his house, Eliezer by name, would be the heir. Next, in Gen. 48:5f., Jacob claims for himself Ephraim and Manasses, the two sons born to Joseph before Jacob's arrival in Egypt. The third incident has to do with the finding of the infant Moses by Pharaoh's daughter. The Egyptian princess returned the child to his mother to nurse him. When the boy had grown sufficiently the mother brought him to the princess who 'adopted him as her son' (Ex. 2:10). There is fourthly the case of Genubath, the son of an Egyptian princess and the Edomite refugee, Adad, who was placed by Pharaoh among his own children (1 Kg. 11:20). Lastly we have the case of Esther, who was adopted by her uncle Mardochai (Est. 2:7).¹

These are all examples in the Old Testament which bear a striking resemblance to the practice of adoption among other people of the ancient Near East and to the custom as it is known among us today. Nonetheless many writers, especially those of some decades ago, are commonly agreed that adoption strictly speaking was not known in

¹ The Vulgate uses the verb *adoptavit* in Ex. 2:10 and Est. 2:7. The CCD also translates Gen. 48:5 by *adopt*.

Israel. Thus S. Many maintains that the Israelites did not have adoption in the strict sense.¹ He contends that the Hebrew law of levirate (Deut. 25:5-10) was contrary to the notion of adoption, even though St Augustine² and after him many theologians and ecclesiastical writers called this arrangement of the Mosaic law adoption. Furthermore, adoption would have interfered with the Hebrew laws of inheritance and succession as outlined in Num. 27:8-11.

In a similar vein S. J. Candlish notes that 'No such legal and complete transference of filial rights and duties seems to have existed in the law of Israel, though there may have been many cases of the informal adoption known among us, as when Mordecai took the orphan Esther, his uncle's daughter, to be his (Est. 2:7). The failure of heirs was provided by the levirate law.'³ To all this T. Rees adds the keen observation that all the examples of quasi-adoption in the Old Testament 'occur outside of Palestine.'⁴

Origin of Paul's metaphor

This calls attention to the metaphor of adoption as it is used by St Paul, and accentuates the questions of its origin and meaning. After all, St Paul was a Jew (Ac. 22:3 ; 2 Cor. 11:12), a Pharisee (Ac. 23:6), proud of his exact training in Judaism and his careful observance of the Mosaic law (Ac. 22:3). On the other hand, he was born outside Palestine, in the Jewish diaspora, at Tarsus of Cilicia (Ac. 9:11 ; 21:39 ; 22:3). He was a Roman citizen by birth (Ac. 22:7). Along with the Jewish religious education received from his parents (Ac. 23:6), and later at the feet of Gamaliel (Ac. 22:3), he had also learned the Greek language and customs in his native Tarsus. Not only this, but he is writing to Christian communities situated in the centres of the Roman world, one of them even in Rome itself. Although a goodly portion of the membership of all of them, possibly even the core, was also Jewish in origin and training, yet they, too, as St Paul himself, were well versed in the language and customs of their native surroundings. Hence again the questions : whence did St Paul derive the metaphor of adoption which he employs in the epistles to the Galatians, the Romans and the Ephesians ? What image precisely does he want to portray and what does he wish to teach by this metaphor ? How did his readers receive and understand this teaching ?

In answering the question about the origin of the Pauline metaphor

¹ op. cit., vol. 1, col. 229. cf. also G. H. Box, 'Adoption (Semitic)' in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 1, p. 115

² *Quaestiones in Heptat.* v, 46 : PL 34, 767

³ op. cit., I, p. 41

⁴ op. cit., I, p. 58. Rees does not look upon Gen. 15:1-4 as an example of quasi-adoption.

of adoption, authors are divided into several classes. There are some who hold that St Paul is thinking of Roman law, and that Roman practice is the background of his application of the metaphor in his epistles. Such is the opinion proposed and defended by J. S. Candlish, who goes on to explain that the whole context of Gal. 4:5 shows that in St Paul's mind adoption 'is a position bestowed by a disposition or covenant of God, and through a redemption by Christ. This probably led St Paul to the use of the word ; for the Roman adoption was effected by a legal act, which involved a quasi-buying out. He also plainly regards it as similar to the adoption in Roman law in this, that it gives not merely paternal care, but the complete right of sonship, the gift of the Spirit of God's Son, and the inheritance. No doubt this legal analogy may be pressed too far ; and St Paul plainly indicates that what he means is really something deeper ; for it is founded on a spiritual union to God's Son, which is described as putting on Christ (Gal. 3:27) ; so that our redemption is not a mere formal or legal act, though it may be compared to such in respect of its authoritative and abiding nature.'¹

That the metaphor of adoption and the basis for St Paul's doctrine could be Roman in origin is also granted by T. Rees, especially so in view of St Paul's Roman citizenship. Rees, however, prefers to consider them Grecian in background, and advances as an important reason the observation that the term *exagorasei* (Gal. 4:5) 'applies equally well to the slave who is redeemed from bondage, and the Roman son whose adoptive father buys him out of the authority of his natural father. But in the latter case the condition of the son is not materially altered by the process ; he only exchanges one paternal authority for another. If Paul for a moment thought of the process in terms of ordinary Roman adoption, the resulting condition of the son, he conceives in terms of the more free and gracious Greek or Jewish family life. Or he may have thought of the rarer case of adoption from conditions of slavery into the status of sonship.'²

