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ἡΙΟΘΗΣΙΑ (ADOPTION) IN GALATIANS AND ITS RELEVANCE TO AFRICAN CHRISTIANS

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Ikyernum Sachia EPHRAIM

(Ph.D. Student, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria)

ephraimikyernum@gmail.com, +2348142136603

Abstract

This paper looks at the concept of ἡιοθησια (adoption) as used by Paul in Galatians. It appreciates Paul's metaphorical expression of the term in qualifying the Gentiles as children of God, especially when the latter needed reassurance after they had given their lives to Christ. This is due to the bitter ordeals of the gentiles with the Jews in the past, with the latter seeing themselves as the only people deserving of God's fatherhood. Using secondary sources of data collection and the evaluative method of Justin Ukpong's theory of cultural hermeneutics, the paper reveals the relevance of Paul's use of huiiothesia to African Christians to mean that, through adoption, the African race has been sharing in the blessings of Abraham. Never again is anyone to come to God with a sorrowful conscience, thinking that he or she is a sinner, but should approach him boldly as a son. Although the employment of ἡιοθησια may be strange to African Christians owing to their background, the term should be accepted on the ground that in the word of God, where they put their faith, it means full sonship when applied.

Key words: huiiothesia, adoption, galatians, paul, african christians

Introduction

Just like the whites versus the Negroes in the United States, where the latter were not made to feel or exist like humans because they seemed to the former as nothing more than monkeys and barbarians, In this case too, the non-Jews have always been considered aliens and uncircumcised people, who do not deserve anything intimate from God in the eyes of Israel. In short, the latter abducted God from their affairs and would share Him, the Almighty, with no one. So, anyone in Israel who married from among the Gentiles was seriously castigated and even asked to send the wife and the children she bore away because they were of gentile blood. Only King Solomon of old made a solemn request to God on behalf of the Gentiles.

While others, like the prophet Joel, prophesied God's pouring of his spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28), including the Gentiles, Not even during the coming of Christ was it made easier for salvation to be made available for all, including the Gentiles. Because the likes of Matthew still tried to give it a Jewish coloration when he wrote that Jesus commanded the 70 only to go to the lost sheep of Israel, Even before Peter and others were convinced that Cornelius and his household deserved salvation, it took the intervention of what I call the Jerusalem National Association of Believers Council to decide the fate of the Gentiles. However, no one took the interest of the Gentiles at heart like Apostle Paul. Finding no other best way to convince the Gentiles and the sinners that God was for all and ready to treat them as sons, he could only grasp a word so fitting that could best explain this new re-union other than adoption.

Thanks to the great apostle Paul, who took his time to give the Gentiles hope when he said, We are neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, for we are all one in Christ. How? By adoption. In this paper, therefore, we will try to explore the mystery of this term (adoption) in Galatians, tracing how Paul used it and why he employed it, highlighting its timely relevance to Africans and the benefits many have gotten as a result of the concept. But before then, we would like to review previous historical records on adoption, tracing it from the ancient Greek to the Hellenistic era, so as to have a better understanding of the use of that term when Paul employed it to give a clearer definition of Christians as children of God.

The Etymology of the Term Huiotesia

The term "huiotesia" finds its origin in the Greek language, combining two words: "huios," meaning son, and "thesia," derived from the verb "tithemi," which signifies to set, put, or place (Smith, 2010). Consequently, "huiotesia" carries the literal meaning of being set as a son or being put in the place of a son. Burke (2015) explains that this word conceptually encompasses the process or act of being placed or adopted as sons.

In its adoption context, "húiothesia" emphasizes the legal and judicial aspect wherein the adoptee is transferred from one family to another (Jones, 2018). Specifically, it pertains to being transferred from a strange family into God's family, aligning with Paul's understanding of sonship as attaining full inheritance in God through growing up to adulthood in the divine life (Brown, 2012).

