THE PERFECT IMAGE

By J. P. KENNY

In this article we shall deal with first, Christ himself as the perfect image and expression of the heavenly Father, according to the witness of the New Testament. Secondly, we shall show that Christ is the perfect image and manifestation of the Father not for himself but for our sakes: he reflects the Father to us, assimilates us to himself and is the exemplar and pattern of christian behaviour towards the Father.

CHRIST, THE FATHER'S PERFECT IMAGE

Though Christ is never expressly named in the New Testament as the perfect image of the Father, it is clear that he is the image peerless and *par excellence*. No-one can claim comparison with him 'who in every way holds primacy'.[1] It could be maintained that certain New Testament texts refer to Christ as God, not as man. Even if this objection is sustained, it does not alter the fact that the Christ who is perfect image in his divine, invisible dimension, is also perfect image in his human, visible dimension. It is precisely because, within the bosom of the Trinity, the second person is the Father's perfect image as Son and Word that in taking flesh he becomes the perfect image, within the field of human experience. The perfect image locked away from human gaze in the intimate life of the three-personed God is, at the incarnation, brought within the range of mortal eyes.

The New Testament witness that Christ is the likeness of the Father is both indirect and direct: the first is to be found chiefly in St John, the second in St Paul. When the New Testament proclaims Christ as Son, as Word of the Father and as enjoying an unparalleled oneness with him, it is equivalently affirming that Christ is the perfect image of the Father.

The Son

Though the phrase, Son of God, has considerable elasticity and might merely mean a friend or favourite of God's or his adoptive

[1] Col 1, 18.

son,[1] in its many applications to Christ (taken cumulatively and not just as isolated instances) especially when these are viewed in the light of the living tradition and faith of the Church, Son of God refers to the unique, divine Son of the heavenly Father, the second person of the Blessed Trinity.[2]

Christ is called Son of God by Gabriel,[3] by the Baptist,[4] by the devil-possessed,[5] by the centurion,[6] and by his apostles and disciples.[7] It is a title Christ claims for himself;[8] and his Father publicly acknowledges him as his beloved Son.[9] With particular emphasis Christ is named in St John as the Father's only-begotten Son who has taken flesh to ransom the world.[10]

This revelation of Christ as Son implies his perfect likeness to the Father. A son is always in some sense the image of his father. Being a man's son means more than being his piece of property or his chattel, his servant or his friend. It means something quite different from being a child of the mind, as we sometimes call the work of art: the sculptor fathers forth his creative idea in extraneous matter, hewing and shaping stone. Sonship means, first, a sharing and sameness of substance between father and son (neither inanimate objects nor animals can be a man's offspring); secondly, a communication of nature from father to son. It is their nature that parents transmit to their son, who arises from within them, receiving his being as their gift. He has blood-links, genetic ties with his parents. Therefore, he is like them, their replica.

However, the resemblance between human father and human son is more or less impaired. First, there is the gap of twenty to thirty years in their ages. By the time the son has grown up, and his features are formed, the father is already withering and beginning to decline. Again, the human son is not the product of a father alone. The likeness of the son is divided between both parents. His build, his walk, the tint of his hair perhaps reflect his father, while

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[1] In the OT, Son of God is applied to angels (Gen 6, 1), to Israel (Hos 11, 1; Exod 4, 22), to the king (2 Sam 7, 14; cf Ps 88, 27), to the just (Sir 4, 10). For the jews, this title characterized groups or individuals who stood in an especially close relationship with God.

[2] Vincent Taylor writes: 'In contrast with Son of Man, which is used by Jesus exclusively, and the Lord used of him by the believing community, Son of God is a title employed on both sides . . . By this terminology Jesus seeks to describe his relations to God. The same is true also of the community. Whereas in *ho kurios*, it defines its relation to him, *in ho huios tou theou* it describes his divine status', *The Names of Jesus* (London, 1954), 52).

