

Doctrine of Adoption - III. Synopsis of Roman Adoption

The Romans raised their children in a very strict atmosphere designed to make them adults by age 14. If a young boy properly responded to authority, at the appropriate time he was given all the privileges of Roman citizenship. If a boy showed slow development and tended to reject the authority of the system, then his father sought a replacement.

Thus, the Roman system of primogeniture was flexible in that it allowed aristocrats to seek a strong replacement for their weak sons. They could go to the plebeian class and select a young man who showed promise and a willingness to advance in the authoritarian system of Roman aristocracy. If he advanced as expected, he was adopted into the patrician family and became heir apparent to the father's position as head of the household.

The natural born son became the responsibility of the adopted son. He was to be cared for and provided for. However, he did not have the natural privileges which would normally have been his had he shown positive volition to the system. In this way, the Roman society was able to remain strong and vibrant for centuries.

The flexibility of their system of primogeniture allowed them to replace the occasionally weak natural born son with a strong adopted son. The result was that quality people maintained control of the patrician class. When the patrician class was strong and healthy their prosperity trickled down to the lower classes.

The openness of adoption allowed everyone an opportunity to rise above their station in life. All that was required was a willingness to adjust to a system of discipline and authority. When their day came to become full citizens, they were given a new name, a new robe, and a signet ring.

These were indicators to society that this young man had demonstrated his abilities in the area of leadership and authority orientation. He had been trained under the discipline of the schoolmasters, the *paidagogos* now he was a new species, ready to serve his new father.

IV. Roman Adoption Used as An Illustration of Spiritual Adoption

Adoption speaks of God recognizing the believer at the moment of salvation as an adult son. Adoption is illustrated by the Roman custom we have examined. It speaks of our membership in the Royal Family of God and the eternal permanency of our aristocracy. Roman adoption conferred adulthood on either a natural or foster child.

God adopted Israel as His client nation but she rejected Him. Consequently, God turned to the church. We are the foster sons of God who have been adopted into royalty.

One of the responsibilities which goes with the privileges of our aristocracy is the obligation to our step-brothers, the Jews. We are to protect and defend them, offer refuge and support, and assume a pro-Semitic stance in society. But all of the family fortune is passed down to the adopted son. Thus, we are heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ.

Adoption refers to the privileges found in the top and bottom circles. Many times in Roman history, the adopted son of the emperor turned out to be a horrible leader as evidenced by Caligula, Nero, and Commodus. Such is the case for the royal family. Most refuse to utilize their assets or fulfill their responsibilities. A few do. But no matter what our function is, we are different from all other believers of all other dispensations.

The Roman adoption ceremony, the *adrogatio*, is a beautiful illustration of God's eternal decree to absorb the Church-Age believer into His royal family. From this analysis we can therefore develop the following definition for the term adoption:

“A proclamation by God at the moment of our salvation where He formally inducts us into His royal family thus making us His heirs and Christ's joint-heirs. Adoption means that we are made citizens of the heavenly community, with access to its privileges and opportunities, and granted the delegated power to utilize its assets.”

Those who make the advance will be honored at the judgment seat of Christ with one of the special awards associated with the adoption process.

Adoption among Roman patricians meant a new name and it was looked on as a reward signifying the highest level of aristocracy. The fine white linen of the *toga virilis* is symbolic of the righteousness of the believer in the eternal state. It is the essence of the believer in resurrection body.

All believers have a resurrection body but not all have a new name which goes with their adoption. That new name is reserved only for those who are classified as winners at the judgment seat of Christ. Therefore, Christ's resurrection guarantees us a resurrection body in eternity.

Those who advance to spiritual maturity in time will receive a new name written on that resurrection body. This is revealed as the third Nike Award at the judgment seat of Christ but will only be known to the one who receives it.

Revelation 2:17 - *Toi nikonti*: To him who is a winner, I will give blessing from the source of the hidden manna [**Escrow Blessings in Time**], and I will give him a white stone [**resurrection body**]; furthermore, on the stone has been written a new name of aristocracy, which new name of aristocracy no one knows except the one who receives it.

Thus, we may conclude that adoption is the result of Genuine Humility at Phase I: Gospel Hearing, while the Nike Awards are the result of Genuine Humility in Phase II: The Christian way of life.