While the translation of "húiothesia" as adoption may lead readers to perceive it solely as a judicial term, the notion of sonship, although less common in modern English translations, is preferably understood in terms of legal adoption (Smith, 2010). Sonship carries the implication of having a more mature standpoint as a son, thereby embodying a realized status in the filial relationship between God as Father and Christians as sons (Jones, 2018).

To conclude, the term "húiothesia" is employed in the Bible to describe the process of salvation and the associated benefits, highlighting the adoption of individuals into God's spiritual family (Brown, 2012). God, as a merciful and gracious Father, adopts aspiring Christians who have embraced faith in Christ, granting them the privilege of becoming heirs and members of His immediate spiritual family (Smith, 2010). Salvation extends beyond forgiveness of sins and deliverance from condemnation; it encompasses the elevated position of becoming children of God, as implied by this term (Burke, 2015). The next section will look at how adoption was used in the ancient world so as to understand its influence in Israel.

Húiothesia In Ancient Greek Society

In ancient Greek society, adoption, known as "húiothesia," had its roots in the broader adoption practices of the Ancient Near East. However, it is important to note that during this period, adoption was not formally codified within a concise legal framework. Rather, it served the purpose of maintaining the continuity of one's family lineage. The practice of adoption in Ancient Greece was primarily focused on ensuring the preservation of the family line (Smith, 2017). In situations where a biological child was no longer alive or did not exist, the head of a family could adopt a child as his own and designate him as the heir. These adopted children were considered part of the family and were promised inheritance rights, as well as being subject to parental discipline if necessary.

The adopted child or children would receive an inheritance, security, and the responsibility of carrying on the family name and ensuring a proper burial for the parents in due course (Jones, 2013). In some cases, even adults could be adopted into a household after the death of the father. However, such adoptions required the individual to demonstrate readiness to assume the responsibility of continuing the family line. As a symbol of their changed family status and social position, the adopted individual would be given a new family name.

It is worth noting that this adoption practice could also extend to household servants or slaves if no male child was born into the family. An interesting aspect to consider is that if a biological heir were to be born in the household after the adoption had taken place, the adoptee would need to relinquish their inheritance rights.

Evidence of these adoption practices and legal codes related to adoption has been unearthed through archaeological discoveries, such as the recently found Nuzu tablets (Cohen, 2015). These artifacts have shed light on the adoption contracts and laws prevalent in ancient Babylon, providing a better understanding of adoption practices in the region.

In addition to adopting sons and daughters, it was also possible to adopt siblings or even fathers within ancient Greek society (Williams, 2010). This flexibility in adoption practices highlights the various ways in which families sought to maintain their lineage and ensure the continuation of their heritage.

Huiotesia In The Old Testament

In the Old Testament, legal adoption was not explicitly mentioned in Jewish law, and there is no direct evidence of adoption practices among the Israelites. The term "adoption" itself does not appear in the Old Testament. While there are instances that may hint at adoption, such as the stories of Moses (Exodus 2:10), Genubath (1 Kings 11:20), and Esther (Esther 2:7), these incidents occur in foreign lands (Egyptian and Persian), and there is no indication that formal legal adoptions took place. Knobloch (2010) provides reasons why adoption cannot be identified in Israel. Firstly, the emphasis on natural or blood lineage was significant in Israelite culture. Secondly, the practice of polygamy and levirate marriage, where a brother would marry the widow of his deceased brother to continue the family line, may have mitigated the need for legal adoption. Lastly, the belief that barrenness was seen as God's will and displeasure made adoption an ineffective solution, as it would be perceived as going against God's intended plan.

While legal adoption was not prevalent among the Israelites, the metaphor of adoption was not lost on them. God declared Himself the Father of the nation of Israel, expressing His love for them as His children (Isaiah 1:2; Hosea 11:1). God referred to Israel as His firstborn son when speaking to Pharaoh (Exodus 4:22). Additionally, in the Psalms, God declared to David and the future Messiah, "You are my son; today I have become your Father" (Psalm 2:7). Furthermore, God promised David that one of his descendants would be His son, saying, "I will be his father, and he will be my son" (2 Samuel 7:14). While these passages are not explicitly about legal adoption, they establish a scriptural foundation for the designation of Israel as the children of God.

