

will then be in session. We must let our principles be distinctly understood. And rest assured we are too numerous a body, too strong (in those most telling of all circumstances, to a politician) at the polls, to have our voice, uttered in a calm, firm, and dignified manner, totally disregarded.

THE ADOPTION OF SONS.

Not only amongst those who are confessedly aliens, but amongst multitudes who have a name to live, very inadequate views of the extent of God's gracious design in the gospel are prevalent. Judging by common modes of expression on the subject, salvation is regarded as little more than a deliverance from wrath, which is all that is understood by the forgiveness of sins. There may accompany this, certain vague expectations of future happiness; they know not where or of what kind; but that upon which the mind is chiefly fixed, is the removal of the sentence of death. Now, surely this is a meagre view of Christian privilege, and a dishonouring view of the purpose of grace; and it is little wonder if such a faith exercises little influence upon heart and life. Divine love contemplates much more than a deliverance from danger and degradation, and an introduction of the sinner into a state of security in which he may peacefully prosecute the journey of life, till his disembodied spirit reaches a state of dim and mysterious transport. The gospel does indeed hold out to us the removal of the curse, and deliverance from wrath; but it is merely the preliminary step, as the bestowment of a great blessedness implies the removal of existing evil. God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law; but this is only as a means towards an end: the end is "that we might receive the adoption of sons."

It is thus the design of God is uniformly presented:—"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we might be called sons of God." God has "predestinated us to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Nor can we consider such expressions as mere figures, and such as earthly potentates use, when in the spirit of exaggerated courtesy, they style their subjects, children. A fair consideration of the whole subject would rather leave you with the conviction, that the terms, "father," and "child," but feebly express the great reality of the relation that is established between God and believers. Two considerations that lie on the very surface of the subject will sufficiently establish the unspeakable dearness and importance of that relation.

I. *The vast expenditure by which it is secured to us.* Human folly often makes a great outlay of means upon objects that are

trifling or worthless. The toil of years; the treasures of empires; the lives of countless armies; the efforts of genius; the happiness of nations; nay, the inestimable worth of souls, are thrown away upon a sounding name, a splendid nothing. But, with the Divine wisdom there must always be a strict proportion between the importance of the end and the value of the means employed to reach it. Now, look at the love bestowed upon us, and thence infer the greatness of God's purpose in redemption; see that love going out from everlasting, pressing on from the counsels of eternity through all providences and revelations in time; bearing down all opposition; sweeping away every obstacle; staggered by no difficulty; stopping at no sacrifice, till in the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. And when we see that He sent his well-beloved, so humbled, to bear the curse; that he did not spare him, but gave him up to the death for us all, it must leave us with the conviction that the Father's love is no mere figure of speech, and the Son's place, no mere empty name.

II: *The connection in which that relation is enjoyed.* Had the design of redemption been, to bring us into the fellowship of angels, the distinction would have appeared inestimably precious, and the relationship unspeakably dear. But how far short this comes of the reality we may judge, if we can estimate the distance between a servant in the house, and the son over his own house. It is as one with Christ, that believers hold their relation to God. Christ delights to own the relation as common to him and them. After the last stage of his humiliation was past, and he was acknowledged to be the Son of God with power, he sent this message by Mary to his disciples, "Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God." In another place it is stated, "For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one."—that is to say, of one Father,—"for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying I will declare thy name unto my brethren." We may learn here, how far the purpose of Divine grace extends, not simply to undo the effects of the fall, and bring man back to the dignity, which would have been proper to his original nature; but as the grounds of our acceptance infinitely exceeds all creature righteousness; as we hold our place by, and with, and in Christ, then must believers be the Sons of God in a sense that cannot be affirmed of any other of his creatures.

This distinction is not a mere prospective grace, but a present and actual attainment of believers. The manifestation of Sons of God is prospective. We wait for it; it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but the relationship itself is not held in abeyance.

"To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God." And it is expressly declared "now are we the sons of God." "Ye are all the sons of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." God acknowledges the relationship,—"now ye are my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The acknowledgment, however, for the present is private,—"The Spirit witnesseth with our spirits, that we are children of God." The testimony is unheard amid the din and confusion of this Babel world, but the day is coming when the acknowledgment will be so loud, that the universe shall hear; the manifestation so clear, that the universe will wonder at its glory. "For we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see Him as he is." As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. What reversals will there be on that day of harsh and censorious judgments! Take heed how ye judge, lest ye condemn those who shall then be approved. Especially what reversals will there be on that day of the world's decisions! Those who have been scorned and hated, will be led forward to be crowned as kings; those who have been caressed and honoured, will be covered with shame and everlasting contempt. It behoves every man to settle the question, "am I a child of God." There need be nothing doubtful about it; the change from our natural state as children of wrath, must be too marked to leave it an obscure question. Have you received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father?

HUMAN STANDARDS.

We have been asked by a correspondent to give our views on the propriety of employing human standards in the churches, as tests of fellowship. This is not a heavy task. It must be obvious to every intelligent mind, at a single glance, that a book which lays down the rule and measure of our duty to God, must be absolutely perfect. Now, to enter a church under the solemn promise that we will abide by the doctrines taught, or the duties enjoined in some human compilation, is to affirm our confidence in the infallibility of human teaching: for no man with the fear of God before his eyes, or the love of Christ in his heart, would dare to promise, that in attending to those duties which grow out of his relations to God and to man, he would be governed by an imperfect rule. To try and discipline members, to test their orthodoxy, or to detect their heterodoxy, by human standards, is also to affirm the infallibility of such productions; for no church would venture to admonish or exclude a member by a defective rule. The very assumption of infallibility, then, which must ever form a necessary antecedent to the adoption of any uninspired system, given or received as a test of ortho-