

Nicolae Moşoiu

# The Paternity of God and the Gift of Adoptive Baptismal Filiation

*πνεῦμα υἰοθεσία, spiritum adoptionis filiorum  
(Romans 8, 15)*

## Abstract

This text is dealing with the theme of the paternity of God as is reflected in the New Testament and in relation with the process of the adoptive baptismal filiation. As a consequence of the receiving of the form, the beauty of the Son made also man (christomorphisation), or of the changing of the garments of skin (Genesis 3:21) with garments of light (Gal 3:27), God the Father acknowledges us at the Baptism as sons and daughters (baptismal υἰοθεσία). This new status of the human being is the most important aspect of the Holy Mysterion of Baptism and has a crucial significance for our spiritual life. The text refers also to the humble response of man to God's sacrificial love, expressed by a martyrdom and the adoption of abandoned children.

## Keywords

Paternity, Baptism, Christmation, Eucharist, receiving the form of Christ (Gal 4:19) (christification or christomorphisation), vestment of light, syngeneia, baptismal υἰοθεσία, martyrdom, ordo, adoption.

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'Only One God, both Father and Son, can explain all earthly paternity and filiation', says St. Dionysius the Areopagite, elaborating on a statement made by St. Paul. (Ephes 3:14)<sup>1</sup>.

'God is love' (1 John 4:8,16). Based on this revealed text, Fr. Stăniloae remarks that the Holy Trinity 'is love without beginning aiming at an extension of love'.<sup>2</sup> God the Holy Trinity, "the structure of the supreme love",<sup>3</sup> creates out of love, with love and for love. Creation is a consequence of bestowing the intra-Trinitarian love from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

The present contribution will speak less of the intra-Trinitarian love<sup>4</sup>, which is apophatic, and more of the reflection of this love in the process of the adoptive baptismal filiation, as well as the humble response of man to God's sacrificial love, expressed by a martyr's death and the adoption of abandoned children.

## 1 The Paternity of God and man's adoptive filiation – scriptural bases

### 1.1 The Paternity of God

God has been perceived as Father throughout the history of Christianity. The Lord has taught us "Our Father". In the Sermon on the Mount, the word *father* is used 16 times, the first article of the Creed names God Father, and both tradition and spirituality refer to the paternity of God and man's adoptive filiation, which, instead of being limited, as was the case in, the Old Testament, for the Jewish people, or the case of the Christian theology for those born again by baptism, or the chosen ones, the term refers to all people. Indeed, man's ontology is iconic for he is "*eikon Eikonos*"<sup>5</sup>, created in the Image of the Father<sup>1</sup> who is the Son. Therefore, it

<sup>1</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I, București, 2003, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> Idem, *Sfânta Treime sau la început a fost iubirea*, București, 1993, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Before writing this chapter of his *Dogmatica*, Stăniloae wrote an article in *Studii Teologice*, nr. 5-6/1970, p. 333-355, called: „Sfânta Treime, structura supremei iubiri (The Holy Trinity, the structure of the supreme love)”.

<sup>4</sup> See the well documented study wrote by Najeeb G. Awad, "Between Subordination and Koinonia: Toward A New Reading of the Cappadocian Theology", *Modern Theology* 23:2 April 2007. The Godhead for Saint Gregory is the three persons together, for these hypostases "do not have degrees of being God or degrees of priority over against one another" (Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations*. 31.14). The Father and the Son and the Spirit are not for Saint Gregory "of the same substance", but are together "one substance"; hence the oneness and unity of the Godhead is adored just as the three hypostases are equally adored and confessed in the one Godhead.

<sup>5</sup> This truth was clearly explained by P. Nellas, in *Omul, animal îndumnezeit*, Deisis, 1999.

is not some, but all are sons of God in a potential way, and they become really through the assumed gift of baptismal adoption.

In the Holy Scripture, there are three ways in which God is named Father:

a) In a special way, He is Father for Jesus Christ, whose relation to the Father is unique by having the same being as Him in eternity. No one is the son of God in the sense that Jesus Christ is - *Monogenes, Unigenitus*. He is the Son, and God is His Father, in a way He is not anyone else's Father. When He speaks to the disciples, Our Lord Christ names Him '*Your Father*', and when he talks about God, He names Him '*My Father*', but never '*Our Father*' together with the disciples<sup>6</sup>. Jesus Christ has '*the glory as of the only Son from the Father - doxan hos monogenous para Patros*' (John 1: 14) and He makes the Father known, '*the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known. - monogenes theos ho on eis ton kolpon tou patros, ekeinos exegesato*' (the Greek text: *God, the only Son – monogenes theos*). This truth is also liturgically expressed: "Only-Begotten Son and Word of God..." Out of love, the Father gave His Only Son to mankind "*ton hyion ton monogene edoken*" (John 3:16) and the lack of response to God's love, unfaithfulness in His Only-Begotten Son, has dire consequences. (John 3:18)

b) God is Father for those reborn and adopted through Baptism, to those saved, who are therefore distinguished from other people. In this sense, the Lord names God Father of those who follow Him and St. Paul told the Romans: '*For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*' (Romans 8:15)

c) God is named Father of mankind in general, the human being was created in His image. He loves more than any loving father even when the loved ones do not return a filial love. Not all people are God's children in the same way God is Father to all people, because they fail to reach His likeness by love and obedience.

In the Gospel according to St. John, the word *Father* is more frequently used than the synonymous *My Father*. '*For the Father loveth the Son*' (John 5:20) (also Matthew 11: 27; 24: 36; 28: 32; Mark 13:32; Luke 10:22 are the only texts of the synoptic Gospels). However, there are cases where "the Father" is not clearly referred to by the Son. The most cited reference is John 4:21-23: (they)'*shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshipers.*' The question that arises here is

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<sup>6</sup> Charles M. Mead, "The Fatherhood of God", in: *The American Journal of Theology*, Vol. 1, No. 3. (Jul., 1897), p. 579, we owe him the biblical text references and some of the analysis in this section

whether God is the universal father or only Father to those who worship Him? The context remains vague. Still, no other biblical text alludes more clearly to a universal character of the word *'Father'*.

