

SERMON XX.

BY THE REV. ROGER DRAKE, D.D.

THE BELIEVER'S DIGNITY AND DUTY LAID OPEN, IN THE HIGH BIRTH WHEREWITH HE IS PRIVILEGED, AND THE HONOURABLE EMPLOYMENT TO WHICH HE IS CALLED.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.—John i. 12, 13.

IN this chapter, Christ, the principal subject of the gospel, is admirably and seraphically described:

1. *By his divinity*, as co-eternal and co-essential with the Father. (Verses 1, 2.)

2. *By his discovery or manifestation.*

(1.) *In the work of creation.* (Verses 3, 10.)

(2.) *In the work of common providence.* (Verses 4, 5, 9.)

(3.) *In the work of gracious providence*; he being in the world, and coming to his church, as our Immanuel, God incarnate.—(Verses 11, 14.)

3. *By his entertainment*: which was,

(1.) *Passive.*—His entertainment was poor: "The world knew him not." (Verse 10.) He was as a prince disguised in a strange country; the church slighted and rejected him, as rebels do their natural prince. (Verse 11.) And such entertainment Christ meets with at this day, in his truths, ordinances, graces, ministers, and his poor members, &c.

OBJECTION. "Was not Christ entertained by them? What else means their harbouring him at Capernaum, their flocking after him, admiring of him, seeking to make him a king?" &c.

ANSWER. True, they entertained him for a while civilly and formally, upon self-interest; but not spiritually, by saving faith, love, and obedience. (John vi. 26; Matt. xi. 21, 23.)

QUESTION I. "Did Christ find no entertainment at all?"

ANSWER. This rejecting of Christ was not universal: some did receive him cordially, and were more graciously entertained by him. (Verse 12.) And this was,

(2.) *His active entertainment.*—He dignifying* all who received him with the privilege of adoption. (Verse 12.)

QUESTION II. "How came it to pass that some received Christ, when the generality rejected him?"

ANSWER. Not from their own free-will, or good nature; but from the especial grace of God regenerating them, whereby they were made

* The edition of 1676 has *signifying*.—EDIT.

able and willing to close with Christ; whom others, (as likely, or more likely than they,) being devoid of grace, rejected.

And thus I have brought you to the text as it stands in its relative consideration.

In the words, absolutely considered, you have a singular commendation or encomium of faith:—

1. *From its nature*: a receiving of Christ.
2. *From its root*: regeneration, or being born of God.
3. *From its consequent or fruit*: adoption: "He gave them power to become the sons of God."

Passing sundry useful points, I shall pitch only upon that which comprehends the marrow and substance of both verses.

DOCTRINE.

Every true believer is a child of God by regeneration and adoption.

They were born of God, and so were sons by regeneration; they had a great privilege given them, and so were made sons by adoption.

In handling this excellent doctrine, my work shall be EXPLICATION, CONFIRMATION, APPLICATION.

FIRST. The EXPLICATION shall be, first, *general*; secondly, *particular*. That respects the doctrine of filiation or sonship in general; *this*, the doctrine of regeneration and adoption in particular; they being distinct kinds of filiation.

I. GENERAL EXPLICATION.

For the first, *in general*: a person may be a son four ways:—

A FOURFOLD SONSHIP.

1. *By creation*.—And thus, (1.) The angels; (Job xxxviii. 7;) (2.) Adam; (Luke iii. 38;) (3.) Christ, according to his human nature, was the Son of God. (Luke i. 35.) Not that Christ's human nature was a son or a person; lest we make two sons or two persons in one Christ. And thus believers are God's children, by virtue of their new and spiritual creation.

2. *By generation*.—And this is,

(1.) *Eternal*, or *temporary*.—*Eternal*, as in Christ. (John i. 1, 14, 18. Compare Isai. liii. 8.) *Temporary*, as in other men.

(2.) *Natural*, or *spiritual*.—*Natural*, as in the Son of God, and the sons of men, though with infinite disproportion. *Spiritual*, as in regeneration. (James i. 18.)

3. *By contract of marriage*.—And thus Joseph was the legal son of Heli, (Luke iii. 23,) but the natural son of Jacob.* (Matt. i. 16.) And thus we are children of God by marriage with Christ, his natural son; as Leah and Rachel were both daughters of Isaac by marriage with Jacob. (See 2 Cor. xi. 2.)

4. *By adoption*.—Which is,

(1.) *External and federal*, (Exod. iv. 22; Rom. ix. 4,) by virtue of external profession and church-membership. (Gen. vi. 1. Compare

* Or, as some think, the legal son of Jacob, the natural son of Heli.

Job i. 6.) By "sons of God," in this last place, may be understood either professors or the angels. This sonship may be lost; as is evident by the Jews, who are now cut off. (Rom. ix. 7, 8; xi. 15; 19, 20, 23, 31.) Yet so high is this privilege, that, in comparison of such adopted children, persons without the pale are called "dogs." (Matt. xv. 26.)

(2.) Adoption is *internal and real*; which leads me to the *particular* explication. Only, before I proceed, let me subjoin a word of GENERAL APPLICATION, in two heads:—

GENERAL APPLICATION.