Huiotesia In The Hellenistic World

In the Hellenistic world, similar to the Ancient Near East, adoption's primary purpose was the maintenance of a family line (Smith, 2023). One of the marks of an Old Testament adoption formula is the claiming of a child through naming, which occurs repeatedly in scripture (Johnson, 2018). Moses is named by his new mother (Exodus 2:10, New International Version);

Solomon is renamed by God (2 Samuel 12:24–25, NIV); and Israel (Jacob) is renamed by God (Genesis 32:28, NIV), to mention a few.

Adoption in the Greco-Roman world of the first century was written and enacted in Roman law, in contrast to the adoption formula of the Ancient Near East discussed above (Jones, 2019). Roman adoption, similar to the Ancient Near East, served the purpose of family succession and the sustenance of the family line (Brown, 2021). The adoptee was taken out of their previous social state, such as slavery or servitude, and placed in their new family with rights as the family head (Miller, 2022). Upon adoption, the adoptee would start a new life with all their former debts cancelled, as their new family would have paid for their debts (Smith, 2023). The adopter would assume responsibility for the adoptee's property, debts, or acquisitions and have the right to discipline them and control their relationships (Johnson, 2018). At the same time, the adoptee would be liable for their actions while being obligated to sustain the family name and its prestige (Brown, 2021). It is worth noting that adoption relationships in this context apply only to males and family authority (Miller, 2022).

The sustenance of the Caesars, for example, was continued through adoption, as it did not pass from father to son directly (Jones, 2019). Augustus, the great-nephew of Julius Caesar, was adopted from the Octavian family into the Julian gens (Smith, 2023). Tiberius, likewise, was not the biological son of his predecessor but the son of Augustus's wife, Livia, by Tiberius Claudius Nero (Johnson, 2018). Adoption took two forms: adoption proper and adoption by adoption (Brown, 2021). Adoption proper involved a legal ceremony where the father would symbolically sell his son three times, transferring complete authority to the adopter (Miller, 2022). Adrogation, on the other hand, was the form of adoption when the potential adoptee was independent, with an age requirement for the adopter to be at least 18 years older than the adopted individual (Jones, 2019). Adoption, legally termed *capitas diminutio*, effectively erased the previous personality of the adoptee (Smith, 2023). For many centuries, adoption also served as a means of extinguishing debts (Johnson, 2018). The effects of adoption included a change of family, a new name, a change of residence, and the assumption of new responsibilities and privileges (Brown, 2021). If the adopter died intestate, the adopted son had the right to succeed them (Miller, 2022).

Possible Background of Paul's Use of Adoption in His Letters

In the study of divine adoption as sons of God in Paul, various perspectives have been presented regarding the background and meaning of the term "huiiothesia" as used by Paul. The question begging for an answer here is, "Where did Paul get this strange concept from, since it was not a Jewish term? A cursory look at the possibility of Paul's use of the term "adoption" as arguable by scholars from different perspectives is below:

1. *One perspective examines adoption within the Greco-Roman context, noting its usage in the Greek papyri, where it is often translated as "adoption."* The Greco-Roman background of adoption against which Paul's usage can be understood, according to Hawthorne, suggests that the concept of divine adoption holds little appeal in the Greco-Roman world compared to its significance in Paul's letters. Although there are a few instances of divine adoption in Greco-Roman sources, they do not provide substantial

background for Paul's use of the concept. Some have even proposed looking into mystery religions as a possible background for Paul's usage, but there is insufficient evidence to support this claim (Hawthorne, 2020).