In John 14:8, when St. Philip asks: *'Lord, show us the Father'*, the Lord answers: *'he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father'* (14:9) Therefore, the *Father*, Philip refers to is the same as the One the Lord calls *'My Father'*.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, there are texts where God is directly called not only Christ's, but also other people's Father. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6, 7), the Lord calls God Father of those He addresses 16 times. One cannot peremptorily say the Lord Jesus Christ here states the absolute universal nature of the paternity of God. We are told the sermon is addressed to His disciples (Mt 5:1). Even though *'the multitudes'* who *'were astonished at his teaching'* were also there, this does not explicitly imply that the sermon is addressed to them too, when it certainly is far from undeniable that the universal paternity of God was a familiar concept for the Jews. God was more likely seen as Father of the Jews, the chosen people, but nowhere is He called Father of all people. Similar texts: Matthew 10:20; 13:43; 18:14 and 23:9. The first three were clearly addressed to the disciples but the fourth was *'to the multitudes and to his disciples'* (23:1) It is the only such text in the first Gospel. However, it does not refer to the Pharisees and the scribes. Only Pharisees claimed they were sons of God, the scribes and the sinners were excluded. The Lord excluded the Pharisees and the scholars because they viewed themselves as perfect and warns them that sinners who repent will have access to His Kingdom. The Lord speaks to His disciples, in Mk 11:25, also in Lk 6:36; 11:2,13; 12:30, 32. In the fourth Gospel, *'Your Father'* (Jn 20:17) is only used once. Consequently, there is no clear statement regarding the universal nature of the paternity of God.

The same conclusion can be drawn after analysis of the other New Testament books.<sup>8</sup> Generally, when God is called Father, the word is either spoken by Jesus Christ, or by His disciples. When St. Paul blesses: *'Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'* (Rm 1, 7), he refers to the writer and those he writes to. Several texts vaguely call God Father. In Eph 2:18, St. Paul writes: *'for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father'*, and he does not imply all people, but Christians that come from gentiles and from Jews. The same can be said of: 1Cor 8:6; Eph 5:20; 6, 23; Col 1:1-3; 3:17; 1Thes 1:1; 2Th 1:2 ; Tit 1:4 ; James 3:9; 1Pt 1:2,17; 1Jn 1:2 -3 ; 2:1, 13, 15, 16, 22, 23,24; 3, 1; Jude 1. Another text from 1Jn 3:1 is quite edifying: *'Behold what manner of love the*

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<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, p. 586.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 588.

*Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are.'*

A text from Ephesians 4, 6 requires special attention: '*one God and Father of all*' since it seems to confirm the universal character of the paternity of God. However St. Paul only refers to the body of Christ, the Church, which has one God, one faith, one baptism, one Lord and God of all. The same letter reads: '*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family (all families) in heaven and on earth is named*' (Eph 3:14-15). Firstly, the writer uses a play on words between *pater* – father and *patria*, *paternitas* – descending from a common ancestor (father), community, family, tribe, caste, nation, race<sup>9</sup>; moreover, the word *pasa* - any/all hints at a universal nature.<sup>10</sup> Even if one assumes that the text only includes the families of the faithful, it still contains the most straightforward assertion of the universal paternity of God. In addition, Ephesians 3, 6 reads: '*the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel*'. This suggests that rebirth and adoption by Baptism are not excluded when man becomes son and heir to the Kingdom of God not only in general as before but in fact.

In conclusion, with the exception of John 4:21,23, the Lord does not affirm the universal character of the paternity of God, and that is the case not because it is less real, but rather because the discussion has an ethical dimension. When speaking to the Pharisees, the Lord does not call God their Father, and in John 8:42, 44 He further states: '*If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof.*' The ethical character is obvious. '*The murderer*' cannot be the father of those who do his will unless the meaning is ethical. If God is a loving Father – and the Parable of the Prodigal Son so clearly and movingly speaks of this truth – and fulfills superlatively all that derives from this quality, man, on the other hand, does not fulfill his own adoptive filial vocation. This may be the reason why one finds so few biblical texts on the universal nature of the divine paternity, and those texts that underline man's adoptive filiation limit it to those '*born anew*' (Jn 3:3) and to those who love their enemies. (Mt 5:45).

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<sup>9</sup> New Testament, 1995, note 4

<sup>10</sup> C.M. Mead, op.cit., p. 589.

## 1.2 Πνεῦμα υἰοθεσία, *spiritum adoptionis filiorum* (Rm. 8, 15) – man's adoptive baptismal filiation

One New Testament reference for the theme in question is Matthew 5:9: *'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God'* which certainly does not state the universal nature of mankind's status as sons of God. In the Sermon on the Mount as well, this filiation has a marked ethical character: *'love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.'* (Mt 5:44-45, Lk 6:35). The words are addressed to the disciples who through likeness to God can call themselves sons of God. The Lord distinguishes clearly between *'the sons of the kingdom'* and *'the sons of the evil one'* (Mt 13:38) and *'the sons of God as sons of the resurrection'* (Lk 20:36) can only become those *'that are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead'* (Lk 20:35)<sup>11</sup>.

A further restrictive meaning of the quality of God's sons can be found in the text about Caiaphas who *'said not of himself'* (Jn 11:51), but as high priest in the year of the crucifixion, prophesied that Jesus was to die for the nation and to *'gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad'* (Jn 11:52). The prologue of the fourth Gospel states that filiation is heralded by faith, by the willingness to receive Christ, the Logos incarnated in history: *'But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God'*. In Luke 3:38, at the end of the genealogy, the reference to Adam as God's son is only made so that the line can be complete. Adam, created by God, therefore does not have an earthly father. The pneumatic character of the adoptive filiation is explicit in Romans 8, 14-16: *'For as many as are led [guided] by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God - hyioi Theou. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption - Πνεῦμα υἰοθεσία, Spiritum adoptionis filiorum, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God - tekna Theou'*. The clear distinction between the generic filiation of all people and that of the Christians appears in the next verse: *'and if children, then heirs - tekna; heirs of God - kleronomoi, heredes, and joint-heirs with Christ - synkleronomoi, coheredes; if so be that we suffer with him - sympaschomen, compatimur, that we may be also glorified with him - syndoxasthomen, conglorificemur.'* Consequently, the adoptive filiation is bestowed at Baptism and must be assumed along with all the inherent risks. We are sons if we suffer with Christ before we can rejoice in the glory of His Kingdom.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem



The same letter tells us that adoption is first for the Israelites '*whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises*' (Romans 9, 4), they are first called but their priority is merely chronological since: '*For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel: neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed. For this is a word of promise, According to this season will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.*' (Rm 9: 6-9; also Genesis 17:21); in Galatians 4:28: '*Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise*'. These texts stress the love, assuming the promise and permanent communion. '*...even us, whom he also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles? As he saith also in Hosea, I will call that my people, which was not my people; And her beloved, that was not beloved. And it shall be, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, There shall they be called sons of the living God. And Isaiah crieth concerning Israel, If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved.*' (Rm 9:24-27).