[3] Lk 1, 32, 35. [4] Jn 1, 34. [5] Mk 3, 11; 5, 7. [6] Mt 27, 54. [7] Mk 1, 1; Jn 20, 31; Acts 9, 20; Rom 1, 3–4, 9, etc. [8] Mk 13, 32; Lk 10, 22. [9] Mk 1, 11; 9, 7. [10] Jn 1, 14, 18; 3, 16, 18; 1 Jn 4, 9.

his friends recognize his mother in his eyes, his laugh and the trick of his voice.

Fatherhood in the first person of the Blessed Trinity,and correlatively, sonship in the second, are realized in an ideally perfect fashion, freed from the drawbacks and disabilities that attach to the purely human relationship. St Paul categorically asserts the transcendence of divine fatherhood: 'I bend my knees towards the Father, from whom all fatherhood[1] in heaven and on earth takes its title'.[2]

In the Blessed Trinity, then, the father-son relationship is found in its purest essence. As God is outside time, no temporal precedence or superiority can be vindicated for the Father over the Son. From all eternity the Father is Father as the Son is Son. If a human father is twentyfive years older than his son, this is not due to his fatherhood as such, but to his manhood. Fatherhood and sonship are correlatives that imply one another; as such they are absolutely simultaneous. (One can say father only when one can say son). And this is how they appear in the Trinity. Again, unlike the finite earthly father, the heavenly needs the help of no partner or mother-principle in order to beget his Son. He needs nothing beyond the infinite resources of his own being.

Unhampered by the defects of human sonship, the second person of the Trinity is the flawless image of his Father. He is consubstantial with his Father, proceeding from within the very nature of his Father, receiving his being from his Father. He is God from God as he is light from light. He is not made; he is simply and matchlessly begotten; from all eternity he receives his reality from the Father. He possesses godhead fully, but always as a gift from his Father, who likewise possesses fully that selfsame godhead, but always in order to communicate it to his only-begotten Son. Both enjoy exactly the same attributes of nature; they are alike eternal, almighty, holy, wise, lovable and adorable. The sole difference between them is that the Father is the giver of what the Son receives; but what the Father gives he is and what the Son receives he is. So the Son is the perfect facsimile and expression of the Father from whom alone he proceeds. And this Son, who is perfect image of his Father, took flesh; his mirroring of the Father is thus bodied forth to be discerned by men with eyes of faith, so that in very truth the

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[1] Fatherhood renders the traditional meaning given to the text and crystallized in the Vulgate's *paternitas*. In the original greek, however, *patria* is not an abstract but a concrete term and designates kindred, social group sharing a common father or ancestor, family, clan, race.

[2] Eph 3, 14–15.

apostles might claim that when they saw Christ they likewise saw the Father.[1]

The Word of the Father[2]

Word is that which is spoken, whispered or shouted, sound framed by tongue, teeth and lips and heard with ears of flesh. In a secondary sense it is the idea or thought of the mind. Our mental words are the children of our mind conceived by and within us. Hence we call them our concepts. They are our property, residing in and peopling our minds. They cannot however know and love us as we can know and love them; they cannot think back at us as one person can think back at or be in harmony with another.

These concepts or mental words are the shadows of their objects, whatever the objects of knowledge might be: persons, places, machinery, mathematics, oneself. Thoughts or mental words are the images of things known: images more or less perfect according as one's thinking is more or less true. Sound and adequate thoughts are perfect images, mental twins of objects outside the mind.

Word, as applied to the second Person of the Trinity, suggests that he stands to the first Person in the relationship of thought to thinker. Although God knows all things, men, angels, the universe, his mind is not teeming with thoughts and ideas like ours – accidental realities really distinct from the thinker. Rather his mind, his knowledge, his thoughts, all are one, himself. Apart from the three divine Persons mutually and really distinct but at the same time equally the one true God, nothing exists in God that is not himself. He is ineffable unity and simplicity.

