

# THE MODELS OF NEW BIRTH AND ADOPTION IN THE WRITINGS OF JOHN AND PAUL

DINU MOGA\*

ABSTRACT. Both Johannine and Pauline sonship models provide important soteriological doctrine each in its *own right*, which must not be conflated so as to rob them of their intended soteriological nuances. It will be shown the imperative to recognized that both Paul and John perceive divine sonship as an eschatological phenomenon, because of the eschatological character of the Christ event. The true emphasis of both authors is that sonship is realized now yet realized in full at the *Parousia*. Sonship is inaugurated, but not yet consummated. Both Paul and John perceive soteriology as eschatology and both recognize the inaugurated eschatological character of the inter-advent period. It is therefore important to recognize how both the Pauline and Johannine models of sonship unite at the resurrection. Both anticipate the fullness of sonship as commensurate with the future bodily resurrection, when conformity into the image of the firstborn Son will reach its consummation (1 John 3:2; Rom. 8:23, 29).

KEY WORDS: adoption, blood, sacrifice, new birth, synoptic

## **John 1:12-13**

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

## **1 John 3:1**

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

## **Introduction**

### **The Context and purpose of John 1:12-13 and 1 John 3:1 in Johannine Theology**

John's writings prove from the outset that their author is a convinced believer and because of that he wants his readers to see the saving significance of what he narrates. He makes not the slightest attempt to conceal this, but says plainly: "These are written, that you may believe that

\* DINU MOGA (MTh in Historical Theology, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2005; PhD in Theology, Babeş-Bolyai University, 2015) teaches Dogmatic Theology at Emanuel University of Oradea. E-mail: dinu.moga@emanuel.ro.

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31, see Morris 1971: 70). Thus, the force of his arguments is evident: John is trying to persuade. He is not recording fact for facts’ sake.

According to John 20:30-31 it is clear that John’s stated purpose for his Gospel is evangelistic since the questions he wants to answer for his readers are: Who is Jesus? Who is the Messiah, for the sake of the Jews? And Who is the Son of God, for the sake of the Gentiles. (For the many titles John accorded to Jesus in answer to these questions, see Reymond 2001: 17. For a more detailed study of the theological and historical aspects of the Forth Gospel, see also Morris 1971: 65-138.) These are not questions asked by the Christians, but questions that non-Christians would need to have answered. So John’s primary target audience would appear to be non-Christian Jews and God-fearing Gentiles though a certain residual benefit would of course accrue to Christians, too.

John begins to carry out his stated purpose for his Gospel by drawing a very informative picture of Jesus Christ in chapter one through three. Describing Jesus, Bultmann explains that in John, Jesus appears neither as the rabbi arguing about questions of the Law nor as the prophet proclaiming the breaking in of the Reign of God. Rather, he speaks only of his own person as the Revealer whom God has sent. He does not argue about the Sabbath and fasting or purity and divorce but speaks of his coming and his going, of what he is and what he brings the world (Bultmann 1955: 4). His attention is focused upon the His authority as the Son of God and seeks to demonstrate that.

As he does in his Gospel, John informs the reader of his purpose in writing 1 John (see 1 John 5:11-12). These verses contain a message of encouragement and reassurance sent to a group of believers who were perplexed and bewildered by certain happenings in their midst. (For a more detailed presentation of the events, their theological implications and the practical exhortations, see Bruce 1978: 25-28; also Kruse 2000: 2ff.) Reymond, for example, shows that such a purpose carries John’s readers one step beyond his Gospel. John wrote his Gospel to *arouse* faith; he wrote 1 John to *establish* faith’s certainty (Reymond 2001: 101). The absence of customary epistolary form suggests that it is not so much a personal letter as it is a theological treatise, a polemical tractate or pamphlet, a kind of doctrinal manifesto. (For the epistolary elements which lack from 1 John, see Reymond 2001: 104, cf. Bruce 1978: 25.) 1 John is wholly and vigorously polemical; it is passionately concerned for the truth. It may even be said that 1 John is the Johannine counterpart to Paul’s letter to the Galatians; in both a no-holds-barred attitude against any compromise of the truth is evident. John writes his epistle against, probably the followers of

Cerinthus, those teachers who were denying not the deity, but the full and true humanity of Christ (regarding the false teachers that John opposed, see Reymond 2001: 105).