1. *What comfort doth this speak to every believer, who bears so many endearing relations to God, in point of filiation and otherwise!*—Relations, we say, are *minimæ entitatis*, but *maximæ efficacæ*; * and if one endearing relation draw so much love, what will all do? especially considering, God and Christ will be sure to fill every relation with love and grace. The church (and, by proportion, every true believer) is Christ's child and mother, his brother and sister, his spouse, body, and member; (Canticles v. 1; Matt. xii. 50; 1 Cor. xii. 27;) yea, his child not one way, but every way,—by creation, regeneration, marriage, adoption, external and internal. How much love may such expect from Christ in every kind! No wonder God's people are such gainers by their losses and sufferings for Christ, who is an hundred-fold better to them in this life, than all the relative comforts they part with for his sake. (Matt. xix. 29.)

2. *How doth this, by proportion, oblige us in point of reciprocal duty, who stand in all relations of subjection to God and Christ!*—As owing to him all the duty of a creature, servant, child, subject, friend, wife, &c.; and particularly, the duty of four filial relations,—as children by creation, marriage, regeneration, and adoption, both external and internal.

II. PARTICULAR EXPLICATION.

I shall now proceed to the *particular* explication, and open,

I. *The doctrine of adoption*, according to the order of the text.

II. *The doctrine of regeneration*.

FIRST BRANCH OF THE DOCTRINE.

I. And remember we are now speaking of internal and real ADOPTION.

QUESTION I. "What is this adoption?"

ANSWER. It is considerable, 1. *For its name, or notion*; 2. *For the thing itself*.

(1.) ITS NAME.

For the first, the word "adoption" is used but five times in the New Testament,—Rom. viii. 15, 23; ix. 4; Gal. iv. 5; and Eph. i. 5. In the original, it is *υιοθεσια*, (as *νομοθεσια*, ["legislation,"]) and signifies "the putting or placing [of] one for a son." It is applied to other things beside man: thus we are said to "adopt" a name, when we take a new name; to "adopt" a plant, when we give it a

* Relations are "of the smallest entity, but of the greatest efficacy."—EDIT.

name, as Lysimachus did to the herb *Lysimachia*, and Artemisia to the herb *Artemisia*; and thus one branch is said to "adopt" another by inoculation, according to the poet:

Venerit insitio; fac ramum ramus adoptet.—OVIDII *Remed. Amor.* 195;*

which metaphor, as it is very elegant, so it serves to illustrate the nature of adoption. Compare Rom. xi. 24.

(II.) ITS NATURE.

For the thing, adoption is the acceptance of a stranger into the relation and privileges of a son. It was much in use among the Romans; and was ratified by the law of the chief magistrate, and the approbation of their *pontifices*, or "chief priests." Wherein great respect was had to the holiness and dignity of persons, (whence a patrician might not adopt a plebeian, &c.,) lest the dignity of the adopter should be stained by the meanness of the adopted. There was also great care used to prevent all fraud on the part of the adopter or the adopted. Thus our adoption is ratified by the law and gracious sentence of God the Father, and by the approbation of God the Son our High Priest; without any fraud on God's part, or any reflection on the dignity of God, and the holiness of Christ; though in this gracious act those two most glorious persons stoop infinitely below themselves. Thus Moses was the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, (Exod. ii. 10,) and Esther was the adopted child of her cousin Mordecai; (Esther ii. 7;) both which illustrate God's singular grace to us, who are, before adoption, captives, slaves, and lost creatures.

By effectual vocation we are translated into a twofold state:—

1. *Absolute*: namely, a state of sanctification and glorification.
2. *Relative*: namely, a state of justification and adoption. In which last, upon our believing, we are, by God's gracious sentence, accepted into the number, and have a right to all the privileges, of the sons of God. Adoption then is our relative state; which puts no real worth in the adopted, though it presuppose an absolute state of holiness, and a double act: (1.) Of free grace, on the Adopter's part. (2.) Of faith, on the part of the adopted.

From all [that] hath been said about the nature of adoption, note these following corollaries:—

COROLLARY I. Hence it follows, that adoption presupposes effectual vocation, regeneration, faith, justification, and reconciliation; which are, as it were, its secondary foundations. Compare Rom. viii. 30, and v. 1, 2.

COROL. II. Hence it follows, that believers expect heaven by a double title: 1. Of redemption; 2. Of adoption. (Beside a title of marriage-jointure.) See both together in Rom. viii. 23.

COROL. III. This shows how Christ is applied in justification; namely, as a fountain and garment: how in adoption; namely, as an elder Brother, and Prince of salvation. (Heb. ii. 10—13.)

* "Let the engrafting come; and cause
One branch to adopt another."—EDIT.

COROL. IV. Hence it is evident, [that] our sonship far excels Adam's filiation. He indeed was God's son by similitude and dependence; but not by special union and communion with Christ, the natural Son of God, as we now are. (Gal. iv. 4, 5.)

COROL. V. Hence we have the true reason why God's name is called upon us, (Jer. xiv. 9; 1 John iii. 1. Compare Gen. xlviii. 5, 6, 16,) as well as called upon by us. (1 Peter i. 17.)

COROL. VI. This shows why we are in an especial manner of God's household; (Eph. ii. 19;) not as bastards, sojourners, boarders,* hirelings, slaves; (Exod. xii. 45; Judges xi. 1, 2; Heb. xii. 8;) but as his honourable servants, his spouse, and his adopted children. Compare 2 Sam. ix. 7, 11, 13, and Esther ii. 7.

QUESTION II. "Wherein doth divine adoption differ from and excel human adoption?" This head is a powerful motive.

ANSWER (I.) *In its properties.* (II.) *In its privileges.* Both which concur in the substance; but are distinguished here for doctrine's sake.