God's radical and eternal thinking centres on himself. In us, to think about ourselves first and always gives rise to a pathological condition. Because of our essential finitude and imperfection, we are grotesquely unworthy of such absorbed and concentrated attention. In God, on the contrary, this self-engrossment is a necessity. Anything else would be nonsense. Because he is infinite and of boundless perfection, it would be absurd for God not to be rapt in self-contemplation and love. Nothing is so worthy of infinite thought and love as infinite being. God's infinite wisdom demands that his thinking concentrates on himself, and that other things be known only in knowing himself.

God's thought or mental word about himself must be the perfect

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[1] Cf Jn 14, 9.

[2] Jn 1, 1–18; 1 Jn 1, 1–4; Apoc 19, 13.

image and expression of himself, equal to him in every way, endowed with all his attributes. When with measureless wisdom and infinite power he thinks about himself, from all eternity he gives rise to his Thought or Word which proceeds from him. He pours his whole being into his self-thought. His Thought or Word has all that he, the thinker, has. His Thought cannot be an inanimate idea or a thing; it must be a person, just as the thinker is a person, able to think back at him, able to know and love him as he knows and loves his eternal Word. And because his thinking is true and omnipotent, the Thought he eternally generates is the exact replica of himself.[1]

This Word of the Father, his perfect image, took flesh and dwelt amongst us. Thus the everlasting and unseen likeness of the Father came within human ken – and mortal men heard with their ears of flesh, saw with their eyes of flesh, touched with their hands of flesh the Word of life[2] and thus had contact with the Father in his most perfect expression.

The ineffable unity between Christ and his Father

The Father is in Christ and Christ is in the Father;[3] whatever the Father possesses Christ possesses and *vice versa*,[4] so that the words and works of Christ can be described as the words and works of the Father.[5] The Father loves the lovers of Christ[6] and everlasting life is knowing the Father and knowing Christ.[7] Receiving Christ is receiving the Father;[8] the same is true of other attitudes: knowing, seeing, hating and despising Christ is knowing, seeing, hating and despising the Father.[9] And just as the Father is light[10] so Christ is light.[11] We must maintain communion[12] with both Father and Son whose influence in us is reciprocal: thus no man can come to the

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[1] The 'static' interpretation of Logos given in the text belongs to the traditional theology of the West. A purely exegetical assessment would be somewhat different and more dynamic. It would underscore St John's indebtedness to the OT in general and Gen 1 in particular. The repeated expression 'and God said' emphasises a divine activity manifested in personal action. In the OT, the spoken word is to be regarded as a dynamic and operative extension of personality. This conception enriches the meaning of such passages as Ps 32, 6; 106, 20; Isai 55, 11. However, the Prologue of St John goes far beyond anything in the OT. Word in the OT is never more than the extension of the personality of Yahweh, but in the prologue it has a wonderfully new sense (cf Taylor, op. cit., 164).

[2] Cf 1 Jn 1, 1.

[3] Jn 14, 10; 17, 21.

[4] Jn 16, 15; 17, 10; cf 3, 35.

[5] Jn 8, 26, 28; 12, 49; 14, 10.

[6] Jn 14, 21; 16, 27.

[7] Jn 17, 3.

[8] Lk 9, 48.

[9] Jn 14, 7, 9; 15, 23; Lk 10, 16.

[10] 1 Jn 1, 5.

[11] Jn 3, 19; 8, 12; 46; cf 1, 9.

[12] *koinonia:* 1 Jn 1, 3.

Father except through Christ, the way, the truth, the life;[1] and conversely, no one can come to Christ unless drawn by the Father.[2]

The import of all these texts as indeed of our two previous points, is explained in the exchange between Philip and Christ: 'Lord, show us the Father'. 'Philip . . . the man who has seen me has seen the Father . . . Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?'[3] Looking at Christ with the eyes of faith, we are able to penetrate something of his mystery and recognize him as the perfect image and expression of the Father.