Accordingly, John writes to expose this false teaching by emphasizing the real and true humanity of the Son of God (1 John 1:1-3a; 4:2-3,9,10,14) in keeping with the dictum “the Word became flesh” of his Gospel (1:14). He also writes to give assurance to Christians about their salvation (Reymond 2001: 106).

### **Relationship with the Synoptics**

There is no question but that the language of the Forth Gospel is different from that of the Synoptics. Compared with the synoptics the Gospel of John is very different, so different that it has raised a series of debates regarding whether “it reports accurately the teachings of Jesus or whether Christian faith has so modified the tradition that history is swallowed up in the theological interpretation.” (For a detailed and extensive analysis of the differences, and some similarities, between the Gospel of John and the Synoptics, see Morris 1971: 15-63; Ladd 1975: .215ff; Bultmann 1955: 3ff; Morris 1972: 49-52, and Reymond 2001: 21-27.)

We can easily notice that the themes taken up by John in his Gospel, to which his epistles are closely connected, are not those found in the synoptics. The parables so characteristic of the synoptic Jesus are completely lacking; in their place appear the great symbolic discourses of the good shepherd (ch. 10) and the true vine (ch. 15), which by a symbolic figure represent Jesus as the Revealer. They belong to a cycle of words and discourses whose distinguishing characteristic is the “I am” of the Revealer, and are without analogy in the synoptics.

Although there are differences between this Gospel and the Synoptics, it is quite possible to have an essential unity in the realm of ideas even though the form of words employed in different writings may be very different (Morris refers to A.M. Hunter, whose study on the unity of the New Testament is well known, see Morris 1971: 106). Reymond sees the relationship this Gospel has with the rest of the Synoptics Gospel as a “climactic supplement to the other three”, but expresses as well the current general opinion that the Forth Gospel is probably literarily independent of the Synoptics, but as the Synoptics, is ultimately dependent upon the oral tradition about Jesus which lies behind the “literary sources” which were used in the composition of John’s Gospel as we have it today (Reymond 2001: 19-20).

What each writer of the Gospels are saying in his own terms is that in Jesus Christ we see God’s action for the salvation of all mankind. It is this breadth of vision that we need if we are to compare the Forth Gospel with

the other three. There are differences indeed, but there is not a different message and there is not a different Christ. John is speaking about the same Lord and the same salvation as the other three do. The four Evangelists had the same Person in mind. It was the one Jesus who inspired the four Gospels. Morris concludes that “Jesus is such a gigantic figure that we need all four portraits to discern Him” (Morris 1971: 107).

### **Themes in John’s writings**

The one demand Jesus makes of men to receive his gift of eternal life is faith, belief. This becomes explicit in John in a way that is not evident in the Synoptics. Faith does indeed play an important role in the Synoptics, but in terminology at least, faith is primarily in God, the presence and the power of whose kingly reign Jesus proclaimed. There are sayings in the Synopsis which point implicitly to the fact that Jesus required faith in Himself (more about the way faith operates in the Synoptics, see Ladd 1975: 270ff). That such faith involves more than a correct theology is seen in the distinctive Johannine idiom, *pisteuo eis*. Ladd explains that this is a unique Christian idiom that has no parallels in secular Greek or in the LXX and may have been patterned after the Semitic idiom *heemin be*.

Ladd continues to explain that since the LXX does not render the Hebrew preposition by *eis* but uses the simple dative, it is more likely that the idiom *pisteuo eis* is a distinctive Christian creation designed to express the personal relationship of commitment between the believer and Jesus. This is supported by the parallelism between the idiom of belief and baptism. One must believe on (*eis*) Christ or on the name of Christ (1:12; 2:23; 3:18) and be baptised into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27) or *into* the name of Christ (1 Cor. 1:13; Mat. 28:19; Acts 8:16). As baptism into Christ represents union with Christ in death and newness of life (Rom. 6:4-5), so faith in (*eis*) Christ means personal identification with him. To believe means to receive Him (1:12; 5:43; 13:20), to receive the testimony (3:11), to receive Jesus’ words (12:48; 17:8, see Ladd 1975: 272).

