



## *Jean Paton, Christian Adoption, and the Reunification of Families*

By E. Wayne Carp

*If ever there was a religious theme hidden in an apparently sociological and psychological matter, it is in adoption.*

—Jean Paton, 1957

*It has seemed to me that the religious aspect of adoption is in the fact of forgiveness and the grace of God, as these make possible relief from the otherwise impossible burdens of illegitimacy and prohibition of contact between natural parents and adopted children.*

—Jean Paton, 1959

Jean M. Paton is the mother of the adoption reform movement. Beginning in 1950, Paton, a twice-adopted, middle-aged ex-social worker, dedicated herself to explaining the adoption experience to a wider public, providing a healthy self-image for adoptees, and facilitating meetings between adult adoptees and their families of origin. In pursuit of these objectives, she founded the Life History Study Center in 1953 and Orphan Voyage in 1961. For the next thirty years, when thousands of adult adoptees and birth mothers had nowhere else to turn, Paton personally counseled them by mail, by phone, in her newsletter, and in person on the best way to begin to search for their birth families and the children they had relinquished. She promoted these goals with the publication of two books, *The Adopted Break Silence* and *Orphan Voyage*, as well as a newsletter, *The LOG of Orphan Voyage*, which was in its day an Internet-like bulletin board or blog that kept subscribers up to date with the latest news in the world of the adopted and her personal life. Paton was keenly interested in building permanent institutions for aiding birth parents and adult adoptee members of the adoption triad. In pursuit of this agenda, she encouraged the founders of Concerned United Birthparents (CUB), the first national organization for birth mothers, in 1976, and was instrumental in founding the American Adoption Congress, the first national organization for adult adoptees, in 1979. Out of her fundamentalist Presbyterian upbringing in Ypsilanti, Michigan, a conversion experience in her forties, and her experiential knowledge of meeting her birth mother, Paton formulated a theory for searching and reuniting with one's first

family, which she called "Christian adoption," made up of the Biblical concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation; these religious concepts came to define her understanding of search and reunion between adult adoptees and their original families. Until her death of a heart attack on March 27, 2002 at the age of ninety-three, Paton continued doing what she did best, fighting on a multitude of fronts for the rights of adult adoptees and birth mothers.<sup>1</sup>

America had never been kind to unwed mothers and their children. Like Hawthorne's Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*, unwed mothers were often stigmatized for violating the institution of the family and society's morality about the proper role of women's sexuality. At the beginning of the twentieth century the moral shame of single motherhood was reinvigorated by the "science" of eugenics, which stigmatized illegitimacy by labeling unwed mothers as feeble-minded. Studies "proved" that progeny who inherited this condition were prone to vice, criminality, and insanity. Child welfare reformers urged state legislators to build institutions to hold feeble-minded women of childbearing age.<sup>2</sup> By the late 1940s, as a result of the spectacular success of psychoanalysis in treating American soldiers for neuroses and psychosomatic disorders during World War II, psychoanalytic theory began to dominate social work casework treating the problem of illegitimacy.<sup>3</sup> By 1958, these

<sup>1</sup> E. WAYNE CARP, FAMILY MATTERS: SECRECY AND DISCLOSURE IN THE HISTORY OF ADOPTION 139-42 (1998); Carp, *The Extraordinary Life of Jean Paton and the Struggle to Reform American Adoption* (unpublished MS).

<sup>2</sup> MARK H. HALLER, EUGENICS: HEREDITARIAN ATTITUDES IN AMERICAN THOUGHT 28 (1983); see generally, chs. 1-3.

psychoanalytic tenets had been incorporated into the Child Welfare League of America's influential *Standards for Adoption Service*. It stated that unwed mothers "have serious personality disturbances [and] need help with their emotional problems."<sup>4</sup> Social workers claimed to solve these "problems" by separating the unwed mother from her child, placing the child for adoption, and making sure that if the mother ever returned to the agency for information, she would be denied access to it.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the pseudo-scientific stigmatization of illegitimacy, a veritable demographic revolution in the number of children born out of wedlock was underway in America. With social bonds loosened by wartime, illegitimacy rates began to soar and continued their upward flight for the next fifty years. In 1938, 88,000 children were born out of wedlock; a decade later, 129,700; by 1958 the figure had climbed to 201,000, reaching 245,000 by 1962—a 306 percent increase in a quarter century. The largest increase in the number of out-of-wedlock births occurred among nonwhite mothers, climbing 2.5 times, from 46,700 in 1938 to 130,900 in 1957.<sup>6</sup>

It was the baby boom, beginning in the mid-1940s and reaching its peak in the late 1950s, that increased the demand for infants to adopt, resulting in a profound change in the national culture that tied personal happiness to an ideology of domesticity and the nuclear family. For childless couples, parenthood during the Cold War became a necessity. The media romanticized babies, glorified motherhood, and identified fatherhood with masculinity and good citizenship. This celebratory pronatalist mood, as the historian Elaine Tyler May (1995) has written, "marginalized the childless in unprecedented ways."<sup>7</sup> Uncomfortable at being childless and the subject of public opprobrium, many of these childless couples sought adoption in record numbers. Wartime prosperity, a postwar pronatalist climate of opinion, and medical advances in infertility diagnosis combined to produce a remarkable increase in the number of applications

to adopt a child.<sup>8</sup> In 1945, the Children's Bureau estimated that adoptions had increased threefold from 1937, to approximately 50,000 annually; a decade later the number of adoptions had nearly doubled again to 93,000, and by 1965 climbed to 142,000. In less than thirty years, the number of adoptions had grown nearly nine-fold.<sup>9</sup>

The demand by this new interest group—white, middle-class, and childless couples—was immense, far exceeding the number of available children. By the mid-1950s one expert estimated that of the four and a half million childless couples, fully one million were seeking the approximately 75,000 children available for adoption.<sup>10</sup> Social workers accommodated adoptive parents' demand for infants by following the new advice of "early placements" advocated by British psychiatrist John Bowlby.<sup>11</sup> Citing a mass of clinical evidence, Bowlby demonstrated the adverse effect that "maternal deprivation"—the lack of a birth mother's care—had on the development of infants' character and mental health. He recommended strongly that "the baby should be adopted as early in his life as possible,"<sup>12</sup> specifying that "the first two months should become the rule."<sup>13</sup> By 1955, the Los Angeles County Bureau of Adoptions, one of the largest agencies in the country, reported its success in placing infants directly from the hospital.<sup>14</sup> Subtly and overtly, social workers and maternity home officials pressured unwed mothers to place their babies for adoption, now considered "the best solution" to the "problem" of illegitimacy.<sup>15</sup>

With the tremendous increase in illegitimacy during World War II, coupled with the pronatalism and the baby boom of the postwar years, adoptions soared. As a result there was a revolution in

<sup>3</sup> NATHAN G. HALE, JR., *THE RISE AND CRISIS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS IN THE UNITED STATES: FREUD AND THE AMERICANS, 1917-1985* (1995), ch. 11.