Of course, while St John so heavily underscores this intimate union between Father and Christ, he never loses sight of the distinction of their persons; he never identifies Christ with his Father. Although Christ is divine, abiding with the Father, within his bosom,[4] nevertheless he is not the Father, who is greater than Christ as man.[5] Hence the Father sends[6] and Christ is sent; the Father commands and Christ obeys;[7] the Father is prayed to and Christ prays;[8] the Father is the vine-dresser, Christ the vine.[9]

The image of God

The direct witness of the New Testament is comprised within a trio of texts, 2 Cor 4, 4; Col 1, 15; Heb 1, 3. The first two may be bracketed together as both contain the greek word *eikōn*, image or likeness.

In 2 Cor 4, 4, Christ is described as the image of God. It seems clear that St Paul is thinking rather of the historic Christ, than of the pre-existent divine person. He warns the corinthians how Satan can darken their minds; thus they shall be hindered from perceiving the radiance of the gospel, of the glory of Christ who is the image of the Father. Paul assures them that it is not himself but Christ that he preaches; he is merely their servant for the love of Jesus. The God who has commanded light to issue from darkness shines in the hearts of christians to make resplendent the knowledge of the glory of God which rests on the face of Christ.

In Col 1, 15, Christ is again presented as the image of the unseen God. St Paul is giving thanks to the Father for the redemption through the blood of his well-beloved Son. This Son is the image of the unseen God and first-born of all creatures. All creation is through

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[1] Jn 14, 6; cf Lk 10, 22. [2] Jn 6, 44 and 65. [3] Jn 14, 9, 10.
[4] Jn 1, 2, 18. [5] Jn 14, 28.
[6] Mk 9, 37; Lk 10, 16; Jn 3, 34; 5, 36; 10, 36; 17, 18; 1 Jn 4, 9.
[7] Jn 4, 34; 14, 31. [8] Jn 11, 41; 17, 1; Mt 26, 39; Lk 23, 34. [9] Jn 15, 1.

him and orientated towards him in whom all things are established. Image here refers not merely to Christ's divine sonship, to his pre-existence and Creator-prerogatives, but to the concrete historic Christ, Son of God in the flesh; Paul does not 'departmentalize' Christ, but treats him as a complex unity, refusing to abstract his divine from his human dimension. He alludes to the redemption in blood and Christ's headship of the Church.[1] Further, the Son is called expressly the image of the unseen God. The antithesis hinted at in unseen suggests an interpretation of image in favour of Christ's bodily nature.

In Hebrews 1, 3, the author borrows two metaphors from the sapiential theology of Alexandria[2] to describe the Son's relationship to the Father. First, Christ is the lustre, radiance or outflowing of the Father's glory.[3] The idea seems to be that Christ is the living embodiment of the Shekinah[4] illustrated at the transfiguration.[5] The metaphor suggests how the Son proceeds from the Father, is distinct from him as light is from light or radiance streaming from the source of light and gaining a certain independence of its own. The Son, then, is the manifestation of the Father to the world. Under the figure of light the divine status of Christ is expressed together with his perfect mirroring forth of the Father.

Christ is also the exact reproduction of his Father's being, or the very stamp or impress of his substance. The greek word *charaktēr* means that which is cut in or marked. From the 5th century B. C. it is used to describe the distinguishing features of a person or thing. It denotes the stamp on a coin or ring, the impression made by a seal. Here it means that Christ is the very facsimile of the original – his Father's being; he is the visible expression of this being.[6]

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[1] Col 1, 18. Note the emphatic parallel and repetition of phrases in verses 15 and 18 *hos estin . . . prototokos.*

[2] Cf Wis 7, 25–26.

[3] Max Zerwick considers that *apaugasma* combines two notions: that of brilliance and that of likeness, and that it therefore means lustrous image, *Analysis Philologica NT Graeci* (Rome, 1953) 492. Taylor (*op. cit.* 129) notes that the word means effulgence or radiance and refulgence or reflection.