In 2 Corinthians 6:17-18, St. Paul cites the Old Testament: '*Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*' and Galatians 3:26-28 underlines the faith prerequisites to receive the quality of God's sons, while also speaking of the equality of those born anew from water and the Holy Spirit '*For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus.*' Galatians 4:4-7 also applies this status of God's sons to Christians alone: '*but when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So that thou art no longer a bond servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.*' (also Eph 5:1; Phil 2:15; Heb 2:10, 13, 14 and 12:5-8).

A more in-depth analysis is required for Acts 17:28, 29 where St. Paul argues the kinship of man to God. If Plato links this kinship to the relation between the soul and the universal Ideas, in the Holy Scripture the most important aspect is man as *eikon tou Theos*. In the Septuagint, the words

*syngenia, syngenes*<sup>12</sup> are widely used as *relatives*<sup>13</sup>, the same can be said of the New Testament<sup>14</sup>, except Acts 17:29 where St. Paul cites the antique poet Aratus of Soli (3<sup>rd</sup> cent. BC) and his poem *Phenomenes*:5: 'For we are kindred - *Tou gar kai genos esmen.*' In this particular context, the demonstrative relative pronoun *tou* refers to Zeus who is invoked in the first verse: „*Ek Dios archomestha*”. In St. Paul's writings, *syngenes* only appears in the letter to the Romans and the meaning is clear in 9:3: '*my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh - hyper ton adelphon mou ton syngenon mou kata sarka*' .

The Christian *syngeneia* has different foundations, it is clearly distinguished from the kinship in Plato and the stoics where it supposes co-naturality. In Christianity, it is adoption and it is only possible due to the fact that the Son of God became flesh, and it is *theosis* where God's love and man's love meet.

### 1.3 Syngeneia in the Holy Spirit and the Truth

Whereas the Saint Evangelists, Matthew and Luke show us our Lord Jesus Christ's genealogy as man<sup>15</sup>, describing to us how He, the One Who had been born from the Father “before all ages”, was born from a human being, from the Virgin Mary, the Saint Apostle and Evangelist John describes us how a human being can be born by God's will. It is so remarkable to think how delicately God works with the human being, nothing is forced, amazing, artificial in this work. First the human, the Virgin Mary accepts to bear God in body, so that afterwards, God might bear the human in water and in the Holy Spirit. First the man, Joseph, adopts the Son of God made human, so that afterwards the human being consecrated by baptism to be adopted by God; He comes to us first, in the most delicate and most exquisite imaginable way, as an innocent baby in a manger in Bethlehem for us to be able to most naturally come closer to Him, and, receiving Him, to be ourselves received by God; „*but to all who received Him, who believed in his name, He gave power to become children of God (tekna Theou genesthai), who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God*” (John 1:12-13).

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<sup>12</sup> Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of New Testament*, translator and editor Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1969, vol. VII, p. 737-738. Also the excellent study: Edouard des Places, S.J., *Syngeneia. La parente de l'homme avec Dieu d'Homere a la patristique*, Paris, 1964

<sup>13</sup> “The idea of kinship between man and God is foreign to the Old Testament and to late judaism”, Gerhard Kittel, *op.cit.*, p.740.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>15</sup> Mt 1 și Lk 3



Our Savior Jesus Christ reveals the mystery of this birth from God to Nicodemus<sup>16</sup>: „Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). As Nicodemus was baffled by such a statement, Jesus explained him: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (3:5). In the prologue of the fourth Gospel (1:13), the birth “from (or in) God” is named in the third chapter, birth “from above” (verses 3 and 7), birth “from water and Holy Spirit” (verse 5) or birth “in the Holy Spirit” (verses 6 and 8). In this wonderful work, God is the one who gives birth and we are the ones who are born. St. James says: ‘the Father of lights... of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures’ (1:17-18). Saints Apostles Peter and Paul also refer to this godly birth: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew (anagennesan) to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1Pt 1:3); „You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1Pt 1:23); „He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration (dia loutrou palingenesias) and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:5-6).

The second birth, the birth in God comes about through the Holy Baptism. Jesus Christ did not receive Saint John’s baptism to cleanse Himself, but to consecrate the waters, to entirely unify the vivifying power of the Holy Spirit - the Lord and Giver of life - with the water. By the Holy Baptism, through the water that is consecrated by the descent (*parousia*) of the Holy Spirit, the candidate is born again as a wonderful creature bearing the seal of the holy gifts. That is why praising the God as Creator and anticipating that which will happen to the one coming for illumination, the priest marvels and says: “Great You are God, and great are Your workings, no word can suffice to praise Your wonders!”

The term *γιοθεσία* (adoption as son, not just sonship) occurs in the New Testament only in the writings of Saint Paul (Gal 4:5; Rom 8:15,23; 9:4; Eph 1:5) and never in Septuagint or other Jewish sources<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, Saint Paul is apparently the first to have used *γιοθεσία* in a theological

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<sup>16</sup> Vasile Mihoc, *Predici exegetice la Duminicile de peste an, Sibiu, 2001*, p.8