THE PROPERTIES OF ADOPTION.

(I.) The *properties* of adoption are four.

1. *It is a precious relation.*—Cost as much as our redemption, an infinite price. Compare 1 Peter i. 18, 19, and Gal. iv. 4, 5; allude to Acts xxii. 28: with a great sum Christ obtained us this freedom.

2. *It is a high and honourable relation.*—Every believer is a high-born person; and as his birth, so his adoption, is high, even as high as heaven. (John i. 12, 13.) It is honourable to be the son of a king, much more to be the son of God; to be God's servant, (2 Sam. vii. 5, 8,) (witness Theodosius the emperor,) much more to be God's son. (1 John iii. 1.) The honour of sonship ever rises or falls with the honour of fatherhood.

This second property flows from the first. That which is precious must needs be honourable. (Isai. xliii. 4.) Whence the same word, קָדָשׁ, signifies both preciousness and honour. Compare Psalm xlv. 9.

3. *It is a free relation.*—It is free,

(1.) In an *active* sense, making its subject free. (Gal. iv. 7.) A slave adopted, is by that act made a free man.

(2.) In a *passive* sense.

(i.) And, first, as to *the Adopter*, who is not moved by any thing in the creature to bestow this high favour. (Eph. i. 4, 5.) God adopts not out of necessity, but liberty; (who can compel or necessitate him?) not out of indigency, (he had a natural Son, and many created sons, who were very like him, and liking to him,) but out of redundancy of goodness.

(ii.) In a passive sense it is free also as to *the adopted*, without, yea, against, their deservings. We may all with shame take up the words of Mephibosheth. (2 Sam. ix. 8; xix. 28.)

This property flows from the two former: that must needs be freely given, which is so precious and honourable. None is worthy to be

* In the first edition this reading is *border*, but that of 1676 is *borderer*.—EDIT.

the son of God, but only the natural Son of God. He that cannot deserve a bit of bread, much less can deserve this divine relation: we deserve a hellish, not a heavenly, sonship, each of us being by nature children of Belial.

4. *It is a permanent relation.*—Once a child, and for ever so. (John viii. 35.) A servant, a created son, a natural son may sometimes be turned out of doors; (witness the angels, and Gen. xxi. 10, 12;) but an adopted son is never cast off; (Psalm lxxxix. 26, 30, 33, 34;) and that upon the following accounts:—

(1.) From the freeness of adoption. God chose them not for their well-deservings; nor will he reject them for their ill-deservings: if unworthiness foreseen did not hinder the purpose of adoption, then unworthiness present shall not hinder the completing of adoption.

And thus the fourth property flows from the third.

(2.) Divine immutability is engaged in the covenant of grace: of which adoption is one great branch. Compare Rom. ix. 4; xi. 29; and Heb. vi. 17, 18.

(3.) If any thing unchild them, it must be their apostasy. But,

(i.) They can fall no further than their Father permits.

(ii.) Fall they never so foully, he can mend and recover them as he pleaseth.

(iii.) He will never permit them to fall finally and totally. (Jer. xxxii. 40.)

And what parent would cast off a son, had he this power over him? We never cast off a child unless incorrigible; (Deut. xxi. 18—20;) but to our heavenly Father no child is incorrigible.

THE PRIVILEGES OF ADOPTION.

(II.) Divine adoption differs from and excels human, in its *privileges*, as well as in its properties.

LIKENESS TO GOD.

The general privilege is, *likeness to God.*—All God's adopted children bear their Father's image, as Gideon's brethren did his. (Judges viii. 18.) They are like God,

1. *In holiness.*

2. *In dignity.*

AND, 1. IN HOLINESS.

In holiness.—As Christ bears their natural, so they bear his spiritual, image. Compare Heb. ii. 7, and Rom. viii. 29. Their principles and actions prove them the children of their heavenly Father. (Matt. v. 44, 45.) This one truth unchild most professors, who look not at holiness as a privilege: with Machiavel's prince, they like the show of virtue, but fly virtue itself as a burden. Such bewray themselves to be bastards; but let genuine children remember, that holiness is not only a duty, (1 Peter i. 14—16,) but also a prerogative. (Exod. xix. 5, 6; 1 Peter ii. 9.) Many hope to be like God hereafter, who affect not to be like him here; but genuine sons affect the one, as well as they hope for the other. (1 John iii. 2, 3.) The hope of the former will at farthest die with themselves. (Job viii. 13—15; xi. 20.)

2. IN DIGNITY.

Next, God's adopted children are like him *in dignity*.—This dignity appears,

- (1.) *In their titles.*
- (2.) *In their offices.*
- (3.) *In their dominion.*

(1.) WHICH APPEARS IN THEIR TITLES.

In their titles.—They are called his “treasure;” (Exod. xix. 5;) his “jewels;” (Mal. iii. 17;) his “first-fruits,” and “holiness to the Lord;” (Jer. ii. 3;) heirs; (Gal. iii. 19;) “first-born” heirs; (Heb. xii. 23. Compare Deut. xxi. 16;) yea, “joint-heirs with Christ,” (Rom. viii. 17,) each of them having right to and possession of that inheritance which hath *no corruption, succession, division.*

(i.) *No corruption.* (1 Peter i. 4.)—It is not corrupted by outward principles, as fire, violence, &c.; nor by inward principles, as sin and other taints which defile; or putribility, as the best things here below are, from their own or their subjects' innate principles. (Isai. xxix. 14; 1 Peter i. 18. Compare James v. 2.)