<sup>4</sup> CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, *STANDARDS FOR ADOPTION SERVICE* 14 (1958).

<sup>5</sup> CARP, *FAMILY MATTERS*, at 113-16. See also, ELLEN HERMAN, *KINSHIP BY DESIGN: A HISTORY OF ADOPTION IN THE MODERN UNITED STATES* 148-50 (2010); RICKIE SOLINGER, *WAKE UP LITTLE SUSIE: SINGLE PREGNANCY AND RACE BEFORE ROE V. WADE* (1992), ch. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Clark Vincent, *Illegitimacy in the Next Decade: Trends and Implications*, *CHILD WELFARE*, Dec. 1964, at 515.

<sup>7</sup> ELAINE TYLER MAY, *BARREN IN THE PROMISED LAND: CHILDLESS AMERICANS AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS* 129; 127-40 (1995).

<sup>8</sup> MARGARET MARSH AND WANDA RONNER, *THE EMPTY CRADLE: INFERTILITY IN AMERICA FROM COLONIAL TIMES TO THE PRESENT* 186-87 (1996).

<sup>9</sup> Sophie van Senden Theis, *Adoption*, in 4 *SOCIAL WORK YEAR BOOK* 23 (1937); I. Evelyn Smith, *Adoption*, in 9 *SOCIAL WORK YEAR BOOK* 24 (1947); Kathy S. Stolley, *Statistics on Adoption in the United States*, 3 *FUTURE OF CHILDREN* 28 (Spring 1993).

<sup>10</sup> MICHAEL SCHAPIRO, *A STUDY OF ADOPTION PRACTICE*, at Vol. 1, p. 10 (1956).

<sup>11</sup> JOHN BOWLBY, *MATERNAL CARE AND MENTAL HEALTH* 15-51, 101-08 (1951). See also Ch. 2 of BOWLBY, *A SECURE BASE: PARENT CHILD ATTACHMENT AND HEALTHY HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* (1988).

<sup>12</sup> BOWLBY, *MATERNAL CARE*, *supra* note 11, at 101.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*, at 103.

<sup>14</sup> E. I. Lynch and A. E. Mertz, *Adoptive Placement of Infants Directly from the Hospital*" 36 *SOC'L CASEWORK* 450-57 (1955).

<sup>15</sup> ANN FESSLER, *THE GIRLS WHO WENT AWAY: THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF WOMEN WHO SURRENDERED CHILDREN FOR ADOPTION IN THE DECADES BEFORE ROE V. WADE* (2006); See also Ch. 3, BARBARA MELOSH, *STRANGER AND KIN: THE AMERICAN WAY OF ADOPTION* (2002), SOLINGER, *WAKE UP LITTLE SUSIE*, *supra* note 5, at ch. 3; and MELISSA LUTKRE, *ON OUR OWN: UNMARRIED MOTHERHOOD IN AMERICA* (1997).

adoption policy and practice. Officials began to seal court records, adoption agency case files, and birth certificates, a reversal from the first half of the twentieth century. Before the 1950s, state statutes remained silent on the regulation of adoption agency records, leaving it by default to the discretion of the agencies' executive directors and social workers. As a result, adult adoptees had little difficulty in accessing their records from adoption agencies.<sup>16</sup> In 1942 Paton simply walked into the Probate Court in Detroit and looked up her own adoption when she sought to discover her birth mother's full name.<sup>17</sup> For a multitude of reasons—changing demographics of birth mothers, prescriptive psychoanalytic theory, and the protection of adoptive parents' from possible interference by birth parents—between the 1950s and 1980s, access to adoption court records were closed down first to birth mothers, then to adult adoptees. Next came the denial of access to adoption agency records, followed at last by birth certificates.<sup>18</sup> When Paton returned to the Probate Office a second time to look at the legal record of her adoption, she was told by a clerk “in a clipped fashion” that she “would have to see the judge about that.” Paton said she “felt—spontaneously—that I had been struck across the face with a riding crop.” She remembered the event as the “most humiliating experience of my life.”<sup>19</sup> Paton left without a word. Of course, Paton had already seen her adoption court papers, yet her mortification caused her to redouble her efforts to promote her program of search and reunion.

That program evolved during the years 1957–1960, the most intellectually fertile ones of Jean Paton's life, as her intensive reading melded with her experience as adopted person, social worker, and Christian. Out of this intellectual ferment, one concept—Christian adoption—came to dominate Paton's intellectual landscape, without which it is impossible to understand her life's work. This idea drew upon Paton's intense religiosity, a result of what appears to be a conversion experience Paton had in her forties, when she was “born again.” She wrote to Richard Byfield, a minister of the

Protestant Episcopal Church in San Francisco, “His presence shot through my many-tiered walls. I have been on my knees in gratitude more than one time since I began the Life History Center.”<sup>20</sup> Paton incorporated the Christian beliefs of forgiveness and reconciliation into her ideas about adoption reform; these religious concepts came to define her understanding of intermediaries, search, and reunion.

It may be a surprise for many to learn that Jean Paton was a religious person or that religious tenets permeate her understanding of adoption reform, because from the mid-1960s on Paton spoke about her religiosity only rarely. There were several reasons for this. In the 1950s, Paton believed that the current generation of adopted children would not be religious in the future because the majority of them would have been raised in positivist or relativist families. She foresaw that “there will be nothing for the Life History Study Center to offer the adopted population, except that small segment which is still being reared in religious belief.”<sup>21</sup> Later, Paton deliberately concealed her religious beliefs because she “realized how many people are offended by the slightest reference to God.”<sup>22</sup> Eventually, she came to think that many adult adoptees were not believers because the sealed adoption record laws had destroyed their faith. As Paton put it, “if we cannot believe in our roots, we cannot believe in God.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, as the Adoptees' Liberty Movement Association (ALMA) and other adoption search and support groups gained momentum in the early 1970s, Paton became preoccupied with “the warfare within the movement” and took less interest in issues that used to concern her, such as religion. Yet Paton's religious beliefs remained central to her understanding of everything connected to adoption reform, as demonstrated by numerous remarks scattered throughout her correspondence and publications.