From the theme of faith, which belongs to all those who received Him, John turns to explain what happens to all those who respond this way. His introduction in the theme of adoption is made through the expression „He gave the right to become children of God”. In his studies on John 1:12 Leon Morris distinguishes three important words in John 1:12 which leads to the theme of adoption. These words are “gave”, “the right” and “children” (Morris 1972: 98). Those who received Him have been given the status of children of God.

At this point it is helpful to show that while the New Testament sees God as the Father of all men, paradoxically it does not think of all men as sons of God. (For a helpful discussion on this distinction, see Lloyd-Jones

1997: 181ff, cf. Lloyd-Jones 1993: 14.) God's attitude to all men is that of a Father, in a general sense. All are His sons in the sense that He made them, and that He provides for them. But men are His sons in the full sense only as they respond to what He does for them in Christ. When they receive the word, they are born again (ch. 3) into the heavenly family. It is only in this way that they are really God's children.

Dealing with the theme of adoption Ladd makes a distinction between sonship through creation and sonship through redemption. For the former he refers to texts such as Acts 17:28 where we have a theology, he says, of universal Fatherhood of God. From such verses it follows that all men, being the creatures of the one God, are brothers. In this theology man's sonship to God is a universal truth that belongs to all men by nature, and since men are intrinsically the children of God, this fact should be determinative of their attitude toward God and of their relationship to one another.

But the expression "son of God" can be used to describe the relationship men may sustain to God as the peculiar objects of his loving care. Ladd calls this "the moral-religious" use and may be applied both to men and to the nation of Israel. This is the deeper meaning of Exodus 4:22. Israel is not only a nation brought into being by the activity of God, but also God's firstborn, the special object of his fatherly love. Israel is God's elect people. Repeatedly throughout the Old Testament, the relationship that Israel sustains to God is described in terms of sonship (Deut. 14:1; Jer. 3:19, 20; Hos. 11:1). In the New Testament, this concept is filled with deeper significance as Christians are described in terms of sonship to God whether by birth (John 3:3; 1:12) or by adoption (Rom. 8:14, 19; Gal. 3:26; 4:5).

### **Exegesis on John 1:12-13 and 1 John 3:1**

In verses 12 and 13 from the first chapter of his gospel John turns towards those who responded to the Word by receiving and believing in Him. To these who responded this way the Word gave "the right" or "the authority" to become God's children. This determines Leon Morris to make the important point that „the end of the story is not the tragedy of rejection, but the *grace* of acceptance" (Morris 1972: 98). There were men to whom He *gave* the gift that they should receive the Word and become children of God.

By using the words "the right" John does not speak of status. Again, Morris explains that the root meaning of the word *exousian* is that of "authorisation, an imparted title to a new status, rather than an inherent ability" (see footnote 73 in Morris 1972: 98). Those who received Him by faith have received full authority to this exalted title.

John does not say “to be” children of God, but “to become”. This shows that not only is there a status, but there is a change of status. Elsewhere in his gospel it is spoken as of passing from death to life (5:24). As for the third word “children” we need to point to the fact that John refers to them as “children” rather than “sons” of God. The term he uses is one which draws attention to community of nature (cf. 2 Peter 1:4, “that... you may become partakers of the divine nature”), rather than one which would stress the rights and privileges of sonship.

But how exactly have received these this status or this change of nature? John proceeds to explain that the children are those who believed. In the opening part of the verse John has spoken of receiving Him. Now he speaks in terms of believing on His name. The expression is *tois pisteuousin eis to onoma autu*. Morris draws attention to the fact that while John uses the verb *pisteuo* 98 times, more than the other evangelists and Paul as well, he never uses the noun *pistis* (see a detailed explanation for the use of verb with preposition *eis* in Morris 1971: 335-336). It is, however, significant to see the use of the verb with the preposition *eis* to believe “into”, which finds no parallel either in profane Greek or in the LXX (for this observation Morris interacts with Dodd, see footnote 131 of Morris 1971: 335).