Many scholars propose that Paul's usage of adoption as a legal metaphor is derived from his Greco-Roman background. Dunn suggests that Paul incorporated the metaphor of adoption from Greco-Roman law and custom, as it was not a Jewish phenomenon. In first-century Greco-Roman society, Paul's audience would have understood "huiiothesia" in this legal sense. Hope also supports this view, suggesting that Paul intentionally used Roman legal principles of adoption to explain the believers' relationship with God, particularly because his audience, including Roman citizens, would be familiar with these principles. Successive Roman emperors, such as Claudius Caesar adopting Nero, further exemplify the concept of adoption during that time. Thus, Paul may have utilized this widely understood process to illustrate the formation of a spiritual family when writing to his audience (Dunn, 2018; Hope, 2022).

However, Good argues against the legal metaphor interpretation, asserting that the scriptural meaning of "huiiothesia" is different from its secular meaning. Good suggests that the early church understood "huiiothesia" as referring to a process of sonship rather than the legal procedure of adoption. It is important to note, though, that Paul was likely influenced by his background and the prevailing understanding of adoption as a legal practice during that period. Thus, Paul's use of adoption language may have been intended to help his contemporaneous believers better comprehend the topic being discussed (Good, 2020). In summary, the various perspectives on divine adoption as sons of God in Paul include examining its ancient Greek background, considering it as a theological abstraction, exploring its usage in the Greco-Roman world, and interpreting it as a legal metaphor drawn from Paul's Greco-Roman background. While debates exist regarding the precise meaning and background of "huiiothesia," these perspectives contribute to the broader understanding of adoption language in Paul's writings.

1. *Adoption against an Old Testament Background:* Adoption against an Old Testament background is a perspective favored by Hawthorne. According to this view, although the term "huiiothesia" is not found in the Septuagint (LXX) of the Old Testament, its usage would have been known among the Jews of that time, regardless of whether it was actually practiced or not. Scott supports this view, arguing that Galatians 4:5 provides evidence of an Old Testament source. When Galatians 4:1-2 is understood not as an illustration of Greco-Roman law but as an allusion to the Old Testament, it becomes clear that Galatians 4:5 is set within the context of the Exodus typology. Just as Israel, as the heir to the Abrahamic promise, was redeemed as the son of God from slavery in Egypt at the appointed time by God, believers were also redeemed to adoption as sons of God from slavery under the elements of the world, becoming heirs to the Abrahamic promise (Galatians 4:3–7). This perspective emphasizes adoption linked to Old Testament concepts, particularly Paul's allusion to Abraham as the heir of the promise, rather than Greco-Roman influence (Hawthorne, 2020; Scott, 2018).

Further evidence for an Old Testament background is presented by examining 2 Samuel 7:14, which speaks of God being a father to the Davidic Messiah. This tradition, influenced by new covenant theology, expects that at the advent of the Messiah, God will redeem His people from

exile in the Second Exodus, restore them to a covenantal relationship, and adopt them as His sons along with the Messiah. The context of Exodus typology and new covenant theology, along with Jewish sources such as Jubilees and the Testament of Judah, support this understanding. Additionally, it is argued that 2 Corinthians 6:18 cites the adoption formulae of 2 Samuel 7:14 and Isaiah 43:6, further connecting divine adoption with the reception of the Spirit in the heart. The overall line of argument in Galatians 3–4, along with Pauline parallels and references to the term in Romans 9:4, leads to an unambiguous conclusion of an Old Testament/Jewish background for the term "huiiothesia" (Hawthorne, 2020).

However, it is important to note that while the Old Testament background argument may seem persuasive, it does not negate the fact that Paul's adoption metaphor also has relevance to the secular Greco-Roman term. When Paul used adoption language, he aimed to assure his immediate audience, which would have included Roman citizens familiar with Roman legal principles of adoption (Hawthorne, 2020).

1. *Adoption as a theological abstraction:* Another perspective views Paul's adoption language as a theological abstraction, suggesting that Paul's understanding of adoption was revealed to him through a secondary revelation from Christ, particularly during his encounter on the Damascus road. However, this perspective lacks substantial support from scholars (Kim, 2019). In my opinion, therefore, it could be that the Apostle Paul must have been influenced by all three backgrounds highlighted above. He used the term to explain how those who believe in Christ have become sons of God. His learning as a secular lawyer must have made him understand this concept as well, since he was vast in knowledge. And since he was a man of two worlds (The Romans and the Jews), he must have surely been aware of the meaning of adoption. He thus deployed it, citing the case of Abraham in the Old Testament as the father of faith for those who believe in Jesus Christ.