Paton's understanding of Christianity revolved around a few basic concepts. Although unsure of God's ultimate purposes, she took from the Gospel of John that “his message [was] Love.”<sup>24</sup> She believed Jesus was the adopted son of Joseph, and was a social orphan, which Paton defined as a person deprived of their original parents not by death but by social

<sup>16</sup> CARP, FAMILY MATTERS, *supra* note 5, at ch. 3. Social workers routinely provided adoptive parents with information about their child. See, E. Wayne Carp, *Adoption and Disclosure of Family Information: A Historical Perspective*, 74 CHILD WELFARE 217 (Jan./Feb. 1995).

<sup>17</sup> JEAN PATON, THE ADOPTED BREAK SILENCE: THE EXPERIENCES AND VIEWS OF FORTY ADULTS WHO WERE ONCE ADOPTED CHILDREN 7 (1954).

<sup>18</sup> CARP, FAMILY MATTERS, *supra* note 5, at ch. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from Jean Paton (hereafter “JP”) to Mr. Downing (May 9, 1978), (on file with author, folder: MI) (Unless otherwise noted all references to manuscript sources refer to the Jean Paton Papers).

<sup>20</sup> JP to Richard Byfield (Feb. 6, 1961) (folder: Byfield).

<sup>21</sup> Press Release, Jean Paton, From the Center's Notebook (Oct. 1958) (folder: CM 1957–1959).

<sup>22</sup> JP to Marilyn Hipp (Jan. 8, 1983) (folder: Hipp).

<sup>23</sup> JP to Kay Rachford (Aug. 10, 1977) (folder: Rachford, Kay).

<sup>24</sup> See 1 John 4:8; JP to Geneva Ferrozio (Feb. 2, 1982) (folder: Ferrozio, G).

reasons.<sup>25</sup> Paton reprinted with approval a statement from a British Broadcasting Company program, *The Listener*: “And what of Joseph? Where did Jesus get his feeling about fatherhood if not from him? Yet throughout the whole of Christianity he had been represented as a simple, bewildered man. Conventional Christianity, tied to the supernatural, neglects Joseph and Mary as the educators of Jesus.”<sup>26</sup> Inspired by these words, Paton completed a piece of sculpture on the Holy Family, which “included Joseph and the supernatural.”<sup>27</sup> She thought that “only Jesus among all the founders of religions knew of and dealt with the ensnarement of official hostility toward outcasts and uncertain souls.”<sup>28</sup> She especially liked to envision “the Messiah” as “‘The Lamb of God—Despised and Rejected.’”<sup>29</sup> She noted, “It is perhaps even truer than has sometimes been suggested that the Christian Church belongs especially to orphans.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, Paton held that Christianity related to the needs of adopted people. She recognized that the church was flawed and that it did not always live up to its origins, but “at least the ministry had a history and an ethic if only they would apply it.”<sup>31</sup> The church for Paton was a much better alternative to professions like social work or psychiatry, which had “little to offer except a pretense of skills.”<sup>32</sup>

One of Paton’s earliest references to the Christian aspects of adoption occurred in 1955 in the performance of her role as ombudsman for the adoption triad. On November 4, she fired off a letter in response to a newspaper article, which described how, at a session of the National Council of Churches’ conference on social welfare, representatives deplored the black market in babies. Playing on the term “black market,” Paton advocated “the more fundamental green market.” She explained that

a green market was one “wherein all participants in adoption thrive through the years.” Although admitting that it may be necessary for an unmarried woman to relinquish her child to adoptive parents, Paton declared that it should not “mean a lifetime of sorrow and worry about this child of her flesh and mishap.” She then asked how the pain and ages-long stigma were to be removed. This was possible, she answered, “under Christian concepts” and the Life History Study Center’s Registration Service, which could be used “for reconciliation and reunion at appropriate times. Only in this way can it be possible for the natural parents of an adopted child to find complete forgiveness, and for the child and adoptive parents to fully participate in the Christian form of love.” Paton invited pastors to address this problem in their counseling, and suggested that she was available for advice if they wished to write her.<sup>33</sup>

Returning to a religious message in November 1957, Paton wrote a review of Ralph Barton Perry’s *Puritanism and Democracy*, in which she specifically discussed “Christian adoptions.”<sup>34</sup> These had little to do with the specific practices of a Christian denominationally-operated adoption agency. For Paton, at the heart of Christian adoptions was the doctrine of forgiveness, and at the heart of any adoption was illegitimacy. As she advised one correspondent, “illegitimacy colors all adoption practice.” It was the reason adoption records came to be sealed, and why adopted persons had a sense of inferiority, making them hesitant, which ultimately delayed their development in life.<sup>35</sup> According to Paton, “there was no cure for illegitimacy except for forgiveness.” In a Christian adoption, birth parents were “no more evil than anyone else.” To Paton, the “basic Christian message” was “Go and sin no more. There is forgiveness. If the practice and structure of adoption included forgiveness, the explanation to the child would be possible.”<sup>36</sup> According to Paton, the problem of the stigma of illegitimacy could only be solved “in a society which has been formed by those related to God through the grace of forgiveness, and who express this in their social relations.”

Paton admitted to Johanna G. Schenk, Director of Casework at Boston’s Children’s Friend Society, that no single person was an expert on the subject of forgiveness. Nevertheless, she modestly claimed

<sup>25</sup> JP to Sidney Green (Sept. 14, 1971) (folder: Green, Sidney); JP to Bill Lumley (Dec. 5, 1975) (folder: Lumley, Bill). According to Yigal Levin, “most modern scholars assume that Joseph must have adopted Jesus in some form or another.” See Levin, *Jesus, ‘Son of God’ and ‘Son of David’: The ‘Adoption’ of Jesus into the Davidic Line*, 28 *JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT* 415-442 (no. 4, 2006). But this is a contested idea. For a learned view that the historical Jesus was fatherless, see ANDRIES VAN AARDE, *FATHERLESS IN GALILEE: JESUS AS CHILD OF GOD* 77, ch. 5 (2001). Paton’s definition of a social orphan comes from an untitled essay written “after ‘67.”

<sup>26</sup> Press Release, Jean Paton, Jottings (Feb. 1, 1961) (folder: Reunion 1960-1962).

<sup>27</sup> *Id.* (emphasis in original).