Basic to this construction is the idea of that activity of believing which takes the believer out of himself and makes him one with Christ. But really to believe the Father or really to believe the facts about Christ inevitably involves the attitude of trustful reliance on God which is basic for the Christian (details in Morris 1971: 337). It is clear that he thought of faith as an activity, as something that men do. The sense must be that the believer throws himself upon his Lord in loving, self-abandoning faith and trust.

Notice then that they are to believe “on his name”. The “name” is a description of all “God” means. To believe “on the name” of the Word, then, means to believe that God is the God we see revealed in the Word and to put our trust in God. This is more than simple credence. It is not believing that what He says is true but trusting Him as a person. It is believing “in” or “on” Him.

In John 1 verse 13 John moves on to describe the way men enter the heavenly family. He uses the plural form “who were born” in order to refer to those who believe in verse 12 (for the incorrect use of the singular and the reasons thereof, see Morris 1972: 100). The origin of the “children of God” is described three times negatively and one positively. They are “not of blood” which could point to an idea in antiquity which suggested that birth took place as the result of the action of blood (details in Morris 1972: 100), “nor of the will of the flesh” denoting in John “man’s bodily nature in its weakness rather than in its sinfulness” (Morris 1972: 101) as the term “flesh” is commonly used by Paul. Nothing human can bring about the

birth of which he speaks. Over against this John sets the way men are born into the heavenly family. The new birth is always sheer miracle. All human initiative is ruled out. Men are born “of God” They can be born in no other way.

As we take in consideration the first epistle of John we see how the apostle moves here to a deeper argument, if we may say so, something still more profound. As John proceeds in this letter he reaches verse 29 in the second chapter where he makes an important transition towards the theme of being born of God, being children of God. Howard Marshall explains that the new idea introduced in verse 29 of chapter 2 is that of spiritual birth and it will figure prominently in the rest of the epistle (3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18; cf. John 1:13; 3:6, 8, see Marshall 1978: 167). Through this new idea John makes it clear that membership in the family of God is to be received through a spiritual birth. Those who become children of God this way need to understand that membership in the family of God is to be recognized by the family likeness; since the Father of the family is righteous, the children will practice righteousness. Bruce explains at this point that righteousness is the mark of recognition for all those who are children of God, even he they make no such claims in words (Bruce 1978: 79).

This spiritual birth brings about a new relationship. The thought is that believers stand in a new relationship to God, analogous to that of children to a father. This is common picture elsewhere in the New Testament, and has its basis in the Old Testament where God’s people are said to be related to him, like children to a father, and the thought is of his fatherly care for them and their filial duty of obedience towards him (Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 14:1; 32:6; Psalm 103:13; Proverbs 3:12; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8; Jeremiah 31:9,20 Hosea 11: Malachi 1:6; 2:10).

The metaphor is taken further when it is expressed in terms of begetting and birth. Christians have received new life from God by a creative act comparable with physical begetting. This is as far as the metaphor can be taken: we never hear in the Bible of a female partner in the act of spiritual birth. The point of the metaphor is rather to indicate that spiritual life comes from God through the agency of the Word and Spirit. The Christian is thus placed in the same relationship to God as is occupied by Jesus, although John preserves the distinction by reserving the name of “Son” for Jesus and referring to Christians simply as “children” of God. Marshall explains in his footnote that both Jesus and Paul speak of men as “sons of God” (Mat. 5:9; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 3:26; 4:4-7. Elsewhere in the New Testament spiritual birth is mentioned in 1 Peter 1:3, 23; Titus 3:5).

The question of the origins of John’s terminology is an important one. Many scholars claim that here a Hellenistic idea has been imported into Christianity (see Bultmann 1955: 45-47; Marshall 1978: 168).

Marshall explains that the use of this new expression may have been introduced here in anticipation of the use of the metaphor in 3:9. At the same time, perhaps it was an easy equivalent for John to use with reference to Christians as those who have received a divine anointing, and to this extent the way had already been prepared for its use (Marshall 1978: 168). This transitional element is explained by Marshall to be an easy one due to the fact that in both anointing and the new birth the Word and the Spirit are the operative factors (see footnotes in Marshall 1978: 169). Here he has in mind the problem of testing the truth of claims to be true Christians within the church, and John asserts that true righteousness is possible only on the basis of spiritual birth (Marshall 1978: 169).

