

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTIONS # 74 & 34.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #74. *What is adoption?*

A. Adoption is an act of the free grace of God,¹ in and for his only Son Jesus Christ,² whereby all those that are justified are received into the number of his children,³ have his name put upon them,⁴ the Spirit of his Son given to them,⁵ are under his fatherly care and dispensations,⁶ admitted to all the liberties and privileges of the sons of God, made heirs of all the promises, and fellow-heirs with Christ in glory.⁷

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #34. *What is adoption?*

A. Adoption is an act of God's free grace,⁸ whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.⁹

Question 1—*What is adoption generally?*

Answer—Adoption into God's family is the peculiar privilege of those who are effectually called, Gal. 3:26. Adoption follows upon our justification and is an act of God's free grace, 1 John 3:1. Metaphorically, adoption is an ingrafting so that the stock adopts the branch cut off of another tree, and put into another branch of it, Rom. 11:17. Divine adoption is an act of God, whereby he does judicially take (and constitute) those that are by nature strangers to him, and none of his family, members of his family, and his own children, giving them the privileges of his children, or of his house as children; which is twofold:

First, it is external and federal which is common to the members of the visible church, whereby they enjoy peculiar privileges beyond the rest of the world, e.g., Rom. 3:1, 2. This adoption belonged to Israel of old, Rom. 9:4. For God owned them as sons in the midst of Egypt, Ex. 4:22, 23. Now, under the Gospel, this has been extended unto the Gentiles, Gal. 3:26, 27. This family has always, since Cain was cast out, been a separate family in the world, chosen out from among the rest, Gen. 6:2.

This adoption, is really in itself a high dignity, so that, in comparison of them, the rest of the world are but as dogs to children, Matt. 15:26. It is possible for men to retain this relation and yet remain in their natural relation to the devil, as to their internal state, so as they may be lost forever, John 8:44.

¹ 1 John 3:1.

² Eph. 1:5; Gal. 4:4, 5.

³ John 1:12.

⁴ 2 Cor. 6:18; Rev. 3:12.

⁵ Gal. 4:6.

⁶ Ps. 103:13; Prov. 14:26; Matt. 6:32.

⁷ Heb. 6:12; Rom. 8:17.

⁸ 1 John 3:1.

⁹ John 1:12; Rom. 8:17.

Second, it is internal and saving adoption, which is peculiar to believers, or those effectually called and converted, whereby they enjoy spiritual privileges beyond all those who are numbered in the visible church, being ingrafted into Christ and made real members of his body, John 1:12, 13. These God adopts, he judicially avouches them to be his sons and daughters, having a right to the saving privileges of the children of his family, Gal. 4:4, 5; Eph. 1:5.

Adoption is not a real change of the sinner's nature; but, as justification is a relative change of his state whereby men are brought out of a state of alienation from God and are no more aliens or foreigners to the family of heaven, but domestics of it, Eph. 2:19. In adoption, our names are enrolled among those of the family, Luke 10:20; and though a new nature accompanies it, Eph. 4:24; yet adoption itself is a new name, not a new nature, with vast privileges attending it, Rev. 2:17.

Adoption is done in an instant, not carried on by degrees; as soon as the soul is married to Christ, it is a son or daughter of the house of heaven, and its relation to that of hell is extinguished, John 1:12. It is true, there will be at the great day a solemn declaration of that adoption, and the adopted will then be perfectly past their minority, and enter into the full possession of the inheritance, Rom. 8:23. Nonetheless, those who are adopted are already the children of God, 1 John 3:2.

Question 2—What are the parts of adoption?

Answer—The parts of adoption are two:

First, the receiving of the sinner into the number of God's children wherein the adopter is God, and particularly, in respect to the dispensation of redemption, the Father, Eph. 1:3, 5. Wherefore the love of the Father is celebrated in adoption, 1 John 3:1. The party adopted is the elect sinner in pursuance of God's eternal predestination, Eph. 1:5. All these elect ones were known from eternity to God, 2 Tim. 2:19.

Second, the giving of him a right to the privileges of the sons of God wherein are numerous benefits to be considered: 1.) A new name, for they are no longer called children of the devil, but are retitled to reflect their new relation to God, Rev. 3:12; 2 Cor. 6:18. They are called sons and daughters of God, Heb. 12:5. Though the world call them by names of contempt, they are given honorable names by God, Ex. 19:5; Mal. 3:17. 2.) The Spirit of adoption, enabling them to call God Father, Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6. 3.) Access to God and communion with him when others must stand back, Eph. 3:12. By this, God takes delight in the prayers of his people poured out, by virtue of this Spirit of adoption, Prov. 15:8; Song 2:14. 4.) Special immunities and freedoms, Matt. 17:26. They are free from the curse which is placed upon others for every breach of the law, Gal. 3:10. They are freed from the hurt of every thing which issues from such a breach, Luke 10:19. 5.) God's fatherly love and pity whereby he distinguishes in them weakness from wickedness and pities them, Ps. 103:13. When he corrects them, he does it with fatherly reluctance, Lam. 3:33. 6.) Protection, for they are in danger here in this world, from the devil, the world and the flesh, Prov. 14:26. God sets a hedge about them, which neither devils nor their agents can break through, but as he opens gaps by his permission for their trial, Job 1:10. 7.) Provision, which arises from his fatherly care, 1 Pet. 5:7. He provides for their souls, Ps. 84:11. He provides for their bodies, both food and raiment, Isa. 33:16; Matt. 6:30, 32. Indeed, he provides for all of their necessities, Ps. 37:3. 8.) Seasonable and sanctified correction is a special benefit of the covenant of grace, proceeding from God's fatherly love, Ps. 89:30-32. What is a proper punishment and a sign of wrath to others, is a privilege to them, Heb. 12:6. 8.) An

inheritance and portion, according to their Father's quality; they are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, Rom. 8:17. Their portion will never fail, but will declare itself through eternity, when the portion of worldly men shall be at an end, 1 Pet. 1:4. It is an inheritance which is not moveable, though many things moveable be given in accordance with the wisdom of the Father, Heb. 12:28.

Question 3—*What are the properties of this adoption?*

Answer—There are several properties of this adoption: 1.) It is a precious and costly relation which was obtained by great sum, *cf.* Acts 22:28. Although this sum was not paid by the child of God himself, for the Son of God, Christ, bought them by his obedience and death, Gal. 4:4, 5. 2.) It is a high and honorable relation, for those who are low naturally are, by the adopting grace, raised to the highest pitch of honor we are capable of obtaining, *cf.* 1 Sam. 18:23. 3.) It is freely bestowed, for there is nothing in the adopted naturally, more than the rest of mankind, to move God to pitch on them, Eph. 1:5. Neither birth, nor beauty, nor parts can be alleged, Ezek. 16:3-6. 4.) It is a never failing relation, once a child of God, ever so, John 8:35. If a child wander from the father's house, he will be sought and brought back again, Luke 15:20. God's adopted children never fall totally away, Ps. 89:30-34.