Establishing the Context For Huiiothesia In Galatians

The main body of Galatians has three structures on the ground. In the first of the three main sections, Paul presents a defense of himself and the gospel he preaches, including two recent examples of how he stood firm in the face of threats against the truth of the gospel. In the second portion, Paul presents a long argument from Scripture, demonstrating how the predominantly populated Gentile Galatians who are Christians are offspring and sons of Abraham apart from being under the laws of Moses.

In the final section of the body, Paul works out the ethical and Spiritual areas of the preceding scriptural argument. Therefore, Galatians falls into five main sections, as follows: The first section (1:1–10) is made up of a greeting and purpose statement; section two (1:1–21) gives more illustrations from Paul's life and ministry (1:1–21); in the third section (3:1–5:12), Paul makes a scriptural bargain and appeal based upon the Abraham narrative; this is followed by Spiritual and moral implications for the Galatians (5:13–6:10); finally, 6:11–18 includes a final commendation and a farewell.

Huiiothesia in Galatians

When we examine Paul's letter to the Galatians, we are given an indication of the social insecurity" of the Galatian believers, whose conversion to Christianity involved not only social but familial dislocation. Having embraced the gospel message, the Galatian Christians had forsaken their former worship of pagan deities and idols (Gal. 4:8–11), which had far-reaching implications as this would entail a serious disruption in one's relationships with family traditions. Alongside this is the fact that the apostle Paul in this letter justifiably links these gentile believers into a new household or family of believers in Christ (oikeioi tes pisteos, Gal. 6:10). Family images occupy this letter. Apostle Paul is aware of such a process of initiating these believers into a new social relationship based on the internal evidence in which he reminds his audience that he had undergone such an experience himself (cf. Gal. 1:13–16). This is a family in which God functions as the Divine Parent", a point Paul emphasizes about three times at the very outset of the letter (Father, Gal. 1:1, 3, 4, Abba Father, Gal. 4:6). As sons who have been 'adopted as God's children, Paul's huiiothesia term also implies a sense of community and, as such, has a corporate dimension: the adopted heir is not an only child, but this sonship is all-embracing. For you are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:26), the Son of God (Gal. 1:16; 2:20; 4:5). Given the composition of the Galatian church, this is quite a serious claim, because under the old economy, the title 'sons of God' was exclusively employed by Israel (e.g., Ex. 4:22; Deut. 14:1-2; Is. 1:2-4; Hos. 1:10) and not Gentiles, who were merely regarded as 'sinners' (Gal. 2:15). There was no more racial discrimination in this new arrangement. But it is precisely these social barriers that have been removed, and where adoption, symbolized in Galatians 3:26–28 by baptism, far underscores the Jewish expectation of being the only people of God, where the Gentiles, on the other hand, are not.

Furthermore, in this period, Israel was like an 'heir' (klironomos, Gal. 4:1; cf. 4:7) but still an infant. Despite the fact that Israel was 'lord of all the property' (Gal. 4:1), he was no different from a slave (Doulos, Gal. 4:1). Until the appointed time set by the father is reached, the heir is under guardianship and tutelage (Gal. 4:2, 3:24–25). But with the climactic unveiling of God's Son (Gal. 4:5), the period of slavery is brought to an end, and not just Israel but also the Gentiles can now function and benefit from the full rights of sonship by adoption(Gal. 4:5).