The new line of thought our “knowing that God is righteous, and doing righteousness accordingly” (Candlish 1973: 264), in virtue of “our being born of him is what awakens John’s grateful surprise, and occasions his exclamation “Behold, what manner of love!” His discourse now is an expansion of that thought. Our being called the children of God is a wonderful instance of the Father’s love (Candlish 1974: 265). This is marvellous because John speaks about us, those who were lost and guilty. F.F. Bruce shows that the language used in these verses echoes that of the Prologue to the Gospel, where the Eternal Logos received no welcome among those who should be first to acknowledge him: “but to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born... of God (John 1:12,13, see Bruce 1978: 85). Marshall explains that the train of thought has an interesting parallel in John 3 where the conversation with Nicodemus about the new birth from above through which alone men can enter the kingdom of God is followed by the magnificent declaration of the divine love which sent God’s only Son so that we might have eternal life (Marshall 1978: 1690170).

The author includes himself with his readers among those (we) who are called the children (*teckna*) of God. In his footnotes Colin G. Kruse on 1 John explains that in 1 John *teknon* is always and only used to denote “children of God” (3:1, 2, 10: 5:2, see Kruse 2000: 115). *Teknion* or *paidion* are used as terms of address for the readers. In 2 John *teknon* is used for children of the “Elect Lady” (1,4,13), and in 3 John it is used for believers in the Johannine writings; *huios* is always reserved for Christ.) So then what exactly it means when we are told that we are the children of God? Lloyd-Jones explains that as children we stand in a certain position; a child is in a certain relationship to the parents—it has a certain status and is therefore entitled to certain privileges. The word *child* or *son*, especially at this point, carries with it a kind of legal statement which defines the relationship and position and status. A child is one who is related to a given parent in a way

that no one else is; so you can look at it in that external manner, from the pure standpoint of legal relationship (Lloyd-Jones 1993: 14).

To be called children of God is an immense privilege because it means that God himself has chosen us to be in his family. The best commentary of what it means to be children of God is found in John 1:12-13. Looked at from a human point of view, those who “receive” Christ, in the sense of believing in him, are children of God. Looked at from the divine point of view, his children are those who are “born of God”, or as Jesus puts it in John 3:8, those who are “born of the Spirit”. The author not only says that he and his readers are “called” children of God as an outcome of God’s love lavished upon them, but emphasises the reality of this status when he adds, “And that is what we are!” (Kruse 2000: 115)

The question is how were we made sons of God? His answer is: Through his own Son making common cause with us, that we may have a common standing with him. And to what effect? That we may be to Him what His own Son is to Him; the objects of the same love; sharers of the same rank (Candlish 1973: 265-266). The “love package” contains our title to be called children of God (cf. 3:2, 10; 5:2; John 1:12; 11:52; Romans 8:16; 9:8; Philippians 2:15).

But it is chiefly one element or feature in this high calling that the apostle has before him when he breaks out into this rapturous exclamation; our being the sons of God as “born of him” (2:29); our undergoing a divine birth which, making us partakers of the divine nature, makes us thereby really and truly children of God; children, in a sense, by nature; and therefore fitly acknowledged as children (Candlish 1973: 266).

Notice the peculiar turn of expression. As exactly rendered, it is not that we should be called “the sons”, but rather, that we should be called “children” of God. It is not said merely that we are called his sons, as having him standing to us in the relation of a Father; but that we are called his children; his divinely-born children; deriving from a divine birth, a divine nature; children of God, in respect of our being born of God. A reference to the original confirms this criticism. *Tekna Teous* is the phrase not *huioi Pateros* (Candlish 1973: 266).