<sup>17</sup> James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of γιοθεσία in the Pauline Corpus* (WUNT, 2.48; Tübingen: Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1992, p.175. This is a very well documented and elaborated doctoral thesis ( 353 p.), dealing with the Greco-roman, Old Testamen/Jewish background and the Pauline letters, an authentic reference to the very important theme of γιοθεσία-adoption as son

context, let alone of divine adoption. In the conclusion of the work quoted, James M. Scott outlines the fact that although, by using *γιοθεσία*, Saint Paul clearly avails himself of a Hellenistic term, it does not necessarily follow that the Apostle, all whose extant epistles are written in Greek, has a Hellenistic legal procedure or metaphor in mind, let alone a Roman one. The Hellenistic *meaning* of the term must be distinguished from a Hellenistic *background* of the term. For example the line of argumentation in Gal 4:1-7 and Gal 3 and 4 as a whole leads to the sure conclusion that *γιοθεσία* in Gal 4:5 refers to a specific Old Testament/Jewish background, being set in a context framed by the *Exodus* typology: just as Israel, as heir to the Abrahamic promise, was redeemed as son of God from slavery in Egypt at the time appointed by the Father (vv.1-2), believers were redeemed as well to adoption as sons of God from slavery under the *stoicheia tou kosmou* at the fullness of time and thereby became heirs of the Abrahamic promise (vv.3-7)<sup>18</sup>. But we might not confuse the status of sons of God, which was more as a promise in the Old Testament, with the one in the New Testament. As the author who has just been quoted noted, although the term appears in Rom 9:4, as one of Israel's historical privileges, the broader context of Gal 3-4 makes it clear that believers are sons and heirs only insofar as they participate by Baptism - „*For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*”(Gal 3:26-27) – in the Son of God who was sent to redeem them (Gal 4:4-5). Strictly speaking, Christ is the heir of Abraham (Gal 3:16) and the messianic Son of God promised in 2 Sam 7:12-14. Seen in context, *γιοθεσία* in Gal 4:5 must refer to the Jewish eschatological expectation based on 2 Sam 7:14. The adoption formula from 2 Sam 7:14 was applied by the subsequent Judaism not only to the Davidic Messiah but, under the influence of the New Covenant theology (cf.Hos 2:1), also to the eschatological people of God. Specifically, the 2 Sam 7:14 tradition expects that, at the advent of the Messiah, God would redeem his people from Exile in a Second Exodus; He would restore them to a covenant relationship; and He would adopt them, with the Messiah, as His sons (cf.Jub. 1:24;TJud. 24:3;4QFlor.1:11). In fact, 2 Cor 6,18 actually cites the adoption formula of 2 Sam 7:14, and that in the context of the same Exodus typology and the same New Covenant theology. As in the 2 Sam 7:14 tradition, Gal 4:5-6 connects divine adoption with the reception of the Spirit (of the New Covenant) in the heart<sup>19</sup>.

The interpretation of *γιοθεσία* in Gal 4:5 also applies to the closely parallel passage of Rom8. Here, too, participation in the messianic Son of God by

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<sup>18</sup> Ibidem p.267-268

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, p.268

adoption is so integrally connected with the reception of the indwelling Spirit that the Spirit is called the *Πνεῦμα υἰοθεσίας* (v.15), the Holy Spirit by Whom also the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled (v.4). Rom 8 contains elements of the *Exodus* typology, and divine adoptive sonship implies heirship with Christ in the Abrahamic promise (v.17). In the conclusion of the section dedicated to Rom 8, James M. Scott noted that despite the attempts to minimize or deny one aspect or another, Rom 8 contains both present and future aspects of *υἰοθεσία* which are related as successive modes of participating in the sonship of the messianic Son of God by means of the Spirit<sup>20</sup>. In the present aspect believers receive the Spirit of *υἰοθεσία* through Baptism and the continuous renewal of the baptismal gifts by means of an authentic Christian life, called by Symeon the New Theologian, Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The reference to the Baptism is presupposed in Rom 8 (e.g. v.1: „*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*”; verse 2: „*for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death*”), also because Rom 6 is a clear description of it. In the eschatological aspect of *υἰοθεσία* (verse 23), believers, who already have the indwelling Spirit as the means of resurrection (verse 11), participate in Jesus’ resurrection to the messianic Son of God in power (Rom 1:4) when Christ comes at Parousia (Rom 8:29), and they enter into the Abrahamic inheritance of universal sovereignty with the Son (Rom 4:13; 8:17,32), the Firstborn among many brothers (8:29). Here again, the influence of 2 Sam 7:14 can be felt, for the Spirit-mediated resurrection/adoption of the Son (Rom 1:4), which is proleptic to that of the sons, is interpreted in light of the promise of divine adoption in Nathan’s prophecy<sup>21</sup>.

Man's kinship – *syngeneia* to God is not a metaphor but a profound reality due to the Son of God incarnate, the Archetype of man. He made Himself our brother, and we become His by Baptism, consequently His Father becomes Our Father – the only prayer the Lord Himself taught us is addressed to the Father- and His Mother becomes our Mother.

Christ's Baptism has profound meanings for ours. As was already pointed out, the Son of God as Man completely unifies the life-giving powers of the Holy Spirit and the water, making Baptism '*of water and Spirit*' real. This consecrated water makes it possible for us to be born anew, man is actually reborn, born again, he is a new creature. The priest prays: '*But do You, O Master of All, declare this water to be water of redemption, water of sanctification, a cleansing of flesh and spirit, a loosing of bonds, a forgiveness of sins, an illumination of soul, a laver of regeneration, a renewal of the*

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<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, p.265

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p.266

*spirit, a gift of sonship, a garment of incorruption, a fountain of life*<sup>22</sup>. This un-spoiled putting on, Christ's luminous clothing, bestowed at Baptism, has as a natural consequence the adoption, the intimacy with the Father, the One Who says at every Baptism: '*This is my beloved Son*' (Mt 3:17).

After the three immersions, it is asked: 'A robe of divine light bestow upon me, O You that for vesture array Yourself with Light!', then there is the Christmation, also known as the personal Pentecost, and only after that it can be sung: '*as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ*' since the Holy Spirit is the One who imprints in the candidate the form of Christ, the One who makes the candidate Christlike.

Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae underlines the fact that: "all the statements of the blessed Apostle Paul pertaining to the death, resurrection, transfiguration of man, imprinting and clothing him in Christ, as ethical-ontological moments are recalled in the rite of Baptism. Through this participation in the crucified and resurrected Christ, the baptized take on the *form* of Christ, or become co-bearers of the *form* of Christ (*symmorphoi*). Their new *form* is the *form* of Christ imprinted in them, and through this in the Church"<sup>23</sup>.

