

has indeed revealed more fully the primary and inextinguishable Fatherhood of God, but that is scarcely remembered by reason of the new glory of His Fatherhood in Christ.

Privileges. THE PRIVILEGES OF CHRISTIAN SONSHIP.

The privileges of entrance into the family of God by adoption—which as privileges are connected rather with adoption than regeneration—are distinctly exhibited in the New Testament. They are filial access in the confidence of devotion : freedom from all kinds of bondage ; the advantages of the election ; the assurance of a constant guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit ; and the enjoyment, first in earnest, and then finally, of the Christian inheritance. These all of course have relation to the other blessings of the new Covenant so far as these blessings are one in their diversity ; but they are specially connected with the Christian Sonship.

- I. Access to God in filial confidence is the first prerogative. *Ye have received the Spirit of adoption in Whom we cry, Abba, Father.*
- Rom. viii. 15. This is the secret of all Christian devotion and worship. The temple which our High Priest has consecrated is always the house of God : the house with a meaning unknown to the ancient economy, one in which the worshippers worship as children. After quoting the declaration, *I will be their God*, St. Paul adds another passage from another place, *and will be a Father unto you*. This addition
- Ex. xxix. 45. is a very striking instance of the change which Christianity has introduced in the relations of His people to God. Of Solomon it
- 2 Cor. vi. 16, 18. had been said : *I will be his Father, and he shall be My son ;* and again, *I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his Father*. The
- 2 Sam. vii. 14. Apostle extends this special privilege to all believers in Christ ;
- 1 Chron. xxviii. 6. an extension of which a distant hint had been given : *bring My sons from far and My daughters from the ends of the earth*, where
- Isa. xliii. 6. St. Paul found the sanction of the inclusion of the daughters.
- Matt. vi. 9. *Our Father !* is the new invocation. This impresses its character on

worship, public and private; and on all the communion of the soul with heaven. Christian fellowship with God is filial in and through His Son. It is assured confidence in Him as a Father.

II. Whatsoever belongs to Liberty or Freedom, in the New-Testament sense of the word, is linked with sonship. The Saviour said, *the truth shall make you free*; and then declared that the sons in the house, made free by the Son, are *free indeed*, *ὅντως ἐλεύθεροι*: with an emphasis on the *ὅντως* which meant more than the contrast with Jewish delusive freedom, the deep word being left, like many others, to be interpreted by the Spirit and to be understood by the meditation of faith. We are redeemed from *under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*. Between sonship and bondage there is no affinity. The law has become a *law of liberty*. It is written in the heart, and obedience must spring from filial love. The Christian privilege is thus contrasted with that of the Jews, who were under the law and knew not the great redemption: though the ancient people were one collective Son, they were as such *under tutors and governors* in an estate of discipline which *differeth nothing from a servant*, that is, *until the time appointed of the Father*. In itself it is emancipation from every yoke: we are *not under the law but under grace*. Grace is the new law, working by faith through love an obedience which is acceptable to God. Here justification and adoption join: the former is a perpetual sentence of release from the condemning law, the latter guarantees the strength of a new and better obedience. But, as compared with the great future, there is still a bondage to corruption, so far as the body is concerned and its infirmities. *Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*: the resurrection will bring in perfected freedom.

III. The privileges of the Election of God belong to the filial relation which is sealed by admission into the ark of the Christian family. Israel was the chosen people, *to whom pertaineth the adoption*, in St. Paul's eyes even yet untaken away; their election and their adoption were one and the same prerogative. In Christianity the election is still synonymous with adoption, but it is personal and not national: rather it is both; for the elect are the foreknown brethren of Christ and family of God glorified in eternity, even as they are one by one gathered out of the world into the Divine

Matt. vi.
9.

Freedom.

John viii.
32, 36.

Gal. iv. 5.

James i.
25.

Gal. iv. 1
2.

Rom. vi.
14.

Rom. viii.
23.

Election.

Rom. ix.
4.

household through their obedience to the evangelical call. The Father has *predestinated us unto the adoption of children*, which is, being interpreted elsewhere, *to be conformed to the image of His Son*. God's children as such are elected out of the world; they are, like their Elder Brother, and for His sake, *chosen of God and precious*, and are unspeakably dear to their heavenly Father, Who orders everything for their welfare: *all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose*. Their highest prerogative as separated from the mass is that they are *accepted in the Beloved or found in Him*, and regarded with the same complacency which rests upon their Head: *Mine Elect in whom My soul delighteth*. Jesus is our Election as well as our Righteousness and our Sanctification: The Father *hath chosen us in Him*, and our election is no more and nothing less than our union with the Redeemer.