Lloyd-Jones explains the important difference between the use of “children” and “sons” showing that when John says that “we are called the children of God” it means that we share the very nature of God. “This is why the authorities” notes Lloyd-Jones, “are all careful to point out that the right translation here is “children of God” and not “sons of God” (Lloyd-Jones 1993: 15). Lloyd-Jones asks: “Is there a difference between a child and a son?” (Lloyd-Jones 1993: 15) The word “son” emphasises a legal, external relationship, whereas the word “child” always puts the emphasis upon the common nature, that the child is derived from the parent and

shares the nature and the blood of the parent. It emphasises this internal, vital, organic aspect of the relationship rather than the legal position. And what John, therefore, is reminding us of here is that we who are truly Christians are sharers of the very life of God. Peter expresses this by saying that we have become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). John does the same in his analogy of the vine and the branches in John 15, where the life of the vine passes into the branches through that vital and organic relationship.

Again, we say that it is fatherly love that explains our being called children of God in virtue of our being born of God. It is the very glory and perfection of the love which the Father bestows on us, that we are thus called or constituted children of God (Candlish 1973: 266).

Candlish suggests that our being called “children of God” may be considered simply as an act of adoption, very much analogous to what is practiced among men. Viewed in that light, it is unquestionably an instance of fatherly love, and fatherly love of no ordinary kind (Candlish 1973: 267). Candlish continues to deal with this notion explaining that God “begets us” to himself, we are born of God by an inward communication of his nature to us. He wants us to be not titular, but real and actual children; children by participation of nature as well as by deed of adoption; by a new creation as well as a new covenant; of one mind and heart, of one character and moral frame with himself (Candlish 1973: 270).

### **Conclusions**

Therefore, we conclude here that John’s main thought in this letter as well as in his gospel is that as a result of Christ’s righteousness we are not only in fellowship with God, we are also children of God. We are born of God. We are not only in a new relationship in an external manner, we have a vital internal relationship. The whole theme of the third chapter is the fact that we are born of God and are in this organic, internal relationship to Him. To say it differently as children we are members of the family of God. A perfect parallel to this is expressed by Paul in Ephesians 2:12,19 where he shows that we have been made “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” We have become members of God’s family; we really are in that relationship to him because we have His nature. Because we have received of His life, we, as children, belong to His family, we belong to his household, therefore we are in this unique relationship to Him.

How have we become the children of God? In 1 John 3:1 the apostle gives the answer. John does not merely say that God has shown His love to us, but goes further and says that God has bestowed His love upon us. This means that God has put His love into us, implanted Himself, infused or injected His love within us. What really makes us children of God is that

God has put His own life into us. God's nature is love, and He has put His nature into us so that we have the love of God. We cannot be children of God if we are not like God; the child is like the parent, the offspring proclaims the parentage, and God in that way makes us His children. He puts his own nature into us, and we become His children, and that nature which is in God is in us, and it is acting and manifesting and expressing itself (Candlish 1973: 269).

### **Comparism and Contrast Between John's Model of New Birth and Paul's Model of Adoption**

When we consider the use of adoption in Paul's writings we find that it is suggested that the best place to enter Paul's doctrine of adoption is Romans 9:4, because at the core of Paul's argument in this verse is that Israel's sonship status is in "direct continuity with sonship status realized in Christ, because God's covenantal faithfulness continues from old to new covenants under the singular covenant of grace" (a more extensive consideration is given in Garner 2002: 42). Adoption *hiutesia* is an exclusive Pauline term, and is used five times in the New Testament (Romans 8:15, Romans 8:23, Romans 9:4; Galatians 4:5 and Ephesians 1:5). The problem identified with the use of this term is that when adoption has been given theological attention has borne an almost exclusively "forensic cast" (Garner 2002: 2). The aim of most recent scholarly works is to show that Paul extends the term *hiutesia* beyond its legal cultural constraints, and permeates the term with biblico-theological content (Garner 2002: 2ff). Since *hiutesia* has been perceived as an exclusively forensic doctrine, issuing in filial privileges, Trumper's assertions concerning the incompatibility of the sonship models are virtually self-evident. John's model of sonship as new birth pictures the internal *renovation* of nature wrought by the Spirit. Paul's model of sonship as adoption pictures the external and legal familial privileges granted by the Spirit in Christ, wherein adopted sons are freed from bondage of sin (Garner 2002: 137-138).

