ABSTRACT

This is a study of divine adoption in the confessions of the Reformation Period. The concept of adoption is based on the Pauline *huiosthesia* describing the entire plan of salvation by God ranging from predestination to consummation. Because of this broad feature, the concept has the potential to be an underlying theme, presenting a theological framework into which the concept is woven. However, in the past adoption has as a whole unfortunately been neglected or incorrectly treated throughout church history.

Currently, some theologians are trying to restore this neglected concept. Tim J. R. Trumper is one of them. Whereas Trumper values Calvin as *the* theologian of adoption, he wrongly judges the neglect of adoption in the confessions of the Reformation Period. In chapter 1, by questioning this judgment, the present study formulates the main research question; *what is the place and function of the concept of adoption in the Protestant confessions in the 16th and 17th centuries?* In order to advance this research question, we carry out the two tasks: 1) the *historical* task to find the place of the concept in the confessions and 2) the *systematic-theological* task to clarify the function of the concept in the confessions.

In chapter 2, we strategically use Trumper’s dissertation as a tool to grasp how Calvin treats the concept in his works. This is because we methodologically use Calvin’s use of the concept as the center for exploring the confessions in the study. It is intended that presenting Calvin’s treatment of the concept will be a good lead to the research body (chapters 3-5) delving into the confessions in terms of the concept.

From chapters 3 through 5, this study explores eighteen important confessions in order to examine how the concept of adoption and its relevant issues are treated in them. Chapter 3 investigates documents written prior to Calvin and specifies some seminal importance which has relevance to adoption, leading eventually to the development by Calvin. In chapter 4, we explore documents written by or directly related to Calvin. Those documents show how the concept was developed and deepened by this reformer. In chapter 5, we explore the confessions written after Calvin, considering whether or not his soteriological thought influenced them in the context of adoption. What we actually find there is that those confessions basically treat adoption, although they do not take full advantage of what Calvin developed.

In the first part of chapter 6, we carry out the historical task by solving the four sub-questions. 1) Are there any instances of treating adoption in the confessions? 2) Are there any historical lines related to
Calvin in terms of adoption? 3) What is the main factor causing the difficulty to recognize the historical lines related to Calvin? 4) What is the meaning of having WCF 12 as a *locus* in the confessional history?

Regarding 1), the instances found in the research body become a clear answer to that question. In relation to 2), by scrutinizing carefully those instances, we clarify that the confessions written after Calvin hint at his treatment of the concept of adoption. In regard to 3), we identify the contextual nature of confessions which affects their format as the main factor causing the difficulty to recognize the historical lines related to Calvin. Regarding 4), we conclude that WCF 12 is a historical sign indicating that the concept of adoption had been maintained in the Reformed tradition throughout the confessional history of the Reformation Period.

In the second part of chapter 6, we carry out the systematic-theological task by solving the four sub-questions. 1) How do the instances of treating adoption in the confessions reflect the Pauline *huiothesia*? 2) What are the relevant issues of adoption, to which its concept is theologically related? 3) What advantage does the concept of adoption have for reshaping soteriology in confessions? 4) How can the concept of adoption be expressed more fully in confessions? Regarding 1), we find that whereas the confessions reflect *huiothesia* as a whole, no confession does full justice to the complete scope of it. This shows that the confessions were purposely written to build up the church in the actual theological context, serving her with the normative, unifying, and catechetical functions. In relation to 2), we identify the fourteen issues which are crucial to present a redemptive-historical framework. Then, we clarify the relation of adoption to the twofold grace, the new birth, and deification. With regard to 3), we first define the function of the concept of adoption as a teleological grace providing God’s children with both a basis for and the purpose of their salvation. On the basis of this teleological function, we conclude that having the concept in confessions has the three advantages. First, it has a potential to present a redemptive-historical perspective. Second, it has a potential to provide confessions with a Trinitarian orientation. Third, it has a potential to make it possible for the familial aspect of the gospel to be communicated more effectively in the context of church discipline, as compared with theological tracts, treatises, or textbooks. Regarding 4), we propose that presenting the concept as an underlying theme is the most appropriate method.