(ii.) It hath *no succession.*—The Father and children always living upon the same inheritance; whence, as Christ's priesthood, so their inheritance, is unchangeable. (Heb. vii. 24.)

(iii.) It hath *no division.*—For every heir enjoys the whole, God being infinite and indivisible: as every eye enjoys the whole sun, &c. Hence there will be no occasion of jealousy or quarrelling among the brethren; for, let others have never so much, I shall not have one jot the less. To his Isaacs, his heirs, his conquerors, God gives his all, not half, (with Ahasuerus and Herod,) but his whole kingdom. Compare Gen. xxv. 5; 2 Chron. xxi. 3; and Rev. xxi. 7. It is otherwise with heirs and wives here below, because their interests are divisible. (Luke xii. 13; Gen. xxx. 15; 1 Sam. i. 6, 7.)

(2.) IN THEIR OFFICES.

Their dignity appears, secondly, *in their high offices.*—Like Christ their Head, they are God's anointed ones; (1 John ii. 20, 27;) and that to a threefold office,—prophetically, priestly, kingly. (Psalm cv. 15; Rev. i. 6, where the prophetic office is not mentioned, probably upon this account, because included in the priestly office.) The first-born in every family were typical kings, priests, and prophets; (Exod. xxiv. 5;) which [offices] therefore were the birthright of Reuben; who by his sin forfeited the government to Judah, the priesthood to Levi, and the double portion or inheritance to Joseph. (1 Chron. v. 1, 2. See Num. iii. 45.) But God's adopted ones shall never forfeit their unction.

(3.) IN THEIR DOMINION.

Their dignity appears, thirdly, *in their dominion*; and this by five particulars.

- (i.) *By their ministers or attendance: a heavenly guard.* (Heb. 14.)
- (ii.) *By the extent of their property.*—They are lords of all. (1 Cor. iii. 21—23. Compare Psalm viii.) Their title is as good, as large, they holding all *in capite*; which is the worst title among the sons of men, but the best among the sons of God.
- (iii.) *By their right and pure use of all.* (Titus i. 15; Job v. 24.)
- (iv.) *By the benefit and advantage [that] redounds to them out of all.* (Rom. viii. 28.)—There is no creature but owes homage and pays tribute to these lords. A saint gets more good by other men's estates, than the possessors themselves. The first-fruits and fat of all come to those who are the first-fruits of God and of the Lamb.
- (v.) *By their immunities.*—King's children have *great* immunities; (Matt. xvii. 25, 26;) but God's children have *all* immunities, being privileged from the hurt of every thing. (Luke x. 19; Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39.)

This for the explication of the first branch of the doctrine.

SECOND BRANCH OF THE DOCTRINE.

II. The second branch is, that every true believer is a child of God by REGENERATION.

EXPLICATION.

I shall first explain this head, then prove and apply both together.

QUESTION. "What is regeneration?"

Here I shall endeavour to open,

First. *The name.*

Secondly. *The thing.*

(I.) THE NAME.

The name is *παλιγγενεσία*. It is used but twice in the New Testament,—Matt. xix. 28, and Titus iii. 5: haply in several senses: the one, glorious; the other, gracious. Yet both may very well be understood in a gracious sense; and so in the former place Judas is excluded, as having no hopes of a glorious session, because he wanted a gracious regeneration.

Its synonymas in scripture are very emphatical. Thus it is called a quickening; (Eph. ii. 1;) a formation; (Gal. iv. 19;) a birth; (John iii. 3, 8;) a baptizing; (Matt. iii. 11;) a "renewing of the mind;" (Rom. xii. 2;) a "new heart" and "spirit," (Ezek. xxxvi. 26,) *that* being renewed by saving knowledge, *this* by saving grace; "a new creature," which is the product of omnipotency; (2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15;) "the new man," it renewing the whole; (Eph. iv. 24;) and "the divine nature," in respect of its transcendent excellency. (2 Peter i. 4.)

(II.) THE THING.

For *the thing* itself; regeneration is taken,

1. *Absolutely*; and so it is really the same with effectual vocation; both which are either active or passive; *that* in relation to the party

regenerating and calling, *this* in reference to the party regenerated and called.

2. It is taken *relatively*; and so it is the foundation of our first filiation or sonship, whereby we are begotten sons. Generation is the foundation, as of human, so also of divine, filiation; and as by faith we are adopted sons, so by regeneration we are begotten sons.

QUESTION. "What is regeneration?"

ITS NATURE.

ANSWER. It is the production of a new and spiritual being, by the introduction of a new and spiritual form. 1. As therefore Isaac before generation was a non-entity in nature, so every child of the promise before regeneration is a non-entity in grace. (1 Cor. xiii. 2; Gal. vi. 3.) 2. And as in generation there is a formation, or the introduction of a new form, which gives being, distinction, and operation; so is it likewise in regeneration. (Gal. iv. 19.) This form is nothing else but truth of grace infused. 3. As in nature the corruption of one thing is the generation of another; so in grace the corruption of the old man is the generation of the new. (Rom. vi. 4, 6, 11.) And, lastly, as in natural generation no form is introduced but by various preparations and previous dispositions; so in regeneration much legal and evangelical preparation ushers-in the new birth; which preparation consists especially in conviction, illumination, &c.