<sup>28</sup> JEAN PATON (AS RUTHENA HILL KITTSON), *ORPHAN VOYAGE* 116-17 (1968). For scholarly support of Paton’s view, see ANDRIES VAN AARDE, *FATHERLESS IN GALILEE*, *supra* note 25, chap. 6.

<sup>29</sup> JP to Bill Cody (Sept. 10, 1979) (folder: Cody, William).

<sup>30</sup> JEAN PATON, *ORPHAN VOYAGE*, *supra* note 28, at 117.

<sup>31</sup> JP to Sidney Green (Sept. 14, 1971) (folder: Green, Sidney); JP to Bill Lumley (Dec. 5, 1975) (folder: Lumley, Bill).

<sup>32</sup> JP to Sidney Greene (Sept. 14, 1971) (folder: Green, Sidney).

<sup>33</sup> Press Release, Jean Paton, *The Green Market in Adoption* (Nov. 4, 1955).

<sup>34</sup> Press Release, Life History Study Center, Jonathan Edwards Returns (November 1957) (folder: Life History Center for “Reunion” Program). Paton admitted there were other types of adoptions, but she favored Christian adoptions.

<sup>35</sup> JP to Selma Chesler (Feb. 20, 1966) (folder: Chesler).

<sup>36</sup> JP to Katherine Gordon (Sept. 28, 1982) (file: Gordon, Katherine).



to have pioneered the concept into the subject of adoption, though she suspected that “it was there from the first, surely.”<sup>37</sup> Paton was right on both counts. Not only was Paton the first person to apply the idea of Christian forgiveness to an adoption reunion, viewing the meeting as both a psychological process and a performance in which both parties were considered injured and had to utter words of forgiveness to each other, but she was also a pioneer in hypothesizing a positive relationship between theological and therapeutic forgiveness.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, as Célestin Musekura, a scholar of religion and the founder and president of African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries, notes, “the Christian Scriptures—both the Old and New Testaments” are filled with accounts “of a merciful, compassionate, and just God, who continuously and patiently redeems his wayward, but beloved people, in order to bring them into a communion by offering the forgiveness of their sins.”<sup>39</sup>

Paton’s initial understanding of forgiveness was grounded in the teachings of Paul Tillich, one of the most influential Protestant theologians of the twentieth century. Dismissed in 1933 from the University of Frankfurt for his opposition to the Nazi movement, Tillich immigrated to America on the advice of Reinhold Niebuhr, who had offered him a position at the Union Theological Seminary in New York. In 1951, Tillich produced the first volume of his magnum opus, the three-volume *Systematic Theology* (1951–63). Four years later, Tillich retired from Union Theological Seminary to accept the prestigious appointment of University Professor at Harvard. His popularity in the United States grew from his dynamic preaching and best-selling books, such as *The Courage to Be* (1952) and *Dynamics of Faith* (1957), which introduced theological issues and modern culture to a general readership.<sup>40</sup> In 1959, his somber visage graced the cover of *Time* magazine, as Tillich joined Niebuhr and Billy Graham as heralds of a revival of religion in the 1950s, which was marked by “a sober, critical, Protestant, Christian worldview.”<sup>41</sup>

Tillich became known as the “therapeutic

theologian.” He eventually gave up his original goal of transforming society and instead set out to heal individuals. To achieve this objective, Tillich tried to adapt what was best in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, attending psychoanalytic seminars and meetings, and holding conversations with Karen Horney, Rollo May, Erich Fromm, and others. To reach a mass audience, he transformed traditional religious terms into language understandable to all. In Tillich’s work, as his biographers put it, “*sin* became separation, *grace* reunion, *God* the Ground and aim of Being, and *faith* ultimate concern.” Conservative theologians grew uneasy at Tillich’s untraditional language; they preferred “Christ” to “New Being” and “Holy Spirit” to “Spiritual Presence.” Many churchgoers, however, felt relieved and enlightened to hear that sin was “not a single immoral act but a universal state of separation in which man found himself alienated from himself, from others, and from God.” Similarly, they were comforted to hear that grace was not “a virtue or a state of perfection but a state of reunion with that from which they had become separated.”<sup>42</sup> Tillich was a powerful, even mesmerizing, preacher, and collections of his sermons were the most widely read of his works; three volumes of them were published. Paton took notes on the second volume, entitled *The New Being* (1955).<sup>43</sup>

On February 21, 1954, at the Unitarian Church of Germantown in Philadelphia, Paton had heard Tillich deliver a sermon on forgiveness.<sup>44</sup> As his text, he took Luke 7: 36–47, which tells the story of Jesus eating at the house of one of the Pharisees. A woman, a known sinner, approaches Jesus. She washes his feet with her tears, wipes them with her hair, and then kisses and anoints them with oil. When the Pharisee objects to the sinner’s deeds, Jesus rebukes him, comparing him to his detriment to the sinner, and gives him a lesson on forgiveness, summed up in the sentence: “Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved

<sup>37</sup> JP to Joanna G. Schenk (Oct. 28, 1955) (folder: MA).

<sup>38</sup> CÉLESTIN MUSEKURA, AN ASSESSMENT OF CONTEMPORARY MODELS OF FORGIVENESS (2010). Musekura dates the earliest psychological study of forgiveness to a dissertation in 1984. *Id.* at 18.

<sup>39</sup> *Id.* At 26–32, and ch. 4. Biographical information from Faith and Leadership, Célestin Musekura: *Raising Up Hope*, <http://faithandleadership.com/multimedia/celestin-musekura-raising-hope> (accessed January 9, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> WILHELM AND MARION PAUCK, 1 PAUL TILlich: HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT (1976).

<sup>41</sup> ANDREW S. FINSTUEN, ORIGINAL SIN AND EVERYDAY PROTESTANTS: THE THEOLOGY OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR, BILLY GRAHAM, AND PAUL TILlich IN AN AGE OF ANXIETY 1-2 (2009).

<sup>42</sup> I have relied on the biography in WILHELM AND MARION PAUCK, 1 PAUL TILlich: HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT, *supra* note 40, at 226–230.

<sup>43</sup> PAUL TILlich, THE NEW BEING (1955). The other two volumes, both published by Scribner’s, were THE SHAKING OF THE FOUNDATIONS (1948) and THE ETERNAL NOW (1963). For Paton’s notes, see Jean Paton, Tillich, Paul, “The New Being,” Scribner’s 1955 (unpublished manuscript on file with author; folder: Method of Benevolence).