[4] Cf THE WAY, Vol. 3 (April 1963), p 154; cf Exod 24, 16; Ps 84, 10; Rom 9, 4.

[5] Mk 9, 2–3.

[6] It is interesting to note that the author of Hebrews uses *eikon* in the strongest pauline sense of reality or archetype as opposed to shadow, silhouette. In 10, 1 he writes: 'Since the law has only the shadow of the gifts to come and not the real substance of things . . .' (*skia* is contrasted against *eikon*). Why in Heb 1, 3 does he prefer *charakter* to *eikon*? Possibly, suggests Taylor (*op. cit.* 128), because he felt that the former was stronger and more picturesque.

Consequently, when we call Christ the perfect image of the Father, we must distinguish between his divine and his human dimension. As divine, therefore as Son and Word, he is adequate image and we can argue from everything in the image to the original. As human, visible, corporeal he is the most perfect image the Father can possibly have under the restraints of a created form. But, obviously, not every attribute of the human image can be affirmed to the Father. The Father has no eye or heart of flesh; he was never hungry, tired nor tortured as was his image. The things that belong to the body as body cannot be ascribed to the Father because the Father did not become incarnate. However, it remains true that no more perfect image-in-the-flesh of the Father can be conceived than Christ our Lord.

Christ, perfect image of the Father for our sakes

St Paul tells us that all things are ours, and we are Christ's and Christ is God's.[1] Everything that Christ did was done to the glory of his Father, but for our sake: to save, regenerate and lead us back to the Father in heaven. Hence his coming into our midst as the Father's perfect image bears on us and is done on our behalf. As perfect image, Christ reflects the Father to us; he assimilates us to himself so that we, by resembling him, might also resemble the Father; he becomes our model and exemplar, showing us how to lead the sort of life that pleases the Father.

Christ reflects the Father to us

The fact that Christ is God in human nature floods our minds with intimate knowledge of God. In the course of history man has indeed gained much knowledge about God. Reason and philosophy have ministered sound, abstract ideas. The revelation of the Old Testament, where God spoke about God through the lips of prophets, opened up totally new salvific vistas. The revelation of the New Testament conveyed through the words of the eternal Word-made-flesh surpassed anything previous, presenting the mystery of the Trinity along with the whole corpus of specifically christian truths. However, we must carefully note that Christ enriched our knowledge of the Father not only by telling us about God, but also and above all by being God. For the first time in history men could study God in man's nature; they saw God walking, sleeping, teaching,

[1] 1 Cor 3, 23; cf 8, 6.

dining, loving, praying, suffering. Until the incarnation they knew God only in God's nature. Now, suddenly, God sprang into focus in a new, unheard-of way.

Because God's nature strikes mortal minds as infinitely remote and inaccessible and even quite terrifying, men find it hard to warm to God.[1] Confronted with the divine, they are gripped by a paralysing fear; they never feel at home and companionable with God. The cry of Peter rises all too easily to their lips: 'Go away from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord'.[2] Men cannot bring themselves to an attitude of loving, filial trust before God. In other words, they cannot treat him as genuinely their Father. He is maker and master; they are his property, his creatures, his slaves.

A feature about Christ in the gospels that sometimes puzzles is his reluctance to state plainly that he was God, or even to allow those who had glimpsed something of the glory of his mission to broadcast it.[3] One reason for this was Christ's determination to bring men to give a real, not just a notional, assent to the most sublime revelation – that God is love.[4] Before the dawning of the truth in the minds of his disciples that he was in very truth God, Christ needed to have their love and trust in him secure. Love for himself as a man had to be so strongly entrenched that fear, consequent on the realization of his godhead, would be powerless to destroy that love and its intimacy. The christian may no longer serve God in a spirit of servile fear; for he has received the spirit of adoption which leads him to regard Christ's Father as his.[5] His filial fear, casting out all crushing servility, is simply part of his love for his most kind Father.[6]