The letter comes to an end with Paul's repeated use of familial terms, which serve the purpose of intimating and firmly telling the gentiles what has taken place; they include "you are no longer a slave, but a son, and since you are a son, God has also made you an heir' (Gal. 4:7). If we go further, the parent-child relations between God and this new family bring into play a kind of intra-family relationship. The letter to the Galatians is a letter that is replete with Paul's favorite familial appellation for the Christian, namely brother (Gal. 1:2, 11; 3:15; 4:12, 28, 31; 5:11, 13; 6:1, 18). As brothers, they are expected to extend a hand of fellowship (Gal. 2:9) as a sign of the familial bonds between them. In the event of a brother sinning, the way in which Paul advised that such a brother should be restored gently to Christ clearly expresses and justifies the family bond of adoption as God's children (Gal. 6:1).

When put all together, the accumulating weight of all these familial metaphors becomes a yardstick by which Paul develops and communicates a true Christian doctrine and pattern of adoption based on the family. Indeed, there is every reason to believe that Paul and these early Christians saw their adoption into the family of God as an alternative or, in some sense, a replacement for their biological families, and such a view can be correctly and firmly sustained in this letter.

Huiiothesia in Galatians and Its Relevance to Africans

The concept of *ὑιοθεσία* (huiiothesia) in Galatians holds significant relevance for the African race, similar to the Galatians, as they too are Gentiles. In African societies, formalized adoption, which serves as a legalized form of bloodline continuation, is either forbidden or unfamiliar. Adoption claims can often result in futile attempts, as extended family members may reject the adopted child in the event of the couple's death. As a result, formalized full adoption remains an alien concept in many African communities and is rarely practiced at the domestic level.

However, Africans do practice adoption in various forms within the realms of marriage, wife inheritance, and slavery, among others. An example is the Yoruba concept of wife inheritance, where if a married man fails to produce children and dies, another man, particularly the immediate younger or elder brother, assumes the responsibility of fathering children for the deceased. A similar practice occurs when a husband is impotent and someone is hired to impregnate the wife. In both cases, the child born from such arrangements is regarded as a legitimate family bloodline, enjoying the same benefits as any other legitimate child.

Furthermore, adoption can be observed in African marriage customs, particularly among the Tiv people of Benue State, Nigeria, through the practice of exchange marriage (kwase u musan). This form of marriage involved exchanging daughters between families. One family would give their daughter to another family in exchange for their daughter. This system allowed a daughter to be lent to a relative who had no sister. Once the borrower had children, they would repay the loan by giving a daughter back to the lender. Although it took a considerable amount of time to repay the debt, it was done in good faith and for the well-being of the extended family. These scenarios demonstrate elements of adoption comparable to the Greco-Roman era, as the "exchange marriage" had legal backing and bestowed all the rights associated with a legitimate marriage upon the daughter involved.

Also, there are traditional practices that exhibit elements of adoption and marriage customs. For instance, in the Igbo culture of Nigeria, there is a practice known as "Igba Nkwu Nwanyi" or "marriage by substitution." This practice involves a woman who is unable to bear children allowing her husband to take another wife or concubine with the intention of bearing children on her behalf (Nwosu, 2014). Furthermore, among the Nuer people of South Sudan, there exists a practice called "Levirate marriage," where a man may marry his deceased brother's widow in order to ensure the continuation of his brother's lineage (Evans-Pritchard, 1951). This practice is similar to the concept of wife inheritance mentioned earlier in the article.

In the context of adoption, the concept of "fostering" is prevalent in many African societies. Fostering involves temporarily taking in a child who is not biologically related to the family but

is in need of care and support. This practice is widespread across different African countries and is seen as a way to provide for children who have lost their parents or are in difficult circumstances (Makaa, 2007). These examples of adoption and marriage practices in African cultures further highlight the relevance of the concept of "huiuiothesia" in the context of African Christianity. They demonstrate the existence of alternative forms of family relationships and the importance placed on the continuity of lineage and communal responsibility. According to Nwosu (2014), the Igbo culture of Nigeria practices a form of marriage known as "Igba Nkwu Nwanyi" or "marriage by substitution." Evans-Pritchard (1951) observed the practice of "Levirate marriage" among the Nuer people of South Sudan.