As hinted already Paul freely uses the term *huios* for Christ and *huios* for the redeemed in solidarity with him. John's writings have received as well considerable attention within the study of spiritual adoption. Though the term *hiutesia* is found only in Pauline literature, almost without fail, Garners explains that Reformed systematic theology which gives any particular attention to adoption, cites John 1:12-13 and 1 John 3:1-3 as critical biblical texts on adoption (Garner 2002: 126). The same person continues to say that although John does not use the term *hiutesia* it does not mean that it dismisses the possibility of using adoption conceptually (Garner 2002: 129).

These differences between Paul and John in their distinct usage of *huios* and *tekna* correspondingly affirm underlying distinctions in their sonship

models (Garner 2002: 130). Morris continues to explain that John uses the term *tekna* and never uses the term *huios* for man's sonship to God, because he keeps that term for Christ. He alone has full rights to what the term denotes. The nearest John gets to it is when he refers to men becoming *huioi fotos* in 12:36. By contrast, Paul speaks of men as both *huioi* and *tekna*. Morris supports the idea that Paul uses *huioi* term in order to refer to the rights Christ confers on those adopted into heavenly family, rather than the community of nature they share (Morris 1972: 98).

Thus Garner suggests that while many attempt to conflate the sonship metaphors of Paul and John, Johannine and Pauline sonship models actually differ substantially" (Garner 2002: iii). Trumper observes that the conflation of Johannine and Pauline sonship models, though they are inherently incompatible "has been quite happily accepted since time immemorial" (Trumper 1996: 141-142). The apparent confusion in John's gospel is expressed in the question: How can one be both born and adopted—and that as a grown-up—into the same family in one single unified movement?

Quoting Vellanickal, Garner notes that in John the term *gegenetai* is always used together with an expression that indicates the origin. Compared to Paul, who also uses the verb *genao* seven times, he notices that he never does so to denote an act of God in redemption (Garner 2002: 129).

After a detailed and careful analysis of John's and Paul's similarities and contrasts, Bultmann comes to the following conclusion: "Clearly, then, John is not of the Pauline school and is not influenced by Paul; he is, instead, a figure with his own originality and stands in an atmosphere of theological thinking different from that of Paul (Bultmann 1955: 9).

Both Johannine and Pauline sonship models provide important soteriological doctrine in each in its *own right*, which must not be conflated so as to rob them of their intended soteriological nuances.

It is imperative to recognized that both Paul and John perceive divine sonship as an eschatological phenomenon, because of the eschatological character of the Christ event (Garner 2002: 139). The true emphasis of both authors is that sonship is realized now yet realized in full at the Parousia. Sonship is inaugurated, but not consummated (Garner 2002: 140).

Both Paul and John perceive soteriology as eschatology and both recognize the inaugurated eschatological character of the inter-advent period. It is therefore important to recognize how both the Pauline and Johannine models of sonship unite at the resurrection. Both anticipate the fullness of sonship as commensurate with the future bodily resurrection, when conformity into the image of the firstborn Son will reach its consummation (1 John 3:2; Rom. 8:23, 29, see Garner 2002: 141).

Thus, whether it is John using *tekna* or Paul using *huios* or *tekna*, both authors recognize the centrality of the resurrection of the *huios par excellence* for sonship regeneration/transformation. Because of the believers' comprehensive solidarity with the Son, Christ's resurrection directly informs the character of sonship by new birth or adoption. It is his resurrected sonship in its consummate renovation to which the re-born and adopted sons of God will *mutatis mutandis* attain (Garner 2002: 142).

The new birth denotes a totally new mode of existence, one that belongs to the eschatological renewal of all things by God. For both John and Paul the eschatological renewal of the *huios* and the *tekna* is accomplished by the resurrection of Christ (Garner 2002: 142). Recognizing both realized and unrealised eschatology in John and Paul, it is striking that the resurrection of Christ is inclusively determinative for their sonship theologies. Whether using a motif of new birth or adoption, these biblical writers share this emphasis on Christ's resurrection as determinative of the present and future character of the believer's sonship. Sons of God—either by regeneration or adoption—are compelled to act in obedience because of their participation in Christ's resurrection. Just as Christ obeyed as the messianic Son, so those in union with him must fulfil covenantal obligation. His conviction is that the preservation of biblical integrity and the perpetuation of systematic theological precision necessitate recognizing distinctions in these authors' sonship models (Garner p. 128). With a deeper examination of the Johannine texts and after a closer examination of the Pauline texts we can assert that there is a distinction between the sonship models.(Garner 2002: 128-29).