Other writers who think the Pauline metaphor of adoption is Grecian in origin are J. Massie,³ J. F. Sollier,⁴ Sir William Ramsey,⁵ George H. Box⁶ and Paul Feine.⁷

Recently, however, a protest has been raised against this more

¹ op. cit., p. 41

² op. cit., I, p. 59

³ 'Testament,' in Hastings, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. IV, p. 720

⁴ 'Supernatural Adoption' in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. I, p. 148

⁵ *A Historical Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (New York 1900), pp. 339, 343

⁶ *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* I, p. 115

⁷ *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (vierte, neu bearbeitete Auflage, Leipzig 1922), p. 241, fn. I

generally accepted opinion that Paul developed his adoption metaphor from the Graeco-Roman practice. Chief among those disagreeing is W. H. Rossell, who argues¹ : (1) that Paul is a Jew, writing to a core of people within each community which is predominantly Jewish in background ; and (2) that Paul refers almost entirely to the Jewish Scriptures as a basis for what he has to say.

It is Rossell's view that ' the absence of the term *huiiothesia* in the Septuagint, and the lack of a corresponding term for adoption in the Massoretic text has misled many in the past. Indeed, the general feeling among Old Testament scholars has been that adoption as an institution did not exist in the Old Testament. These same scholars fail to reckon with Rom. 9:4. . . . The adoptive nature of God's relationship to Israel is here cited by the Apostle and should be recognised. The plain fact is that the concept of adoption does occur in the Old Testament, first as regards God's relationship to Israel—His choosing a special people for His own—secondly, in several instances which must be looked for carefully, since there is not a set of adoption formulas *per se* in the Old Testament.'²

After giving briefly a few references to what he believes are examples of adoption and the further development of the notion in the Old Testament, among them Ex. 2:10 ; Jer. 3:19 ; 1 Chron. 28:6, Rossell devotes special attention to Gen. 15:4, saying that ' it was the Nuzu archives which opened our eyes to the account in Gen. 15. The adoption of slaves at Nuzu is well attested. It was the custom for a childless couple to adopt a son to serve them as long as they lived and to bury and to mourn them at death. In return for these services the adopted son was designated as heir. However, should the adopter beget a son after the adoption, the adopted must yield to the real son the right of being the chief heir. In the light of the above we have the legal meaning of God's reply in Gen. 15:4, " this (slave) shall not inherit thee, but he that shall come out of thy inwards shall inherit thee."'³

In accusing scholars of failure to reckon with Rom. 9:4 in examining the question of adoption in the Old Testament ; by further stating that ' the adoptive nature of God's relationship to Israel is here cited and should be recognised ' ; and lastly, by avowing that ' the Apostle is appealing to the testimony of the Old in writing the doctrine of the New ' Rossell is upholding principles of exegesis which are being proclaimed more and more by biblicists, both non-Catholic and Catholic.

¹ *JBL* LXXI (1952), pp. 233-4

² *ibid.*, p. 233

³ *ibid.*, p. 234. Much in the same line is the opinion expressed by D. J. Theron, *Evangelical Quarterly* xxxviii (1956), pp. 6f.

Rossell's appeal to Rom. 9:4 as a starting-point for the study of the Pauline notion of adoption is seconded by other writers. Thus W. Twisselman in a study on the nature of our divine sonship in the New Testament states in so many words that St Paul holds this divine sonship to have originated through adoption; that his idea in turn must be conceived in terms of the Old Testament and Judaism; and that Paul evidently bases himself on these as his background, since he states that adoptive divine sonship was formerly the prerogative of the Israelites.¹

The same point is made indirectly and perhaps even more forcefully by S. Lyonnet in his study on original sin and Rom. 5:12-14.² Concerning St Paul's opinion on the origin and communication of original sin, Lyonnet states the principle that the Apostle expresses himself most clearly and emphatically by simulating the formula and using the very words of another book of Sacred Scripture dealing with the same matter. This amounts to saying that in the last analysis the Scriptures themselves are the best commentaries on the Scriptures.

Since in Rom. 9:4 St Paul lists *huiiothesia* as the first of the prerogatives of the Israelites, we may legitimately assume that the practice of adoption was known among the Jews. This text is therefore the logical place to begin an exegetical inquiry into the origin and content of the Pauline notion of adoption. Contemporary Greek literature and language, on the other hand, supplied a convenient term.

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BOOK REVIEWS

F.-M. Braun, *The Work of Père Lagrange*. Adapted from the French by R. T. A. Murphy. Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee 1963. pp. xvii + 306. \$7

Some older readers of the *Revue biblique* may recall the *Chronique* for January-April 1915 which marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation by Père Marie-Joseph Lagrange, O.P., of the École biblique de Saint-Étienne, Jerusalem. His contribution was entitled 'Après

¹ 'Die Gotteskindschaft der Christen etc.' in *Beiträge zur Förderung Christlicher Theologie*, 41te. Band, 1te. Heft, 1939, p. 56f.

² 'Le péché originel et l'exégèse de Rom. 5:12-14' in *Recherches de Science Religieuse* xiv (1956), p. 67