The text of the service of Holy Baptism clearly distinguishes between image – *eikon* and form - *morphe* (and the derived verb). In the silent prayer the priest makes before the blessing of the water, he prays the Holy Trinity (the ekphronis: 'Your Most Holy Name, of Father, and of Son, and of Holy Spirit,' man is *imago Trinitatis*) to 'form the Image of Your Christ in him (her) who is about to be born again...' <sup>24</sup>(the original text: '*Kai morphoson sou ton Christon, en to mellonti anagennasthai...*')<sup>25</sup>. Human being is not given the image of Christ by Baptism since he is the Father's Image image (cf. Col 1:15) by creation, rather the candidate's image is restored and is given the form, the beauty, the splendor of Christ, a real likeness to Him, Christ' vestment of light. Unfortunately this vestment usually is not kept intact, that's way it has to be cleanse by Repentance and Divine Eucharist. The human being is immersed in the baptismal water as a 'matter without appearance and without form' - *hyle aneidōs kai amorphos* and emerges bearing the beautiful form of Christ.<sup>26</sup> 'We are

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<sup>22</sup> [http://www.goarch.org/en/chapel/liturgical\\_texts/baptism.asp](http://www.goarch.org/en/chapel/liturgical_texts/baptism.asp)

<sup>23</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, *Transparența Bisericii în viața sacramentală*, in *Ortodoxia*, no. 4, 1970, p. 508

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.goarch.org/en/chapel/liturgical\\_texts/baptism.asp](http://www.goarch.org/en/chapel/liturgical_texts/baptism.asp)

<sup>25</sup> Mikron Euchologion e Agiasmatarion, Ekdosis, Apostolikes Diakonias tes Ekklesias tes Ellados, en Athenais, 1962, p.71.

<sup>26</sup> P. Nellas, *Omul, animal îndumnezeit*, op. cit., p. 86-87.

modeled and imprinted and our amorphous and undefined life is given form and definition.'<sup>27</sup>

It is important to stress again that, according to the order of Baptism text, we may say that we have received Christ's clothing, Christ's *form*, only after Chrismation, because the Holy Spirit is the one Who imprints (*sphragis*) Christ's *form* in us. Through Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, and the rest of our spiritual life we are united in Christ, we receive the Christian way of being, centered on Christ and formed in Christ, as well as the respective form and befitting life. In this way, the Father recognizes on our faces His own Son's form (*morphen, formam*) and recognizes in us the parts of the Only Begotten Son<sup>28</sup>. The nature of man takes the form, in other words the constitution and function of the deified human nature of Christ<sup>29</sup>. *Here we have the key to understanding why God the Father adopts as son (daughter) the neophyte.*

The adoption which is the very essence of the Baptism, is real since at Baptism, Christ the Lord dwells mysteriously in us and therefore gives us His Own beauty, His own vesture of light; consequently one can say the act of adoption is natural since we become the same as the Only-Begotten Son. Emerged from the baptismal waters, the neophyte can ask of God: 'A robe of divine light bestow upon me, O You that for vesture array Yourself with Light' since as St. Paul points it out: '*have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image - kat'eikona, secundum imaginem - of Him that created him*' (Col 3:10) (here 'image' is the equivalent of *eikon* since it refers to the creation of man). We know Adam before the fall was not unclothed but had the vestment of glory; all the more so for those who live their lives 'in Christ': 'Christ's human body is alight with the spiritual beauty of God's endless purity, kindness and wisdom, Who re-establishes and heightens the wondrous human spirituality. This light also touches the souls and bodies of those united with Him, forming the Church.'<sup>30</sup> Similarly, St. Gregory of Nyssa writes so beautifully and clearly that He [The Groom- Christ] made the Church his body, and through the adding of those who are saved it is built in love, until all of us will become perfect, at the measure of the fulfilled age of Christ (Efes 4:13). If, therefore, the Church is the body – *soma* of Christ, and Head – *kephale* of the body is Christ, Who forms – *morphon* the face of the Church – *tes Ekklesias to prosopon* with His own likeness – to *idio charakteri*, the hearts of the

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<sup>27</sup> Sfântul Nicolae Cabasila, *De vita in Christo*, PG 150, Lib. II, 525A, 537D, at P. Nellas, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, Lib. IV, 600B, at P. Nellas, *Omul – animal indumnezeit*, p. 85

<sup>29</sup> P. Nellas, *Omul – animal indumnezeit*, p. 87

<sup>30</sup> D. Stăniloae, „Transparența Bisericii...”, op. cit., p. 514.



friends of the Groom, looking upon this, were stolen (they fell in love) – *ekardiothesan*, for now they see clearer the unseen One.<sup>31</sup>

If the divine *form* (*morphe Theou*, cf. Philip 2) refers to Christ's vesture, the one being baptized receives it too, not in the sense of human autonomy or in a pantheist meaning. Christ dwells in the baptized, and implicitly gives them His own form. They reach full brightness as they fulfill the commandments; the process of their *conforming* to the Body of Christ, full of uncreated divine energies, is endless both here and in His Kingdom alike. Christ is hidden in us from the very moment of Baptism, as stated by St. Mark the Ascete, and He grows with our advance in spiritual life, as we grow in the intimacy of the Holy Spirit, and begins to radiate in the saint. It is not the saint who radiates, like Christ transfigured on Mount Tabor, nor does the saint somehow reflect the radiance of Christ, rather it is Christ Himself who radiates in the saint. This is what it means to see the divine Light - something very different from an exterior, impersonal phenomenon. Here is the third degree of apophatic knowledge of God (as Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae called it), the foretaste of everlasting life in His Light of unending epectasis.

*Syngeneia* received by Baptism is fulfilled in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. St. Athanasius the Great tells us that we can receive the Holy Spirit Who did not become incarnate because He is co-substantial with the incarnate Son: 'by His blood, which is similar to ours – *homogenous* – we are able to receive the Holy Spirit Who is not similar to us - *to me homogenes hemin Pneuma*'<sup>32</sup>. The same idea is expressed in other contexts too: 'Because by kinship to Him in body – *dia ten pros to soma autou syngeneian*, we have become temples of God ourselves and were made sons of God, so that God is given glory in us also, and those we watch us, witness – as the Apostle says (1Cor 14:25) – that «God is among you indeed». John also states in his Gospel: « But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name» (Jn 1:12). And in the epistle says: « hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit »<sup>33</sup>; we have all been freed for the kinship of the body - *kata ten syngeneian tes sarkos*'.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Tâlcuire la Cântarea Cântărilor (Commentary on the Song of Songs), PSB, 29, p. 229

<sup>32</sup> Lexicon Athanasianum, Berlin, 1952, la E. Des Places, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>33</sup> Contra arianos, I, 43, PG, 26, 100c 15, trad. ro. D. Stăniloae în PSB 15, p. 207, 208.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, II, 69, trad. cit., p. 308. In a note, Father Stăniloae explains: 'Since the earthly desires are taken from the body assumed by the Word, we could free from hem as well, due to the communicative kinship (συγγένεια) in body, or the unity of nature between His body and ours.'



The Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, Who consecrates the water of the Baptism, the myrrhon and the Holy Gifts, makes Christ present in the intimacy of our being, through the Holy Sacraments of the Baptism, Christmation and Eucharist. According to St. Paul, Christ lives in Christians: '*Christ living in me*' (Gal 2:20); '*Christ is in you*' (Rom 8:10; 2 Cor 13:5); '*Christ in you*' (Col 1:27); '*Christ is all, and in all*' (Col 3:11). He dwells in their hearts: '*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*' (Ephes 3:17).

In conclusion, *syngeneia* with the Father, by the Son, in the Holy Spirit, which refers to adoption and communion ever deeper with the Holy Trinity, is possible through the Holy Sacraments, in the ecclesial ambience, and has dimension linked to *epektasis*: '*from glory to glory*' (2 Cor 3:18).

## 2 The presence (actualization) of the grace of the baptismal adoption

St. Saint Symeon the New Theologian best pointed out the presence of the baptismal grace. In different contexts, he tells both those he addresses and us all that infant baptism is not enough and he urges to insist on the 'gift of tears', which turns into 'the baptism of tears'. This 'second baptism' renews the grace received during the Holy Sacrament of Baptism, and in every man who desires a new life, brings again the initial state of *sine macula* lost by sin which makes the baptismal grace inoperable. God is holy by His Own being, thus He cannot be in contact with the sinner as long as *metanoia* is absent. 'The second baptism', that of tears, means the presence of the gifts received in the Holy Baptism, being born anew – *anagennesis*, adoption – *hyiothesia*, brethren of Christ, consecration by the presence of the Holy Spirit, receiving the godly vesture of light, that is Christ Himself. Due to its importance, this theme was center for the Church Fathers since the Desert Fathers.<sup>35</sup>

Speaking of the 'Baptism in Spirit' - *To Baptisma en to Pneumati Hagio*, St. Symeon primarily means the renewing grace of the sacramental Baptism. There are not two baptisms, but one which is incomplete without the felt (*aesthetos*) presence of the Holy Spirit. The same work of the Spirit makes baptism by water a holy sacrament which in turn makes possible the progressive renewal of the 'image'. Commenting on: '*who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*' (Jn 1:13), St. Symeon says: 'The term *birth* here describes a spiritual changing – *pneumatiken alloiosin* - which is worked and seen in the Baptism of the

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<sup>35</sup> St. Atanasius the Great first used "the gift of tears-harisma tou dakryon-, De virg.17, PG 28,272C; see St. Gregory the Theologian, Or.39,17, PG 36, 356 A; St. Gregory of Nyssa, De Baptismo,PG 46,417B.

Holy Spirit, as the Lord Himself truthfully says: «*For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence*» (Acts 1:5; 11:16). So these who are baptized in This as in a light, turn into light themselves and know the One who gave them birth; for they see Him too.<sup>36</sup>

'Baptism in the Holy Spirit', that is experiencing fully the baptismal grace, sheds light to the unbreakable connection between *orthopraxia* (or even *theopraxia*) and *theognosia*. God makes Himself known if and while Christ in man since Baptism, becomes more apparent due to the synergic Christ-morphing and Christ-turning, work which pertains to of the Holy Spirit and to the believer.

## 2.1 Martyrdom as full assuming and actualization, by love and obedience, of the quality of God's adoptive filiation

The discussion about Baptism in general and its mutual recognition in particular must turn towards re-living the baptismal experience when death by martyrdom is imminent. In an excellent study<sup>37</sup> which will be cited further here, Gordon Lathrop states from the very beginning that the meaning of the Christian baptism and of its common practice all over the world can be discovered in surprising places. For instance, one of them is an indirect reference from a historical classical text of the Church, which is not about Baptism but which reflects indirectly the baptismal practice or uses baptismal descriptions. Sometimes the surprise of such a discovery or the character of the context can clearly reveal the major importance of the basic model for Baptism.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, in the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, on his way to the process and to martyrdom, wrote a poignant letter to the Christians in Rome, the city where he was to die. He wrote not about Baptism but his imminent death:

'The Master of this world <sup>39</sup>wants to take me and harm my thinking about God. Let no one present help him! Better be with me, that is with God! Do not attempt to speak of Jesus Christ, and also wish for the world (...) My desire (*eros*) has been crucified and there is not in me any fire which feeds

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<sup>36</sup> Symeon le Nouveau Theologien, *Traites theologiques et ethiques*, X,441-448, SC,129, trad. ro. diac. Ioan I.Ică jr.: Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, *Discursuri teologice și etice*, Scrieri I, Ed. Deisis, Sibiu, 1998, p.336.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon Lathrop, "The Water that Speaks. The Ordo of Baptism and its Ecumenical Implications", în: *Becoming a Christian. The Ecumenical Implications of Our Common Baptism*, Faith and Order Paper no.184, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1999, pp. 13-29

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p.13

<sup>39</sup> John 14, 30

off material stuff (*pyr philoulon*) but rather there is water living and speaking in me<sup>40</sup>, saying to me from within , “Come to the Father!”. I do not delight in the food of death nor the pleasures of this life. I want the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, descended from David<sup>41</sup>, and I want the drink of his blood, which is deadless love ( *agape*)’.<sup>42</sup>

This touching text heralds St. Ignatius' martyrdom that he both accepts and wishes for. 'The holy water' that speaks signifies the consecration by the presence of the Holy Spirit, the One who makes Christ present, the Logos, the Word of God. 'The living water is the Spirit of God flowing inside him (Jn 4:14; 7:37-39; 19:34) The Holy Spirit turns us Christlike in form, puts us in the intimacy of Christ, the One that tells the saint: 'Come to the Father!' It is very moving how the baptismal gift is again fully experienced. Baptism was not purely formal but is a continuous process of perceiving the direct presence of the Holy Trinity. St. Ignatius refers to the central matters of the Christian community: the word of God, the water of new birth into the body of Christ, the love-feast of the Eucharistic. These words certainly have multiple meanings – water, speaking, bread, flesh, drink, blood, love – and they include multiple religious meanings. But here, addressing another church which is a gathering defined by the same elements used together, their main liturgical significance could not be far from that St. Ignatius intended. He wanted to convince the church of Rome that he had indeed meant to drink the cup which his Lord drank and to be baptized with the baptism with which his Lord was baptized (Mk 10:38-39). Thus he wanted to prevent them from trying to save him. Indeed, he said of himself that, if is capable of death, he will be 'word of God' meant for others to hear, instead of merely another 'cry' evaporating in the needy history for the world<sup>43</sup>:

The pleasures of this world or the kingdoms of this time are useless to me. “For it were good for me rather to die”<sup>44</sup> in Christ Jesus then to rule over the margins of the Earth. I seek That Who has died for us; I want That Who has risen for us. My birth is near. Grant me forgiveness, brothers! Do not keep me from living by not wanting me to die! Do not give to this world the one who wishes to be God's, or torment him with this world! Let me receive the pure light! Once there, I shall be a man indeed! Let me be follower to the passion of my God!<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> John 4, 10; 7, 38

<sup>41</sup> John 7, 42; Romans 1, 3

<sup>42</sup> *To the Romans*, 7: 1b,2b-3; Greek text in: Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Vol. 1, Cambridge, Harvard UP, 1959, p.234

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:1b

<sup>44</sup> I Cor. 9,15

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:16, 2b-3a , Greek : Lake, *op. cit.*, p.232-34

The writer uses here poignant baptismal analogies: death shall be birth, enlightenment, participation to the passion of Christ. There should be no surprise that in the ancient Church, Baptism and Eucharist were *metaphors* for suffering witness before the world as well as *sources* for such ethical action, because they already signified that in St. Mark's Gospel and was thus continued in the Church of martyrs<sup>46</sup>. In a time of cruelty and oppression, the distance between eating the bread of God in a community and being 'ground like wheat' in the arena was small indeed<sup>47</sup>. St. Ignatius is about to become martyr, which he sees as a reflection of becoming a Christian and fully a person<sup>48</sup>. Proclamation and conversion, the speaking water, the communion meal: this must have been the order – *ordo* in which a person became Christian in Antioch<sup>49</sup>. This order – *ordo* was prone to reminding, 'again and again', as co-extensive to the entire authentically confessing Christian life, not by repeating the Baptism, but by listening to its 'voice' and acting on it.

## 2.2 Adoption and spiritual paternity/maternity, as humble response to the godly gift of personal baptismal adoption

### 2.2.1 Examples of adoption on the Holy Scripture<sup>50</sup>

The practice of adoption is present in the Old Testament. There have been many cases:

- a) In Genesis 15: 2-3, we find that Abraham, being childless, intends to appoint Eliezer, his servant, as heir. Since in the ancient Middle East only relatives, usually sons, could inherit, Abraham must have adopted Eliezer. Adopting a child, sometimes a slave, who was to serve them in life and mourn them in death was quite common for childless couples of that period. In exchange, the adopted became heir. If there was another birth, the natural offspring was the primary heir, the other being secondary.
- b) In Genesis 16:2, Sarah was sterile and decided to allow Abraham and her handmaid, Hagar, to bear children. So will Rachel and her husband, Jacob (30:3), both women hoping to have children. The words '*obtain children*'

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<sup>46</sup> Gordon Lathrop, p.14

<sup>47</sup> St. Ignatius, *op. cit.*, 4:1b: "I am God's wheat and I am ground by the fangs of the beasts so that I can be pure bread to Christ"; Greek in: Lake, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>48</sup> St. Ignatius himself sees his martyrdom as 'becoming christian' indeed, being found truly Christian, not just in name; *To Romans* 3:2

<sup>49</sup> G. Lanthrop, *op.cit.*,p.14

<sup>50</sup> Encyclopedia Judaica, Second Edition, vol. 1, p. 209-211: <http://gale.cengage.com/pdf/samples/sp659282.pdf>

refer to their intention to adopt the children thus born, and the words '*she may bear upon my knees*' (30:3 and 50:23) may hint at an adoption ceremony. Rachel is less likely to have witnessed Bilhah's giving birth as a means to cure her sterility, a common practice among some Arabs today.

- c) Some scholars claim that Jacob was adopted by Laban, who did not have sons (Genesis 29:31). He was made heir and was given the daughter as wife. However, the Bible does not speak of adoption but presents Jacob as an employee of Laban's.
- d) Shortly before he dies, Jacob remembers God's promise to give him Canaan and tells his son Joseph that his two sons, who had been born in Egypt, will be his, as were Reuben and Simeon. It has been noted that they are grandsons and the analogy to *adoption mortis causa* was made, adoption implying inheritance.
- e) Genesis 50:23: '*And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were born upon Joseph's knees*', suggesting an adoption ceremony.
- f) In Exodus 2, 10 Moses is adopted by Pharaoh's daughter.
- g) The '*born abroad*' sister in Leviticus 18:9 may hint at an adopted sister from an extra-marital liaison or from a mother's previous marriage.
- h) Judges 11:1 sq. Since Jephthah was Gilead's illegitimate son, he was merely recognized, not adopted.
- i) Ruth 4:16-17. Obed seems to have been adopted by Naomi. However, the purpose of Boaz's marriage to Ruth was keeping the name of her deceased husband (v. 10) Naomi's adoption of Obed would have affected that. The text says that Naomi did not become his mother, but his nurse and what the women say (v. 14) refer to the fact that Naomi became grandmother.
- j) Esther 2:7 Mordecai adopted Hadassah (Esther), his orphan cousin.
- k) Nehemiah 7, 63. The text hints at adoption into Barzillai's family.
- l) 1Chronicles 2: 35-41. Since Jarha the servant married his master's daughter, he must have been freed and somehow adopted or his offspring would not have appeared in the Judaic genealogy.
- m) Appointing the first born son from a marriage to a widow can be seen as a posthumous adoption, thus keeping the name of the deceased. (see Genesis 38:8-9; Deuteronomy 25:6; Ruth 4) and most likely inheriting.

In conclusion, the texts above show that, from the most likely cases of adoption, two (a and d) date from the patriarchs' period, one (f) reflects the Egyptian practice and the other (j) the Persian Jews' practice during the exile or after it. Sources from before that period are scarce to reveal

the practice of adoption. The tribal conscience of the Jews must have prevented the forming of artificial families and polygamy almost excluded the necessity of adoption. There is no information for the post-exile period about adopting.