Christ expressly told his disciples that seeing him they saw his Father.[7] He declared himself the manifestation of the Father, his perfect image. Consequently his lovableness reflected the Father's lovableness. His consorting with sinners was a visible symbol of the Father's loving kindness and mercy. His preference for the lost and the sinful,[8] his pardoning of the adulteress and of Zachaeus, his pity towards sufferers and the widow of Naim, eloquently revealed the Father's salvific will, the Father's selection of mercy rather than of condemnation. And the words of Christ drove home the lesson his

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[1] This is so normally. The OT, however, affords some glorious exceptions – e.g. Ps 16, 8; 17, 1–4; 22; 26, 4; 72, 23–28; 83, etc.
[2] Lk 5, 8.
[3] Cf Mt 12, 16; 16, 20; Mk 3, 11; 9, 9.
[4] 1 Jn 4, 8.
[5] Rom 8, 15.
[6] *Clementissime Pater;* cf 1 Jn 4, 18.
[7] Jn 14, 9.
[8] Lk 19, 10; 15, 7; Mt 9, 13.

life taught: 'God so loved the world, that he gave up his only-begotten Son'[1] – revealed also in the parable of the prodigal son.[2] Finally he sealed the witness of his life and words with the witness of his blood, death and resurrection. The scene with Mary Magdalen on the first Easter Sunday is fraught with the deepest significance.[3] Mary has no fear of God. When Christ calls her by her name, in a transport of spontaneous charity she flings herself at his feet and clasps him. It is to this formerly unfortunate woman that the risen Lord delivers his first official statement, which involves our brotherhood with him and filial attitude to his Father: 'Go to my brothers and tell them, I am going up to him who is my Father and your Father, my God and your God'. Men can be at home with God and can warm to him: in the knowledge and love of Christ, perfect image of the Father.

Our likeness to Christ is likeness to the Father

Christ defined the scope of his coming amongst men as being that they might have life, and have it beyond measure,[4] new life, supernatural life. This statement forbids us to restrict his role as image of the Father simply to the field of knowledge and enlightenment of our minds; he is not an image merely for contemplation, to enable us to read aright the Father's mind. He is image in a more vital and dynamic sense; his role reaches to the bestowal of life, a new creation.[5] He is his Father's image for our sakes, in order to assimilate us to himself by our re-birth.

As he is like the Father, so we are to be like him. Thus we too shall be like the Father. St Paul informed the romans that the Father predestined christians 'to be moulded into the likeness of his Son, so that he might be the first-born amongst many brothers'.[6] Christ is our elder brother, the 'big' image of the Father. We are to be the younger brothers, the 'little' images of him and so of the Father. In much the same way the early christians represented Christ as the big fish, surrounded by little fish in the baptismal pool: at baptism they are incorporated into Christ.[7]

Another expression of our assimilation to Christ is under the concept of oneness. At the last supper, in his priestly prayer, Christ

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[1] Cf Jn 3, 16. [2] Lk 15, 11–32. [3] Jn 20, 16–18.
[4] Jn 10, 10. [5] 2 Cor 5, 17; Eph 2, 10.
[6] Rom 8, 29; in the greek, *eikon*, likeness, is applied to men: the same word as is used in 2 Cor 4, 4 and Col 1, 15 about Christ.
[7] Cf Tertullian, *de Baptismo. PL I, 1198.*

asked his Father that his disciples 'might all be one, as you Father in me and I in you, that they also may be one in us . . . that they may be one as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be perfected into one'.[1] The ineffable unity between Father and Son is to be projected outwards into the Church and to find its echo in the oneness between Christ and his disciples. How this would be achieved is explained by our Lord at the last supper: his Father together with himself would send the Holy Ghost, the uncreated Love between Father and Son. Thus quite literally would be realized that desire expressed by Christ to his Father 'that the love with which you have loved me might be in them and I in them'.[2] The Holy Ghost, subsistent Love, would come into the Church and into the members of the Church; Christ's Spirit would be their Spirit, given to make them adoptive sons, so that they might pray '*Abba*, Father'.[3] Better, this Spirit of the Son dwelling in their hearts would himself cry out: '*Abba*, Father'.[4] *Abba* is the aramaic word for father which was lovingly maintained even by non-aramaic-speaking christians – the very word used by Christ at Gethsemani.[5] It was treated as a beloved token of their oneness with Christ; his Father was their Father, his *patria* theirs; they were joint-heirs with him[6] because they were his brothers.