<sup>44</sup> A copy of the sermon was in Paton’s possession. Paul Tillich, *Forgiveness* (Feb. 21, 1954) (SERMON SERIES, Series 1953–54, no. 12). It was later published as *To Whom Much Is Forgiven*, in TILlich, NEW BEING, at 2–14. The published version omits the first two-sentence paragraph of the original sermon, in which the only significant addition is that the Pharisee is identified as “Simon.” Otherwise, the published version is identical to the original sermon. For the convenience of readers, references are to the published version.

much, but he who is forgiven little, loves little.”<sup>45</sup>

For ten closely argued, dense pages of printed text, Tillich unpacked Luke’s gospel message to the Germantown faithful. Among the major points Tillich made that Sunday was that the sinner was truly a sinner and the Pharisee a truly righteous man, and that Jesus did not reproach him for a lack of love toward Jesus or for a lack of righteousness. Rather, Jesus’ censure was caused by the fact that little is forgiven to him.<sup>46</sup> “Only if this is clearly seen can the depth and revolutionary power of Jesus’ attitude be understood,” Tillich declared. “He takes the side of the sinner against the righteous, although he does not doubt the validity of the law, the guardians of which the righteous are.”<sup>47</sup> Tillich continued by repeating Luke’s message in easily understood language, careful to avoid any accusation that forgiveness was conditional: “It is *not* the love of the woman that brings her forgiveness, but it is the forgiveness she has received that creates her love. By her love she shows that much has been forgiven her while the lack of love in the Pharisee shows that little has been forgiven him.”<sup>48</sup>

Paton was much taken with the next passage in Tillich’s sermon, marking it with green pencil for emphasis: “And nothing greater can happen to a human being than he is forgiven. For forgiveness means reconciliation in spite of estrangement; it means reunion in spite of hostility; it means acceptance of those who are unacceptable, and it means reception of those who are rejected.”<sup>49</sup> Forgiveness was unconditional. Tillich concluded his sermon with an examination of those he called “the righteousness ones.” He underscored that they really were righteous, but “since little is forgiven them, they love little.” Their unrighteousness “did not lie” on the moral level; their unrighteousness consisted of thinking they did not need forgiveness. Thus, even their righteous actions were not warmed by love. “The righteousness of the righteous ones is hard and self-assured.” Turning to why the righteous could not have helped the sinner and why Christians turn away from their ministers, Tillich answered in a sentence that Paton underscored in her copy of the sermon: “Because they seek a love which is rooted in forgiveness and the righteous ones cannot give.”<sup>50</sup> Seven years later, echoing Tillich, Paton condemned social workers and professionals:

The world of adoption and illegitimacy, the world, that is, which talks about these

experiences and which has power over people of illegitimate birth, these people in power condemn and increasingly fail to forgive—or even to understand the nature of forgiveness—those who have sinned.... Social work and its allies in adoption and illegitimacy are deeply characterized by hardness of heart, and this condition becomes more and more aggravated with each passing year.<sup>51</sup>

More immediately, Tillich’s sermon on forgiveness had a profound personal effect on Paton. After avoiding the issue for twelve years, Paton finally got up the nerve to write to a couple who she believed (erroneously) were her first parents. This experience gave Paton a kind of understanding that matched Luke’s biblical message, as she later explained:

The five days that followed the mailing of the letter preceded the answer, and had nothing to do with the answer. They were the direct and clear result of the breaking of a dam. All the years that I had held back this curiosity, all the piled-up impulses that none of the diversions had used up spent themselves fully and throbbingly in my body.

For two days I was too tense to feel anything. And then it came. For three days every few hours, there rose up from the bottom of my being sobs as deep as all creation and shook me—knowing and willing for them to come—until they were assuaged. Again and again, not painfully—for I was mature enough to welcome them—but everlastingly satisfying themselves, knitting themselves into all my tissues, making themselves forever inhabitants of my sensitivity and thus unforgettable, they came and went, so that to the end of my days there can never again persist in me any hardness of heart toward any natural mother of an adopted child.

It was peace that came, at that small purchase price.<sup>52</sup>

Paton interpreted her sobs, which had begun even as she was writing the letter, as the result of her turning away from her mother, a “hardness of

<sup>45</sup> Luke 7: 36–47 in TILlich, *NEW BEING*, *supra* note 43, at 4.

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*, at 5.

<sup>47</sup> *Id.*, at 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Id.*

<sup>49</sup> *Id.*, at 7–8.

<sup>50</sup> *Id.*, at 13.

<sup>51</sup> Press Release (“Reunion Release”) Jean Paton, *Boundaries of Affliction*, Commentary 2, (Aug. 1, 1961) (Blue Notebook, Jean Paton Papers).

<sup>52</sup> PATON, *ORPHAN VOYAGE*, *supra* note 28, at 52. Although *ORPHAN VOYAGE* was published in 1968, it was written between 1955 and 1959, much closer to the time of Paton’s experience described here.

heart,” as she called it. But when they were over, Paton had the courage to search for her mother, to seek forgiveness, and to forgive.<sup>53</sup> This incident was the source of her first insight into the concept of the need to be forgiven in reunions.

The concept of forgiveness also clarified for Paton many things she had earlier found puzzling. A lack of forgiveness helped explain “the resentments, sometimes hatreds, of many adopted people; the dreamlike existence in which the natural parents are forced to live; the hostility among many social workers toward the irregular [illegitimate] births.”<sup>54</sup> Paton explained that certain adoption practices, especially the cutting off of kinship ties through legislation that sealed adoption records, induced adverse mental symptoms in triad members and discriminatory policies in social workers, “in which the only form of lasting relief [was] forgiveness.”<sup>55</sup>

Paton elaborated more fully on the religious meaning of forgiveness and its relevance for adopted people in discussing the writings of St. Paul. One can see why Paton was attracted to Paul: the Pauline literature frequently refers to forgiveness.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, as religion scholar Timothy P. Jackson notes, as “that liminal figure at the dividing line between the historical Jesus and the Holy Spirit, Judaism and Christianity, Rome and barbarism,” Paul was attracted to adoption metaphors.<sup>57</sup> Paton interpreted Paul’s conversion to Christianity not simply as a result of the teachings and example of Jesus associating with outcasts and “less forgiven people.” Jesus became meaningful to Paul, according to Paton, “because Paul was a combination; a man who had been unforgiving, and also a man open to spirit and therefore open to being forgiven. In this combination, he made possible for an understanding of Jesus’ life and teaching, and a continuation through all ages which contain hatred and need to turn to love.” Paton singled out as particularly important in Paul’s teaching of the point in Ephesians where he affirmed the association between the removal of barriers and the discovery of God.<sup>58</sup> Paton quoted with approval the exegesis of this passage by A. C. Scott:

<sup>53</sup> JP to Connie Dawson (Sept. 2, 1991) (folder: Dawson, Connie).