### Final Conclusions

It is widely demonstrated that John's model of sonship is new birth originating by divine conception. In John being a child is always rooted in a new birth of God. This is how Garner puts it: "It is with this particular familial model that John develops his conception of the believer's existential possession of the gospel of Christ by faith. While for John, Christ is the unique Son (υιός) believers are children (τέκνα) of God by the regeneration of the eschatological Spirit" (Garner 2002: 120-130). Concerning *tekna* and *huios* it can be said that John does use the terms distinctly. The fact that he does not confuse them is not simply a matter of style. Paul, on the other hand, uses them almost interchangeably.

In John's sonship concept, Christ as *huios* is always distinguished from the believer as *teknon*, whereby John's vocabulary protects the eternity and inimitability of the Son *par excellence*. At the same time, the believer's relationship with Christ by faith is described as birth from above, placing the child in consummate solidarity with the unique eschatological Son.

John's conception of sonship, while acknowledging the soteriological centrality of Christ's uniqueness, is fundamentally birth from above, a regeneration motif which emphasizes the distinction between natural birth by human activity and divine birth by the sovereign dispensation of the Spirit through faith in the Son (Garner 2002: 131). The eternal sonship of Christ differs radically from the character of the redeemed sonship, yet the sonship of the redeemed resides exclusively in the Son himself. Therefore, the forensic cast of adoption is foreign to John's concept of sonship, and the importation of adoption into John generally obscures his focus on divine origin and family likeness in the new birth (Garner 2002: 131).

The perceptible key factor leading to the conclusion that John teaches adoption is the juridical tenor of John 1:12 and the comparable declaration in John 3:1. It is assumed that John is appealing to adoption. It seems best to understand John as expounding upon his new birth model in John 1:12. The sheer consistency and clarity of Johannine rebirth in other passages (*i.e.*, John 3:1-3) indicates the prominence of regeneration as his choice model of sonship (Garner 2002: 132).

The overarching point that John makes in 1:12 concerning the believer's new birth/sonship is that it comes only by the sovereign grace of God and is a privilege that is unattainable by fleshly means (Garner 2002: 133). Johannine vocabulary itself points to the new birth as a gift of the Spirit of God in contrast to fleshly, worldly, natural means. Sonship is from above (*anoten*, John 3:5-6), and as such it comes only by the sovereign and unpredictable moving of the Spirit of God according to the restorative work of God in salvation. God alone can declare and effect such a transformation, which is complete, irreversible and spiritually derived (Garner 2002: 133).

## References

- Bruce FF (1978) *The Epistles of John*. London: Pickering & Inglis.
- Bultmann R (1955) *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 2. [Translated by K Grobel.] London: SCM Press.
- Candlish RS (1973) *A Commentary on 1 John*. London: The Banner of Truth Trust.
- Garner DB (2002) *Adoption in Christ*. PhD Dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.
- Kruse CG (2000) *The Letters of John*. Leicester & Grand Rapids: Appollos & Eerdmans.
- Ladd GE (1975) *A Theology of the New Testament*. London: Lutterworth Press.
- Lloyd-Jones M (1993) *Children of God*. Studies in 1 John, Life in Christ, vol. 3. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.
- Lloyd-Jones M (1997) *God the Holy Spirit*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

- Marshall HI (1978) *The Epistles of John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Morris L (1971) *Studies in the Forth Gospel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Morris L (1972) *The Gospel According to John*. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott.
- Reymond RL (2001) *John, Beloved Disciple, A Survey of His Theology*. Fearn: Christian Focus Publications.
- Trumper TJR (1996) "The Metaphorical Import of Adoption: A Plea for Realisation I: The Adoption Metaphor in Biblical Usage." *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 14.2.