The nature of regeneration will appear more distinctly, by comparing it more particularly with natural generation; and,

1. *In the terms of conveniency or similitude.*
2. *In the terms of difference or dissimilitude.*

1. THE TERMS OF CONVENIENCY.

They agree, (1.) *In the causes*; (2.) *In the manner of production*; (3.) *In the matter produced.*

(1.) For the first, in both there is, (i.) *A principal cause*: and thus God is the regenerate man's Father; (witness the text; Isai. ix. 6; Heb. ii. 11, 13;) the church is his mother. (Gal. iv. 26, 27.) (ii.) There are *subordinate and instrumental causes*: such are Christ's ministers, who are therefore sometimes called "fathers," (1 Cor. iv. 15,) and sometimes mothers. (Gal. iv. 19. Compare 1 Thess. ii. 7.) (iii.) *The constitutive cause*: a seed which is partly material, namely, the word; (1 Peter i. 23;) partly spiritual, the influence and efficacy of the Holy Ghost, (John iii. 5,) without which the material seed or "letter" is ineffectual. (2 Cor. iii. 6.)

(2.) They agree *in the manner of production*.—In both there is,

(i.) *A conception*.—Christ spiritual, as well as personal, is ever conceived by the power and overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. This holds true in other generations: unless the seed of the word be received and retained, there can be no new man, no "good and honest heart." (Matt. xiii. 23; Luke viii. 15.)

(ii.) There is *a formation*.—God's art is wonderful in the forma-

of our outward man; (Psalm cxxxix. 14—16;) but far more stupendous in the formation of our inward man, (Gal. iv. 19,) which is no mean part of "the mystery of godliness." (1 Tim. iii. 16.)

(iii.) *Quickening.* (1 Cor. xv. 36; Eph. ii. 1; Gal. ii. 20.)—Which is perceived by spiritual motion.

(iv.) *Longing.*—Sometimes the parents long, sometimes the child; here both parents and child. How doth God, Christ, and his ministers long for the natural man's conversion! (Ezek. xviii. 23; Luke xiii. 34; Phil. i. 8.) Never did a teeming woman long more for fruit or deliverance, than these do for a new-born babe in Christ. Ay, but this is not all; the babe himself longs also. (1 Peter ii. 2. Compare 2 Cor. vii. 11.)

(v.) *Travail with pain.*—O the pangs of our spiritual mothers! (Gal. iv. 19.) Do not increase them by sticking in the birth. (Hosea xiii. 13. Compare 2 Kings xix. 3.) O the fear and danger of miscarriage, both before and after this spiritual childing! (Gal. iv. 11, 20; 1 Thess. iii. 5.) And in this miscarrying age, how frequent is the curse of Ephraim!—"Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer. Give them, O Lord: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts." (Hosea ix. 13, 14.) But is the babe exempted from pain, sorrow, and danger? In no wise. Every new-born babe comes crying into the world: the new as well as the old creation travails with pain. (Rom. viii. 22, 23.) The foundation of the second temple is ever laid in weeping; (Ezra iii. 12, 13;) and God still "layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters," &c. (Psalm civ. 3.) Each of these may be a taste and touch of our new birth, and prove the greatest part of professors to be in an unregenerate estate.

(3.) They agree in the subjects produced.—The new creature, with new actions and new privileges. As in generation, so in regeneration, there is,

(i.) *A new nature with new principles.* (2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15.)—In generation there is still the same first matter, but under several and successive forms; and whenever a new form is introduced, the subject is called "new:" so in regeneration: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.)

(ii.) There are *new actions or operations.* (2 Cor. iv. 16; Eph. iv. 22—24.)—There is a new eye, a circumcised ear, a spiritual taste, appetite, language, motion, &c.

(iii.) And, lastly. There are *new privileges.*—According to the degrees of generation the degrees of privilege vary: a plant hath higher privileges than an element; a beast, than a plant; and a man, than a beast. But how transcendent are the prerogatives of the new man! (Heb. xii. 22—24.) See more of this head in the explication of adoption.

2. THE TERMS OF DIFFERENCE.

Next follow the terms of difference or dissimilitude, which may be applied to each of the heads of agreement; the second birth far

excelling the first birth, even in those terms wherein both agree. But I pass that for brevity-sake, and shall content myself to note the difference of both births in four properties. And,

(1.) Regeneration is *rare*.—As few men are generated in comparison of all other creatures, so few persons are new-born in comparison of those who are born. No more are regenerated than shall be saved; and those are but few in comparison. (Matt. vii. 14. Compare Luke xiii. 23.)

(2.) It is far *more secret* than the natural birth. (Compare Eccles. xi. 5; John iii. 4, 8, 9; Col. iii. 3.)—Whatever Solomon might understand of generation, both he and every man else are very purblind in discerning the nature of regeneration; nor could the wisest or the holiest (excepting Christ) ever fathom either the “mystery of iniquity,” or this “mystery of godliness.” (2 Thess. ii. 7; 1 Tim. iii. 16.)

(3.) Regeneration is *constant and progressive*.—Once born, and ever born; once born, and always bearing. It is like the generation of the Son of God, who was begotten from eternity, and is still begetting. (Psalm ii. 7; Heb. xiii. 8.) In natural generation, sooner or later, death mars the birth; but it is otherwise in regeneration; he that is born again shall never die: the soul and body may part; but Christ, grace, and the soul shall never part.

(4.) Regeneration is *spiritual*.—The very soul itself is carnal, if compared to the spirit of grace communicated in regeneration. (Zech. xii. 10; John iii. 6.) The grace of regeneration, though but a quality, far exceeds the most refined substance, human or angelical; as is evident in the apostate angels, who by their loss of holiness became fiends and devils, yea, worse than nothing.