<sup>54</sup> JP to Dr. Eleanor Scott (Oct. 15, 1955) (folder: 1950s Misc). See also JP to Johanna G. Schenk (Oct 28, 1955) (folder: MA).

<sup>55</sup> *Id.*

<sup>56</sup> F. LeRON SHULTS AND STEVEN J. SANDAGE, *THE FACES OF FORGIVENESS: SEARCHING FOR WHOLENESS AND SALVATION* 136–38 (2003). See also MUSEKURA, *AN ASSESSMENT OF CONTEMPORARY MODELS OF FORGIVENESS*, *supra* note 38, at 190–91.

<sup>57</sup> Timothy P. Jackson, *Suffering the Suffering Children: Christianity and the Rights and Wrongs of Adoption*, in TIMOTHY P. JACKSON, ED., *THE MORALITY OF ADOPTION: SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL, THEOLOGICAL, AND LEGAL PERSPECTIVES* 191 (2005).

<sup>58</sup> PATON, *ORPHAN VOYAGE*, *supra* note 28, at 114.

The August act of God which Paul here celebrates is rather the unification into one Body of those sections of humanity—Jews and Gentiles—which had hitherto been as poles asunder, held apart by prejudice, misunderstanding, hostility, and even, as it appeared to the Jew, by divine ordinance. This removal of the “middle wall”... of the unification into “one new man” of those hitherto antagonistic elements was what filled the Apostle’s mind with wonder and adoring praise... It was in relationship with one another that men continuously realized their relationship to Christ and to God through Him. Indeed, they found in this reciprocal fellowship the convincing proof of their own salvation.... The “fellowship” was, in fact, the sphere within which this complex experience was realized, the reciprocal interaction of moral and spiritual forces divine and human.<sup>59</sup>

Paton was convinced that a shift or breaking down of “the barriers in adoption will plunge one quickly into all the above considerations.” But it was not going to be easy. Modern culture was not a religious one. Inevitably, bewilderment and hostility would precede forgiveness.<sup>60</sup>

Ultimately, an adopted person could only become healthy and unalienated through searching for and reconciling with his birth parents. For Paton, there were “no matters in human life of greater importance than those which cluster about the experience of search.”<sup>61</sup> But adult adoptees had first to be encouraged to search. Many of them dreaded the unknown,<sup>62</sup> feared rejection,<sup>63</sup> felt guilty toward their adoptive parents, or were prevented by the sealed adoption records system.<sup>64</sup> Quoting from the Gospel of Thomas, one of the earliest accounts of the teaching of Jesus outside of the canonical gospels, as an epigraph to a Life History Study Center Release, Paton wrote in October 1958, “Jesus said, Let not him that seekth cease seeking till he find, and when he findth, he shall be disturbed and having been

<sup>59</sup> *Id.*, referring to A. C. Scott, *What Happened at Pentecost* in BURNETT HILLMAN STREETER, ED., *THE SPIRIT: THE RELATION OF GOD AND MAN, CONSIDERED FROM THE STANDPOINT OF RECENT PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE* 136–38 (1921).

<sup>60</sup> PATON, *ORPHAN VOYAGE*, *supra* note 28, at 115.

<sup>61</sup> Press Release, Life History Study Center, *The Bright Journey* (December 1958) (folder: Life History Center for “Reunion” Program).

<sup>62</sup> JP to Jo Anne Ernest (May 16, 1977) (folder: KY—Ernest, Jo Anne).

<sup>63</sup> JP to Mariellen Self (Oct. 2, 1978) (folder: Self, Mariellen).

<sup>64</sup> JP to Bonnie Jacobs (July 28, 1970) (folder: MD—Jacobs 70–71).

disturbed he shall marvel.”<sup>65</sup> In quoting from this unorthodox gospel, Paton provided biblical sanction for adult adoptees to search for their birth parents, but she was also informing them that reunions were difficult affairs, filled with conflict. Ultimately, though, the struggle was worth it. Paton’s experience had taught her that most adopted people who were “firm and persistent” waited until they were at least twenty-five years old or older to search.<sup>66</sup> Paton also believed that no mature adopted persons should begin to search for their biological parents unless they had “an underpinning of religious belief.” Otherwise, they might find themselves without a secure base if the search was successful.<sup>67</sup>

Searching for biological kin was essential because the process was therapeutic in its effects; it healed the inherent alienation resulting from the stigma of illegitimacy and the loss of kin due to adoption. Paton developed an extended metaphor from the Old Testament for understanding the alienating effects of illegitimacy on adopted persons, based on what she described as a difficult and complex article, “The Messiah of Israel,” by André Chouraqui, a renowned French-Israeli religious scholar, linguist, and politician.<sup>68</sup> According to Paton, Chouraqui referred to the disastrous break in continuity for the Jewish people when the Temple was destroyed by the Roman legions. Paton believed that, on a smaller and “historically insignificant scale,” that was what happened to individuals after learning of their adoption: they lost continuity. Adult adoptees believed that they would discover the temple again by locating their biological parents; however, society kept them from achieving this important desire. Suppose, Paton wrote, that these individuals searched anyway and found their parents; their sense of continuity might be restored. But it was a false hope. When the adult adoptee returned to society, “relieved, welcoming toward the world, feeling oneness with it at last, he discovers . . . that the world itself has lost its continuity.” Thus these adoptees remained exiles, differentiated because they were

healed from the stigma of illegitimacy, but the world was not. For the adoptive community, like the Jewish people, who understood the Messianic tradition, the search “has an immense religious energy pulsing in it.” Paton then wrote words that dealt a mortal blow to her ever collaborating with sympathetic researchers in the future: “for the rest of the culture, irreligious, materialist, positivist, from them I expect no understanding at all of this matter.”<sup>69</sup>