IV. Another special prerogative of the adoption is the personal and never-failing direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God: this may be regarded as meaning, conversely, they that are the sons of God are led by the Spirit. He who testifies within them that they are children is given to them as a never-absent Guide: their religion is a life, a walk, a conversation *in the Spirit*. They *walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*. What the following of Christ is in the gospels, the following of the Holy Ghost is in the epistles. He is at all points, under all circumstances, and in the whole economy of life down to its minutest detail, the Monitor of the children of God. And this He is to them as they are children. Everywhere in the New Testament this special direction is promised to Christians as the adopted sons of the Father. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; but ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things*. St. John makes the promise to the Apostles extend to all the *little children*: submitting to His teaching, with perfect renunciation of carnal wisdom, they are led *into all truth*, at least as *the truth is in Jesus*. It is of the adopted children that St. Paul says: *the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us . . . according to the will of God*. He is in us as the Spirit of regeneration; our regenerate

The Spirit's Guidance.
Rom. viii.
14.

Gal. v. 25.
Rom. viii.
4.

1 Cor. ii.
14.
1 Jno. ii.
20, 18,
28.

John xvi.
13.
Eph. iv.
21.
Rom. viii.
26, 27.

nature itself cries unto God ; but it is the Spirit of our adoption Who beareth witness with our spirit of regeneration, in this sense also the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. It is impossible to exaggerate the blessedness of this interior and exterior guidance of the Holy Ghost given to the children of God. He is literally to them all and more than all the present Saviour was to His disciples. *He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit*, Who, common to Jesus and His brethren, is the everpresent Finger of God directing and Power of God defending the followers of Christ.

Rom. viii.
16.
Matt. x.
20.

1 Cor. vi.
17.

V. The inheritance to which Christians are called is the last privilege of their adoption. Of God's ancient children-people it was said : *I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt* ; that is, from the land of bondage. Moreover : *saying, unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance*. And they were in all respects types : in their redemption from Egypt, in their journey to Canaan, and in their possession of the promised land.

Heirship.
Hosea xi.
1.
Ps. cv. 11.

1. The Christian inheritance belongs to the children of God in a twofold sense. *And if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*. (1.) Sin condemned and disinherited man : justification removes the condemnation, and adoption restores the inheritance. That inheritance is the abundance of the privileges of the covenant : it is the whole fulness of the promises ; but especially it is God Himself. The enjoyment of the Supreme Source of blessedness is the supreme good of the soul. (2.) Hence, that most sacred and eternal inheritance which the Son hath in the Father is in some as yet unknown sense shared by us. Our heirship in God is no other than our joint heirship of God with Christ. The only allusion to the eternal decree of man's salvation is that we are *predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son*. This conformation, which is also transformation, is our eternal blessedness : it allows nothing beyond, for it is the perfection of man in the perfection of God. *Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when it shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*. The utmost and highest hope of Christianity is derived from its privilege of sonship. *As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*. It is not however the justification of the former passage, nor the sanctifica-

With
Christ
Rom. viii.
17

Rom. viii.
29.

1 Jno. iii.
2.

Ps. xvii.
15.
Matt. v.

- tion of the latter, but the adopted sonship which cries : *I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness !*
- Earnest.** 2. They enter into an heritage of which they have now only an earnest. The inheritance of Christians is in its deepest meaning *reserved in heaven*. Under whatever aspect it is viewed the Christian heritage is enjoyed only in its firstfruits. This is declared by St. Paul : *ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession*. When Christ shall claim us as His possession we shall claim Him as ours, *in Whom also we have become an inheritance*. It is after speaking of the Christian inheritance that the epistle to the Hebrews says : *for we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end*.
- Fulness.** 3. That participation awaits the believer : we are *waiting for the adoption*, which will *change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body* ; and will enable us in our integrity of body and spirit to *appear with Him in glory*. The death of the Testator has put us in possession of a portion of the goods that fall to us under His covenant-testament. But we must die ourselves to enter upon the vast remainder. Then will He at the last great distribution say to every one of His brethren : *all that I have is thine !* It is He who closes the New Testament with the promise of the filial inheritance : *he that overcometh shall inherit all things ; and I will be his God and he shall be My son*. Thus does the new covenant echo at its close the final promise of the old : *and they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels ; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him*.
- Pa. xvii. 15.
 1 Peter i. 4.
 Eph. i. 13, 14.
 Eph. i. 11.
 Heb. iii. 14.
 Fulness.
 Rom. viii. 23.
 Phil. iii. 21.
 Col. iii. 4.
 Heb. ix. 16.
 Luke xv. 31.
 Rev. xxi. 7.
 Mal. iii. 17.

HISTORICAL.

Ecclesiastical Theories. The variations in opinion on this general subject may be classed under these heads : the various theories of the relation of the new birth to the sacrament of baptism ; differences as to the measure of human co-operation admitted ; its place in the Ordo Salutis, or plan of salvation ; its effect upon the various constituent elements of human nature ; and its value as a Divine gift in respect to the other blessings of the Christian covenant.