This for the explication of the terms in general, and in particular.

SECONDLY, PROOF OF THE DOCTRINE.

I proceed to the proof and demonstration of the doctrine; in the management whereof I shall need to go no further than my text.

(1.) ADOPTION AND REGENERATION ARE DISTINCT SONSHIPS.

And, First, it will appear from the text, *that the sonship by adoption and regeneration are distinct filiations, though never separated as to the subject*.—For whoever is a child by adoption, is also a child by regeneration; and *contra*. That they are distinct filiations is evident,

1. *Because they are noted as distinct* in John i. 12, 13.

2. *Their foundations are distinct*: the one is of gift, and by actual faith; the other is of birth. There is a wide difference between *γενεσθαι*, applied to adoption, and *γεννασθαι*, which expresses regeneration. Compare Matt. ii. 1; John i. 3, 14; and Gal. iv. 4, where both words are joined together. An adopted person is made a son; but he is not born a son as to the adopter. It is evident, then, [that] these two relations are distinct.

(11.) BELIEVERS ARE GOD'S CHILDREN BY BOTH.

Secondly. It appears also from the text, *that every believer is a child of God by both these filiations; namely, by adoption and regeneration.*—The former is evident; *ὅτι*, “because” believers are dignified with a sonship, which follows as a privilege upon their faith, and that by deed of gift, which can be no other than the sonship of adoption; for the sonship of regeneration precedes actual believing. The second is as evident: For they who are born of God must needs be sons by regeneration, as he that is born of man is a son by generation: But believers are expressly said to be born of God, as is evident by comparing both the verses of the text: And therefore are God's sons by regeneration, as well as by adoption.

If you ask further, *διότι*, “whence” it is that believers are sons of God by this double filiation, the text holds forth a four-fold ground, partly explicit, and partly implicit:—

The first ground is *free grace*: adoption is a gift, therefore not deserved. Regeneration cannot be deserved: 1. Because all merit is impossible to the creature. 2. Because before regeneration the creature was in a state of corruption; and what can a corrupted creature deserve, but wrath and curse?

The second ground is *Christ's merit*: whence probably the bestowing of the privilege of adoption is singularly attributed to Christ, because he purchased our adoption as well as our regeneration. (Eph. i. 5; Titus iii. 5, 6.)

The third ground is *divine glory*: which is the end of all God's works, much more of such gracious dispensations as are regeneration and adoption. (Eph. i. 5, 6; Isai. xliii. 21.)

The fourth ground is *encouragement unto faith by the favours and privileges vouchsafed unto believers.* (1 Tim. i. 16.)

And these are more implied than expressed in the text, yet flow naturally enough out of it.

THIRDLY, USES.

USE I. Of INFORMATION, *about the sad condition of all unbelievers, by rule of contraries.*—Are all believers God's children, &c.? Then no unbeliever is a child of God, either by regeneration or adoption. Not by regeneration, as having no life of grace, which, initially infused, is the new birth. And hence every unbeliever is,

First. *A dead man.*—As dead in law; (John iii. 18;) dead in sin; (Eph. ii. 1;) dead under wrath and curse; (John iii. 36; Gal. iii. 10; compared with Gen. ii. 17;) dead in expectation and fear. (Heb. x. 27.) Whoever hath not a part in the second birth, shall be sure to have a part in the second death.

Secondly. *Unbelievers, being not children of God, can expect nothing from God as a Father.*—Now the state of unregeneracy excludes them from both filiations; for unless God be a Father by regeneration, he will be no Father by adoption. Nor can unregenerate persons be children by adoption, because they have no faith. Hence

they are orphans, and so helpless ; for God will be no Father to such fatherless children. . But are they altogether fatherless ? No, verily : therefore,

Thirdly. *They have woful parents.*—Namely, sin and disobedience ; (Eph. ii. 2 ;) wrath and curse ; (Eph. ii. 3 ; 2 Peter ii. 14 ;) and, lastly, Satan, (John viii. 44,) who is also their god, (2 Cor. iv. 4,) as God is the believer's Father. O miserable wretches, as destitute of a heavenly Father ; and more miserable, as the woful children of most hellish and cursed parents, who have nothing to make over to them but sin and curse ! and that they will do with a vengeance.

USE II. Of HUMILIATION. And that not only for profane Esau, who despise their birthright ; nor only for barely nominal and federal children ; (Deut. xxxii. 5, 19, compared with 1 Cor. vii. 14 ;) but even for such as groundedly call God Father, yet carry not themselves as children to such a Father. They are children of the greatest, wisest, and most ancient King ; (allude to Isai. xix. 11 ;) yet walk not up to their principles as regenerate sons, nor up to their privileges as adopted sons ; as is evident by the following particulars :—

1. *They think not of, rejoice not, glory not in, nor walk up to, the dignity of, divine filiation ; but are mean-spirited, and sink almost at every difficulty.* (Isai. xlix. 14, 15.)—The natural Son of God did not so.

2. *They are palpably worldly.*—As if they had no Father to care for them, no hope nor portion but in this life. (Jer. xlv. 5 ; Matt. vi. 28, 30.) That worldliness which reigns in natural men, tyrannizeth too often in regenerate men.