The search was so significant in Paton’s philosophy because, for her, a reunion, when done constructively with a birth parent, was the only way to overcome the adult adoptee’s alienation—or, as Paton put it, referring to a successful search and reunion, “nothing fills the empty spot quite in the same way.”<sup>70</sup> By 1978, instead of using the term “void” or alienation, Paton was using psychological language and medicalized the reunion issue, believing that “every adoptee feels rejection and experiences depression. This is to different degrees, but it is universal. And lifelong.”<sup>71</sup> There was an inherent friction—a difference in basic vocabulary, their relationship to society, and their life histories—between adult adoptees and birth parents, partly because the former were born illegitimate and the latter legitimate.<sup>72</sup> The timing of the onset of the traumas was different, as were the signs and effects. The childhood of adopted people was clouded with inhibitions created by the sealed adoption records policy. Their maturation was aborted, resulting in academic underachievement. Birth parents, by contrast, usually managed to get through their teenage years, and even later years, without these inhibitions imposed by society. “They do mature,” wrote Paton. “Then it all goes up in smoke.”<sup>73</sup> The pain the two triad members experienced also differed. The pain birth parents felt was “grief compounded”; the pain adult adoptees felt was “a feeling of exile and bewilderment, being under constant threat of losing what little identity one has.”<sup>74</sup> Resentment in adult adoptees was natural. Paton advised them that if they felt anger toward their birth parent, they should redirect their bitterness “on the institutions and potentates who brought it about, who brought about the prejudice, and the fancy method of the sealed record.” She asserted that “it is *not* a sin to give birth. That is not what one forgives; one forgives a birthparent’s

<sup>65</sup> Press Release, Life History Study Center, From the Center’s Notebook (October 1958) (Blue Notebook, Jean Paton Papers).

<sup>66</sup> JP to Jo Anne Ernest (May 16, 1977) (folder: KY—Ernest, Jo Anne).

<sup>67</sup> Press Release, Life History Study Center, From the Center’s Notebook (October 1958) (Blue Notebook). Paton did not elaborate on this religious metaphor, except to compare the experience of the search to entering upon psychoanalysis: “one should not lie upon the couch without some shred of faith to await the day of one’s departure.” *Id.*

<sup>68</sup> André Chouraqui, *The Messiah of Israel*, 11 *CROSS CURRENTS* 331–43 (1961) (trans. Richard T. De George); *see also* Obituary, André Chouraqui, *TimesOnline*, 8 Aug. 2007, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/obituaries/article2217691.ece> (accessed December 7, 2008).

<sup>69</sup> JP to Leona Bayer (Dec. 8, 1961) (folder, Bayer, L).

<sup>70</sup> JP to Mary Sobczyk (Dec. 9 1955) (folder: Sobczyk, Mary).

<sup>71</sup> JP to Mariellen Self, (Oct. 2, 1978) (folder: Self, Mariellen).

<sup>72</sup> JP to Nancy Sitterly, (Sept. 14, 1979) (folder: CT—Hart Daube Sitterly); JP to Nancy Sitterly, (Jan. 16, 1980); JP to Rose Mary Sever, (Jan. 15, 1993) (folder: Sever, JM).

<sup>73</sup> JP to Rose Mary Sever (Jan. 15, 1993) (folder: Sever, JM).

<sup>74</sup> JP to Gloria Veillon (Nov. 16, 1983) (folder: LA—Veillon, Gloria).



misconception about her behavior, and gives her a new mode.” But the cure was still the same: “a successful search and participation with others, removes the bulk of it, and gives us something to take its place.”<sup>75</sup> Much of winning the battle of psychological health for adopted adults was the process itself.

But what were the components of a constructive and successful search and reunion? At the foundation of a positive reunion are reconciliation and forgiveness, terms Paton used synonymously. By reconciliation, Paton meant that a reunion ultimately became a psychologically therapeutic experience. In her view, the search was a process by which adult adoptees hoped to find pieces of themselves. But they would be looking for another person who had the same urge. “If done in the spirit of reconciliation, out of a belief that such experiences can be integrating, we achieve more than the strangeness after it is over,” she wrote.<sup>76</sup> One of the problems Paton envisioned in the relationship between the adult adoptees and the birth parent was the lack of a clearly assigned role for either of them in the process of reconciliation. The relationship had to be created by them: “It’s sort of pot luck.” But Paton had no doubt about what attitude lay behind the relationship: “They have to heal each other. . . . No one can really ‘forgive’ a birth parent except the child she had out of marriage. It is the adoptee’s job to do this forgiving.”<sup>77</sup>

Around 1956–1957, then, Paton wrestled with and worked out a complex morphology of the reunion process, consisting of an intermediary and several stages: resistance to natural identity, death fears, the trauma of separation, fantasies, withdrawal, signs of identity, reunion, withdrawal, passivity, name recognition, and reconciliation.<sup>78</sup> To illustrate the various stages of the adoption reunion, she used the example of Native American adoption practice, and in particular, the captivity narrative of Frances Slocum.<sup>79</sup> Paton had earlier read Howard

H. Peckham’s *Captured by Indians*, which included accounts of adoption of whites by Indians, and she found this to be “a valuable reference on adoption.” Her morphology of the reunion process, using Slocum’s captivity narrative, is based solely on Peckham’s book.<sup>80</sup>

In September 1778, the Delaware Indians kidnapped a four-year-old Quaker girl named Frances Slocum from her home near Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. She was later adopted by the Miami tribe and raised in what is now Indiana. In 1837, when she was sixty-four, Slocum was found by her family. Two years earlier, George W. Ewing, a fur trader, came upon her in her Indian household, noticed her white racial traits, and asked if she were white. (In Paton’s morphology, Ewing was the Intermediary.) “Frances evaded an answer,” wrote Peckham, “but Ewing gained her confidence, and she finally told him that she was an Indian.” (This was what Paton referred to as Stage 1: Resistance to natural identity.) “Not feeling well at the time and fearing that she would not live much longer, she then gave him the story of her life.” (For Paton, this was Stage 2: Death fears.) “She recollected that she had had many brothers and sisters, but assumed that they must be dead by now.” (Paton’s Stage 3: Fantasy.) “That probability permitted her to speak now, because she had hitherto feared her relatives would come and take her away if they learned of her whereabouts. She had been happy with the Indians and distrusted the whites.”<sup>81</sup> (According to Paton, this was Stage 4 of the process: Separation trauma.)

The fur trader reported his strange encounter with Slocum, and eventually it reached the family. In September 1837, Frances was reunited with her brother, Isaac (Stage 5: Reunion). Peckham’s narrative records the meeting: “Frances received her strange brother with stoical indifference and even suspicion. [Stage 6: Withdrawal] However, her identity was clinched for Isaac by an injured finger he looked for.” Soon thereafter, another brother and sister, Joseph and Mary, arrived. “Frances received them coolly and did not talk much. [Stage 7: Resistance.] She feared they had come to take her away. While the brothers paced the floor and

<sup>75</sup> JP to Pat Hinchey (Aug. 27, 1979) (folder: Hinchey).