Seeing that christians are images along with Christ, one with him,[7] brothers of his, sharing his Spirit, his Father and his inheritance, it is not surprising that Christ, after having claimed that he was the light of the world[8] should go on to tell them that they also were the light of the world;[9] that to receive, hear or repudiate them was to receive, hear or repudiate him.[10] Saul was changed into Paul through the blinding revelation that persecuting christians was also persecuting Christ.[11]

How do we become like Christ and, therefore, with him images of his Father? Is it a matter first and foremost of personal choice and conscious, cultivated imitation? Our Lord is categoric in his denial of human initiative; his words cut our self-complacency like the crack of a whip: 'You have not chosen me; but I have chosen you'.[12] He enunciates the primary law of the supernatural: 'without me you can do nothing'.[13] Our likeness to Christ is first and foremost the

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1 Jn 17, 21–23.
2 Jn 17, 26.
3 Rom 8, 15.
4 Gal 4, 6.
5 Mk 14, 36.
6 Rom 8, 17.
7 Cf Gal 3, 28.
8 Jn 8, 12; 12, 46.
9 Mt 5, 14.
10 Mt 10, 40; Lk 10, 16.
11 Acts 9, 3–6.
12 Jn 15, 16.
13 Jn 15, 5.

result of a divine decree and the selective purpose of the Father.[1] It is a divine gift and the fruit of divine initiative; we receive it at baptism when we are incorporated into Christ and his Church. The work begun there is perfected through confirmation and eucharist.

The parallel with the natural order is instructive here. A man is born like his father and mother and all his blood-relatives. These family and racial similarities escape the control of man's free-will.

Something similar takes place at the re-birth of baptism. Through the sacramental character a man is 'christened': he is given Christ's mark, associated with Christ the high priest, made a member of the Church, signed with the seal of that Holy Ghost who is the soul of the mystical body. At the same time through grace the baptized is 'divinized': the Holy Ghost dwells in his soul; he shares in the divine nature and is made an adoptive son. These gifts of baptism give a man, indeed an infant, his radical likeness to Christ and prepare for the fuller likeness of confirmation and eucharist.

Christ our model and exemplar

The gifts of baptism are dynamic gifts, geared to action. The baptized, who has passively[2] received these gifts, is summoned to act, to undertake a life in harmony with his christian vocation, to lead a Christ-like life; for in fact he bears the likeness of Christ. So he must translate into action what he has received, under pain of forfeiting some at least of his gifts. From the given likeness flows the deliberate, purposeful imitation of Christ. It is here that Christ again is perfect image. His life is to be the pattern and model of the christian life. He is thus perfect image of the Father in that his life shows christians how they must behave towards the Father. This is why every christian must study Christ's life and shape his own accordingly. Adoration of the Father, prayerful union with the Father, obedience to his will:[3] these are the salient characteristics of Christ's mortal life; they are what the christian must set himself resolutely to imitate in the perfect image of the Father: Christ our Lord.

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[1] Cf Rom 8, 29–30; 9, 10-19.

[2] At his baptism, while the infant is wholly passive, the adult must, of course, wittingly co-operate. Nevertheless he is in some sense passive too, for the initiative always remains with God: the adult's freely elicited act of co-operation is (in so far as it is supernatural) already God's gift. Cf the Council of Trent, session vi, ch 5, Denzinger 797.

[3] Mk 14, 36. Jn 4, 34; cf Jn 17, 4; Lk 23, 46.