### 2.2.2 Adoption as metaphor

#### a) God and Israel

The relationship between God and Israel is frequently compared to that between father and son (see Exodus 4:22; Deut. 8:5; 14:1) It can signify the adoptive filiation, such as Jeremiah 3:19: *'But I said, How I will put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of the nations! and I said, Ye shall call me My Father, and shall not turn away from following me'*. Hosea 11:1,3, 4: *'When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt...Yet I taught Ephraim to walk; I took them on my arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love.'*

#### b) God and the king

The idea that the king is the son of God appears in sources of Canaanite origin and some from the Middle East. Israel however, who had borrowed the institution of monarchy from his neighbors (1Kings 8), could not accept this in its literal sense, so the biblical references to the king as God's son have the significance of the adoptive filiation. Ps. 2:7-8: *'Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son; This day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.'* Even if this is a Messiah psalm, it also refers to David: *'This day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.'* signifies adoption as a new birth as well as receiving the inheritance. 1Chronicles 28:6-7: *'And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts; for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. And I will establish his kingdom forever, if he be constant to do my commandments and mine ordinances, as at this day.'* Similarly: 2 Kings 17:7; Ps 89:27 sq; 1Chronicles 22:10; 28:6.

### 2.2.3 The service for child adoption

The Orthodox Service Book includes a special service for adoptive parents and children that takes place in the Church. The parents hold lit candles, as for the Holy Baptism service. After the blessing, Trisagion prayers, Psalm, Troparion and Kontakion for the Patron Saints of the Church, the priest reads two beautiful prayers that underline firstly the adoption received



through the Incarnation of the Son of God – as the basis of the performed adoption ritual, then the prayers ask for strength in their love, to fulfill their promises and thus be worthy of the Kingdom of God:

“O Lord our God, Who through Your beloved Child, our Lord Jesus Christ, did call us children of God through adoption, and the Grace of Your All-Holy Spirit, and did say, "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son." Do You, the same King, Loving God, look down from Your holy dwelling place on high, upon these Your servants and unite their natures which you have begotten separate from one another according to the flesh, through Your Holy Spirit, into parents and son (daughter). Confirm them in Your love; bind them through Your benediction; bless them to Your great glory; strengthen them in Your Faith; preserve them always and renounce them not for that which proceeds from their mouths. Be Mediator for their promises, that their love which they have confessed to You be not torn asunder even to the evening of their lives; grant that they may be kept sincerely alive in You, our only Living and True God, and grant unto them to become heirs of Your Kingdom[...]

In the second prayer, a distinction is made between the bodily kinship, in Adam, and the kinship of the grace, in Our Lord Jesus Christ; the prayer also asks that the participants keep together the filial submission due to God:

“O Master and Lord, Who are the Maker of all creatures, and by the first Adam did make the bonds of kinship according to the natural flesh, and through Jesus Christ our Lord, Your beloved Son and our God, did show us also as Your kin by Grace, now these Your servants bow their heads before You, Who alone know all things before their happenings, and ask of You a blessing, that in You they may receive that for which they hoped: the bond inscribed in one another, of parents and son (daughter); and that living worthily in You in adoption to sonship (daughtership), they may keep themselves in due constancy[...]<sup>51</sup>

The presence of this service (in the Service Book) implies that the Church has always encouraged and blessed the adoptions. It would be redundant to present here the social and practical relevance of the baptismal filiation doctrine and the relevance of its related practice – the adoption, since there are so many abandoned children.

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<sup>51</sup> [http://www.goarch.org/chapel/liturgical\\_texts/adoption](http://www.goarch.org/chapel/liturgical_texts/adoption)

## 2.2.4 The spiritual paternity/maternity

As a basis for the spiritual paternity/maternity, we cite the words of Saint Paul addressed to the Galatians:

*“My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you - tekna mou, ous palin odino mehris ou morphothe Hristos en hymin”* (Gal 4:19). Christ has to be formed in the human being, in order to be possible life in Christ. In a way, it is necessary that He be incarnate again in each of us, a commonplace in the Christian mystic tradition<sup>52</sup>. This metaphor based on the child gestation in the womb implies that Christ must reach a full development and maturity in the faithful person, because of his affiliation to the ecclesial community. This is a never-ending process, both a gift and a duty, God claiming the gift offered. The Giver-gift relation is thus realized, while the gift-receiver – that is, the faithful person – himself becomes the gift-giver: *“Let us commend – parasometha - [...] all our life unto Christ our God”*

Professor Vasile Mihoc reads in Galatians 4:19 a third aspect of the maternity metaphor, the first and second being the love and care for them: a birth is in pain<sup>53</sup>: “The process of forming the image of Christ in the faithful ones is slow and continuous, and the Apostle has an irreplaceable role. Saint Paul says the he labors ‘in birth *again* until Christ is formed in you’. The Greek verb *morphousthai* (Passive form of *morphoo*) means ‘to be modeled’, ‘to receive a determined form’. The expression *mechris ou* from Galatians 4:19b implies not only the specific moment of the completion of this spiritual growth process, but also the duration or its perpetuity, therefore we can translate this expression with ‘as long as’”<sup>54</sup>.

A distinction can be drawn between the privilege and the great responsibility of the spiritual paternity that belongs to the Church hierarchy on one hand, and the calling and spiritual paternity/maternity responsibility of monks (unordained), nuns, as well as Sponsors for Holy Baptism and Holy Matrimony on the other hand.

As a matter of fact, the bishop – in the likeness of God – is called to have supreme love for the faithful in his eparchy, both paternal love (authority and stringency) and maternal (sacrificial) love. We should remember that the bishop is wearing an engolpion with the icon of the Theotokos as a clear signs of his responsibility to celebrate the new birth of the candidate faithful “*from water and the Spirit*”, by performing the Holy Mystery of

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<sup>52</sup> G. Kittel, *op. cit.*, p. 753

<sup>53</sup> Vasile Mihoc, *Epistola Sfântului Apostol Pavel către Galateni*, teză de doctorat, EIBMBOR, București, 1983, p. 169, 170.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*

Baptism. The priest also performs the Holy Mystery of Baptism through delegation from the bishop, therefore he shares his responsibility.

In conclusion, we can say that God created the world out of love, with love and for love, and that the baptismal adoption is the premise of human being's deification. Furthermore, the martyred death and the adoption of children represent clear signs of overcoming the biological state, of underlining our mystical consanguinity in the Eucharist, and of the unconditional love, similar to the one God – One in Trinity – has for the entire creation.