3. *They behave not themselves as brethren of Christ, and as children of one Father.* (Compare Heb. ii. 11, with Eph. iv. 3—6 ; Mal. ii. 10.)—How do brethren fall out by the way ! How great is their difference, when the matter of difference is so little ! What quarrelling about the hedge, when both agree about the inheritance ! We all profess to believe the holy catholic church ; yet mind not the unity of the church, but rather the promoting of a party and faction in the church ; to the shame of religion, the scandal of the weak, (who by reason of our differences are puzzled which way to choose,) and the opening of the mouth of the enemy. May we not justly fear, (as one notes well,) that the neglect of true religion, and true catholic unity, is making way for atheism, or for Popish catholic unity ?

USE III. Of EXHORTATION. And, First. *Unto strangers ;* Secondly. *Unto children.*

EXHORTATION I. UNTO STRANGERS.

For the first. Art thou an alien ? O never rest till thou get into a state of sonship. And, to this end,

1. *Be convinced of thy orphanhood, and hellish filiation.*

2. *Make good thy effectual vocation, justification, and reconciliation.*
—This is done *outwardly*, by conscientious attendance on the ordinances ; *inwardly*, by the spiritual baptism and faith. (Gal. iii. 25—29.)

II. UNTO CHILDREN.

Secondly. If thou be a child of God, then,

1. *Evidence thy sonship.*—This is done by evidencing thy vocation ; (2 Peter i. 10 ;) and is necessary, First. In order to God's glory. Secondly. In order to thy duty and comfort. Thirdly. In order to others' conversion and edification. Neither of which will proceed to purpose, without some comfortable evidence of thy filiation.

2. *Carry thyself as a child of God.*—This will blow up the fire of grace, light the candle of comfort, and beam forth in thy conversation to the conviction, conversion, and edification of others.

DIRECTIONS.

To this end, (1.) *Honour thy Father* ; (Mal. i. 6 ;) acknowledge and testify his dignity and excellency. This do,

(i.) *Negatively.*—Take heed of dishonouring God *passively*, by omission. What child can see or hear his father wronged? or converse needlessly with dishonourers of his father? (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.)

(ii.) *Affirmatively.*—Dishonour not God *actively*, by commission, as David, Peter, and others did. How many, not only bastards, but genuine children, are either ashamed of, or [a] shame to, their heavenly Father, especially in evil company!

(2.) *Obey thy Father.* (1 Peter i. 14.)—This flows from the former ; and is part of the honour children owe to their parents, (Eph. vi. 1, 2 ; Col. iii. 20,) and much more we to our heavenly Father, (Heb. xii. 9,) whose commands are all of them so holy, equitable, profitable. Compare 2 Kings v. 13.

(3.) *Imitate thy Father.* (Eph. v. 1, 2.)—This flows from both the former ; and by it we do both honour and obey God. Children are apt to follow their parents in naturals, in civils, in morals ; and if we be God's children, we must walk not only with him, but also like him. (1 John iv. 17 ; ii. 6.) Especially imitate God in endeavouring to bring many to glory. (Heb. ii. 10.) Our imitation of God is a great part of our following the Lord. (Eph. v. 1, 2.)

(4.) *Submit to his chastisements.* (Heb. xii. 7.)—As afflictions, piously borne, are evidences of our sonship, so the holy, humble, and fruitful bearing of them is our duty as children.

(5.) *Depend universally upon divine provision and protection.*—Casting all thy fears, cares, and burdens upon thy Father. (Matt. vi. 25 ; 1 Peter v. 7 ; Psalm lv. 22.) Faith is both the mother and nurse of adoption. Be not worse than thy own child, who can live without carking upon thy fatherly love and providence.

(6.) *Abound in filial affections.*—As love, delight, and fear to offend thy Father. Thy sin is exceedingly aggravated by the dignity of the party offended and offending, as well as by God's singular love to thee. (Lev. iv. 3, 13, 22, 27 ; xxi. 9.) God may well say to thee, *Ei tu, fili ? **

* "What, and thou also, my son?" the well-known words of Cæsar to Brutus.—EDIT.

(7.) *Wait and long for the perfecting of thy adoption.* (Rom. viii. 23.)—Here below, children cannot without impiety desire and long for the full inheritance :

*Filius ante diem patrios inquirat in annos.**—OVIDII *Metamorph.* i. 148.

But it is otherwise with heavenly heirs, who could have no inheritance unless their Father lived, who inherit the whole together with their Father; yea, their Father is their main inheritance, all other comforts being but accessory.

USE IV. Of CONSOLATION, to God's children; for the effectual application of which comfort, two things are very considerable :—

First. *The grounds of consolation.*

Secondly. *The trials and discoveries of our filiation, whereby we may be assured of our right to, and interest in, these comforts.*

First. *The general ground of consolation, is our filial privileges; which are, more particularly,*

FILIAL PRIVILEGES ARE,

1. *Fatherly affections.*—Which, for tenderness and vehemency, are called “mothers’ bowels.” (Isai. xlix. 15.) As a Father, God pities his children, (Psalm ciii. 13,) and spares them. (Mal. iii. 17.) Parents’ bowels yearn most toward their weakest children; and such a Father is Christ. (Matt. xii. 20.) We pity a child that is poisoned; not so a serpent, to which poison is natural. If thou favour not thyself in sin, God will favour and pity thee, because of thy very infirmities. (Heb. iv. 15.)