<sup>76</sup> JP to Lynn Greiner (May 13, 1982) (folder: Greiner, Lynn).

<sup>77</sup> JP to Pat Hinchey (Aug. 27, 1979) (folder: Hinchey).

<sup>78</sup> Jean Paton, American Adoption Preliminaries: Grace, and Frances Slocum [1956–1957], (unpublished manuscripts) (on file with author, folder: Basics (Abstracts)). This is a rough draft of an article that Paton intended to send to the journal *Cross-Currents*. On the typed manuscript are many handwritten additions and interlines.

<sup>79</sup> In January 1954, Paton was introduced to Native American adoption practices by Ruth Sawtell Wallis, a pioneering anthropologist who had recently completed ethnographic fieldwork on the changing status of Indian women and children of the Canadian Dakota of Manitoba and who also worked with an American Indian tribe that had adopted whites as well as Indians. Wallis’s fieldwork would result in two publications. *The Overt Fears of Dakota Indian Children*,

25 *CHILD DEVELOPMENT* 185–94 (1954); and *The Changed Status of Twins among the Eastern Dakota*, 28 *ANTHROPOLOGICAL QUARTERLY* 116–20 (1955). For information on Wallis, see UTE GACS ET AL., EDs., *WOMEN ANTHROPOLOGISTS: A BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY* (1988). See also the informative letter on Native American adoption practices from Ruth Wallis to Jean Paton (Jan. 17, 1954) (folder: Wallis, Ruth).

<sup>80</sup> Jean Paton (as Ruthena Hill Kittson), A Note on the Vocabulary Process (undated unpublished manuscript) (on file with author); HOWARD H. PECKHAM, *CAPTURED BY INDIANS: TRUE TALES OF PIONEER SURVIVORS* 116–32 (1954).

<sup>81</sup> PECKHAM, *supra* note 80, at 123–124.

Mary wept, Frances did not display the slightest emotion. There they were, the survivors of a large family, united at last, but elderly strangers.” (Stage 8: Passivity.) “Frances smiled only once when she was told her Christian name and recognized it.” (Stage 9: Name Recognition.)<sup>82</sup> The brothers and sisters increasingly visited with Frances and friendliness grew. However, Frances refused to return to their home with them. She said:

I cannot. I cannot. I am an old tree. I cannot move about. I was a sapling when they took me away. It is all gone past. I am afraid I should die and never come back. I am happy here and lie in the graveyard, and they will raise the pole at my grave with the white flag on it, and the great Spirit will know where to find me.<sup>83</sup>

Eventually, a nephew came to live with her. Slocum adopted him as a son and promised him an equal share of land with her Indian daughters.<sup>84</sup> (This for Paton was Stage 10: Reconciliation.)

Paton found in Frances Slocum’s captivity narrative signposts that were common in any adoption life history, provided that “reconciliation with the kinship family can move from fantasy into reality at some time in the adult life, and that the parties thereto can persist through the difficult initial stages of their relationship.” Thus, patience and persistence were crucial to achieving a successful outcome: reconciliation. Unfortunately, although reconciliation was an experience that adult adoptees knew was possible, Paton believed that not many anticipated it, for one of two reasons. Either they did not recognize true reconciliation or they did not believe that they were unreconciled, or they lacked faith and believed that any action they undertook to relieve themselves from their acknowledged state of anger and alienation would end in failure.<sup>85</sup>

Paton had little hope for those in the former group; in general, they had little interest in the concept of reconciliation. But those in the latter group, she believed, warred within themselves, “in a state of flux between desire and resistance, and are usually in a condition of doubt, desperate passivity.” If this was true, Paton lamented, how could the adult adoptee hope for reconciliation, when one was “broken, conflicted, and shifting in all his realities?” Surely the adopted adult “cannot himself be the creator of a new condition? He does not lift himself out of his boots and become at peace. No, this is understood.” Paton went on to explain

<sup>82</sup> *Id.*, at 125.

<sup>83</sup> *Id.*, at 126.

<sup>84</sup> *Id.*, at 130.

<sup>85</sup> Jean Paton, *American Adoption Preliminaries*, *supra* note 78, at 7.

that “if peace descends, there has been in operation, an additional element beyond himself, yet related to himself, this element being known as: Grace.”<sup>86</sup> She elaborated on the operation of grace in the life of Frances Slocum:

Grace in the case of Frances Slocum, came in the form of a series of elements: the chance passage of a fur trader of sympathetic character; her brothers and sister and their stubbornness; her broken finger as a binder to the past; her Christian name retained for binding detail of human capture; a nephew joining her home and her will. This patient, time-consuming, suffering, and many-manifesting operation is Grace.<sup>87</sup>

Besides understanding the working of grace in reunions, Paton wanted her readers to draw other lessons. Foremost, she believed that Frances Slocum’s experience of grief, loss, and longing, together with her kindred family holding fast to her identity as a part of their familiar life through their the long separation, revealed “the endurance of the kinship family,” which “shone through as a guiding light.”<sup>88</sup> Paton also introduced readers to her original and novel concept of a “third identity.” Born a white person, Frances Slocum became an Indian. She arrived at her third identity gradually, as she went through a series of relationships with persons desiring reunion with her. Though she continued to live in her Indian home, she moved into a relationship with her biological family and carried into herself, in a gradual way, the addition of identity as a white person. Ultimately, Slocum “allied herself to her blood family through the process of adoption of her nephew, the same process which had taken her away from her family originally. She had a first, second, and third identity.”<sup>89</sup> In the same way, Paton was saying, an adult adoptee becomes a new person, a third person, after a reconciliation and reunion with a birth parent.

Paton’s formulation of Christian adoption, with its morphology of search and reunion, reconciliation and forgiveness, led to her announcing a new program of the Life History Study Center, which she named “REUNION;” designed to put members of the adoption triad in touch with each other. Paton emphasized the psychological damage among many in the adopted population caused by the lack of knowledge of their first families and the need to reconnect with their families. As a corollary to this statement, Paton asserted that

<sup>86</sup> *Id.*

<sup>87</sup> *Id.*, at 8.

<sup>88</sup> *Id.*

<sup>89</sup> *Id.*, at 9.

searching for biological kin was essential because the process was therapeutic in its effects: It healed the inherent alienation resulting from the stigma of illegitimacy and the loss of kin due to adoption. Here was the essence of Paton's notion that only through Christian adoption, made possible through the Biblical concept of forgiveness, could adult adoptees become healthy through searching for and reconciling with their birth parents.

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