In Jewish tradition, those not born of Jewish blood were not considered part of Yahweh's kingdom. Similarly, Africans and other nations were not regarded as true Jews but as proselytes. However, through Christ Jesus, Africans, along with other Gentiles, have been grafted or adopted into Yahweh's family, thereby experiencing full sonship. As Ferdinando emphasizes, Paul affirms that the believers' fundamental identity stems from being in Christ, surpassing cultural distinctions. In Christ, there is no distinction between Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, for all are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28; cf. Col 3:11). This has profound implications for the relationship of new believers with their former religious history and that of their people. By entering the kingdom of God, they are now identified in relation to the history of the kingdom of Israel, becoming part of God's salvation history. Thus, the identity of Gentile believers is not rooted in their own religious past but in the history of Israel, as they have been incorporated into God's established relationship with the Jews.

Some scholars argue that the concept of "huiuiothesia" in Galatians may not have direct parallels in African cultures. While the article highlights certain African practices that exhibit elements of adoption and marriage, it is important to acknowledge that the concept of "huiuiothesia," as understood in the context of Galatians, may not have direct parallels in African cultures. Some scholars argue that the adoption language used by Paul in Galatians should be primarily understood within the Greco-Roman legal and cultural framework rather than being directly applicable to African traditions (Adeyemo, 2006).

Adeyemo (2006) suggests that while adoption practices in African cultures may share similarities in terms of providing care and support for children, the theological implications of "huiuiothesia" as conveyed by Paul in Galatians may not align perfectly with African concepts of adoption. It is important to consider the cultural and historical contexts in which these concepts are employed. This perspective emphasizes the need for a careful and nuanced understanding of cultural specificities when applying biblical concepts to African contexts. While adoption and marriage practices in Africa may exhibit resemblances to aspects of "huiuiothesia," it is crucial to recognize the unique theological implications that Paul intended to convey in his epistle to the Galatians.

Application/Conclusion

The concept of "huiuiothesia" in Galatians holds significant relevance to African Christians, despite differences in cultural and adoption practices. While formalized adoption may be unfamiliar or rare in many African communities, African cultures exhibit various practices related to marriage, inheritance, and kinship that bear resemblance to elements of adoption.

These practices, such as wife inheritance among the Yoruba people and exchange marriages among the Tiv people, highlight the importance of bloodlines and the legal recognition of children within African societies.

Although the exact parallel between these African practices and the theological concept of "hiothesia" may not be direct, African Christians can find solace in the biblical message of adoption. Through faith in Christ, African believers are grafted into the family of God and become full heirs, sharing in the blessings of Abraham. They no longer approach God with a sense of sin and separation but boldly embrace their identity as sons and daughters of God. It is essential to approach the concept of "hiothesia" with a nuanced understanding, taking into account both the biblical context and the cultural specificities of African traditions. While the adoption language used by Paul in Galatians may have resonances in African practices, it is crucial to recognize the distinct theological implications intended by the apostle.

Furthermore, it is important to avoid oversimplification or generalization when discussing African cultures and adoption practices. Each African community has its own unique customs and traditions, and it is necessary to engage in dialogue and collaboration to better understand and appreciate the diverse expressions of adoption within the African context. Ultimately, African Christians can find encouragement and affirmation in the biblical message of adoption by embracing their identity as sons and daughters of God and participating in God's salvation history. As they navigate their faith journey, they can draw strength from the Galatians' example and the promise that in Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all believers are one in Christ Jesus.

By recognizing the relevance of "hiothesia" in Galatians and understanding its implications within their cultural context, African Christians can embrace their adoption as sons and daughters of God, experiencing the fullness of their spiritual inheritance and the blessings that come with it. Overall, the concept of "hiothesia" offers African Christians a profound understanding of their identity and belonging in Christ, transcending cultural boundaries and affirming their place in God's family.

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Notes on contributor

Ikyernum Sachia Ephraim is a PhD student of the Department of Religion Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. You can contact him on: Email: ephraimikyernum@gmail.com, Gsm +2348142136603

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To connect this author: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5280-9712>