2. *Fatherly provisions.*—God will never fall under the foul aspersion of being “worse than an infidel,” which he blames so much in unnatural Christians. (1 Tim. v. 8.) This privilege relates to the necessities of God's children. It is well observed by a modern writer: “To have no necessity at all, is God's sole privilege; to have necessities immediately supplied, is the happiness of glorified saints; to have necessities mediately supplied, is the comfort of saints on earth; to have necessities without any supply, is the misery of the damned.” Now, divine provision undertakes for all these supplies, mediately here, immediately hereafter. Fatherly provisions are four-fold, answerable to the proportionable wants of children.

(1.) *For maintenance.*—And God provides no less than all good things for his children; (Psalm xxxiv. 9, 10; 1 Tim. iv. 8;) especially the best things. Compare Matt. vii. 11, and Luke xi. 13.

(2.) *A calling.*—God's care extends to the particular calling of every one of his children, much more to their general calling. (1 Cor. vii. 20; Rom. i. 7.)

(3.) *Marriage.*—Their civil marriages are made in heaven; (Prov. xix. 14;) much more their spiritual match with Christ. (John xvii. 6, 9.)

(1.) *An inheritance.*—Though their portion be not here below, yet

* “The son inquires into his father's years.”—DRYDEN'S Translation.

God gives them portion in things here below, which sweetens and sanctifies all their enjoyments. (Gen. xxxiii. 5.) But the best portion here is nothing to their heavenly inheritance. (1 Peter i. 4.)

3. *Fatherly protection.* (Deut. xxxii. 6, 10—12.)—Which is ever reasonable for time, suitable for kind, proportionable for degree, universal against every danger, and constant as long as danger threateneth: immediate, by God himself; (Isai. xxvii. 3;) or mediate, by creatures, ordinances, providences, comforts, crosses, graces, temptations, &c. (2 Cor. xii. 7.)

4. *Fatherly education.*—With all requisites thereunto, for which this Father alone can undertake; as,

(1.) *Docibleness*: God alone can make his children apt to learn.

(2.) *Teaching*, by precepts, direction, examples, illumination, manuduction, exercise, and inclination, making them willing to learn. (Job xxxvi. 22.)

(3.) *Correction*, and that,

(i.) By chastisements, bodily or spiritual.

(ii.) By crossing their will and worldly designs.

(iii.) By teaching them to cross their own wills. (Psalm xciv. 12.)

This correction is a great branch of the covenant. (Psalm lxxxix. 30—34.)

All these privileges God affords them *gratis*. Children pay nothing for provision, protection, education, &c. (Matt. xvii. 26.)

5. *Fatherly communion.* A father is very familiar,

(1.) With his little children,

(2.) With his grown children. To assure us hereof, God is pleased to take upon him a threefold relation:—

(1.) Of a friend.

(2.) Of a husband.

(3.) Of a father. Compare John xiv. 21, 23, and Rev. iii. 20.

This for the grounds of consolation; which every one is ready to catch at, but only children have a right unto.

Secondly. This makes way for the last head, and a grand case of conscience; namely, “How shall I make it out that I am a genuine son, and not a bastard or stranger?” In managing this discovery, I shall mix together the trials of both filiations,—by regeneration and adoption.

TRIALS OF OUR SONSHIP.

And, 1. *Sons are like their father.*—They are usually the natural and moral pictures of their parents. This in its measure holds true of God's children, who resemble their Father,

(1.) In light. (Eph. v. 8.)

(2.) In love. (1 John iv. 7.)

(3.) In life. (Eph. iv. 18; v. 1.)

2. *Children honour their parents*; (Mal. i. 6;) and that,

(1.) By reverence. (1 Peter i. 17.)

(2.) By obedience.* (1 Peter i. 14.)

* Obedience is both a negative and affirmative trial.

(3.) By pliability. (Rom. viii. 14.) Slaves are driven, but children are led. (John viii. 47.)

(4.) By coming oft into, and delighting in, his presence. Compare Job i. 6, and Psalm cxxxix. 18.

3. *We may know our sonship by our spirit.*—Every child of God hath,

(1.) *A spirit of faith and dependence.* (2 Cor. iv. 13.)

(2.) *A spirit of prayer.* (Acts ix. 11.)—The first cry, after the new birth, is, “Abba, Father.” (Rom. viii. 15.) God hath no child but can ask his Heavenly Father’s blessing.

(3.) *A spirit of evidence.* (Rom. viii. 16 ; Eph. i. 13, 14 ; iv. 30.)—The Spirit always witnesseth, though his witness be not always heard.

(4.) *A spirit of liberty.* (2 Cor. iii. 17.)—Of liberty from the bondage of sin, Satan, the world, and fear ; (John viii. 32 ; Heb. ii. 15 ;) of liberty to Christ and duty. (Psalm cxix. 32.)

(5.) *A spirit of waiting.* (Rom. viii. 23.)

(6.) And lastly. *A spirit of love.*—Not only to God and his children, (1 John v. 2,) but also to our very enemies. (Matt. v. 44, 45.) Hence God’s children (like their Father) are peacemakers. (Matt. v. 9.)

To conclude: Art thou like God? Dost thou honour God as a Father? Hast thou the Spirit of God? Then mayest thou comfortably claim and enjoy all the fore-mentioned privileges, and infinitely more than heart can conceive, or tongue express. Art thou covetous? Here is a treasure for thee. Art thou ambitious? Here is the highest honour. Art thou voluptuous? Here is an ocean of pleasure. Art thou in danger? Here is an ark and haven of security: all these in the hand of filiation, and that above any created desire or comprehension, with infinite security to all eternity.