

An Outline of St. John's Doctrine on the Divine Sonship of the Christian*

IV. CORROBORATORY STATEMENTS

We know well enough from our previous dissertation what does St. John actually mean by speaking of the Christians as being the "children of God" and even as being the "begotten of God". By this phraseology, it was pointed out, he refers to a real divine begetting by which all those who believe in Christ become really the children of God.

But this is not the full meaning implied in the Johannine idea of a true divine generation and of a true divine sonship. In fact, a true generation implies that the parent imparts to the offspring its very substance, whereby the begotten enjoys perfect likeness to the nature of the begetter. The same essential elements, therefore, must naturally be included — though, of course, in an analogous way — in the conception of the divine begetting of the children of God. God, the Begetter, is supposed to impart something of His own nature, by which the begotten may really be said to partake of the divine life and to be in some real sense like to God. No wonder, then, that St. John, who viewed the Christian as the son of God and as that who is begotten of God, fully attests these other two facts, namely, that the divine life is communicated to the Christian, who is thereby really transformed to the likeness of his divine Begetter. The overwhelming thought that we are begotten of God dominated the Apostle's mind to such a point, that it made him think and speak under its permanent influence. It is thus explained why John dwells preferably on such other points as the communication of the divine life to the Christian and of the latter's assimilation to God or to Christ. The two points are nothing else but a further development of his leading thought that the Christians, who are the sons of God, are really begotten of God.

In the following pages we are not expected to give a full account of the Johannine concept of "life" and "assimilation". But a quick glance to those statements, being as they are mere consequences of St. John's doctrine on the divine sonship of the Christian, will prove to be much helpful to get a deeper understanding of the Johannine

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mind. Meanwhile, the real character of our divine sonship will be better brought out and strongly corroborated.

A. THE IMPARTITION OF THE DIVINE LIFE

1. In virtue of its being begotten the offspring enjoys life such as imparted to it by its begetter. The first element, therefore, essentially implied in the notion of a generation is that of the communication of life from the parent to its child.

The same — though in an analogous way — must be said to happen with regard to the divine begetting of the children of God. The divine Begetter must be thought of as imparting His own life to His children. A divine life-giving principle must be said to have been implanted in all those who are begotten of God. Otherwise, their would not have been a true divine generation. And, as a matter of fact, John does not shrink from teaching even more emphatically that the Christ'ian begotten of God lives of the very life of God.

The word "life" is truly peculiar to the Johannine vocabulary (151). The Gospel itself is no more than a development of the very idea included in the word *zoe*, which is really the main thought to which every other point is more or less connected and referred (152). Similarly the subject-matter of the First Epistle consists chiefly in the delineation of life. With this the Epistle begins (1. 2) and ends (5. 20). Rightly enough, therefore, it may be said that the word "life" gives by itself a synthesis of the whole Johannine theology (153). With John "life", in its characteristic use, as referring only and always to the spiritual and moral order (154), may be viewed from different standpoints. Sometimes it is considered in God the Father as the source of all life; very often in Jesus Christ, who is Life itself; elsewhere in its final stage as being imparted to men.

151 In the Gospel it occurs 30 times, while in the three Synoptists 16 times in all; in the I Epistle it is met with 13 times.

152 J.B. FREY, *La concept de "vie" dans l'Évangile de St. Jean*, Bibl. I (1920) 40, remarks: "*On peut bien dire que l'Évangile tout entier n'est qu'un développement continu de la notion de vie et que chacun de chapitres qui le composent, nous offre un ou plusieurs aspects de ce concept aux faces multiples*".

153 Id., *ib.*, p. 47.

154 Whenever John speaks of life in its physical aspect, he does not say *zoe* but *psyche* (cf. 10.11, 15. 17, 24; 12.25, 27; 13.37f; 15.13; I 3.16; Rev. 12.2).

These three aspects, different as they are, cannot, however, be separated from one another. They are so strictly connected, that one presupposes the other, while all of them tend to make the more evident the loving divine purpose of the communication of the divine life to men.

Not only does the Apostle himself constantly return to this conclusion, but there is not a single discourse of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel which does not proclaim it as the end of his work and as the object of all the efforts of men. No thought is more closely interwoven with the whole texture of the Johannine theology than that of the divine self-communication. This is after all the very purpose which moved the Apostle to write about the "Word of life". "These are written ... that you may have life" — he says at the end of his Gospel (20. 31). And the purpose of the whole Epistle is likewise clearly enough indicated: "That you may know that you have life eternal" (I. 5.13). Hence, it is really true that "this actual impartition of the actual life of God is the core of Johannine soteriology" (155).

John takes it as a granted fact that every Christian has "life" within himself. Christians have been transferred from death unto life: he who believes in Jesus has life everlasting, has passed from death to life (5.24), and we know well that we have passed (*metabekamen*) from death to life (156). The imperfect tense shows that the transfer is already accomplished and is still being carried on in its present consequences. In fact, the Christian enjoys really and at present this life; life eternal is already possessed by him who believed in Jesus — *echvi zoen aionion*, as it is often attested both by Jesus and by John himself (157). Life is a real object, abiding (*menousa*) in the Christians (I. 3.15) and they must know that they have it within themselves (I. 5.13), because God gave it (*edoken*) already to them.

Several times this Johannine life is termed "eternal" or "ever-

155 R. LAW. *o. c.*, p. 56.

156 I.3, 14. — "L'idée du passage déjà réalisé de la mort à la vie est un de thèmes les plus habituels des discours johanniques" — M. GOGUEL. *Paulinisme et johannisme. Deux théologies ou deux formes d'expérience religieuse?*, RHPH II (1931) 147.

157 Gospel, 3.15, 16, 36; 5.24, 39; 6.40, 47 Epistle, 3.15; 5.12, 13.

lasting" (*zoe aionios*). The epithet points naturally to the delineation of its nature. As the ordinary meaning of the word "eternal" recalls a future reality, one would be tempted to think that the Johannine "life eternal" refers rather to that happy life in the everlasting glory. This is indeed the sense constantly attributed to the word by the Synoptists, with whom "life everlasting" denotes only the final phase of the "Kingdom of God" (158) and is a thing which will only be possessed in the world to come (*kleronomesei en to aioni to erchomenoi*) (159). John, however, still keeping this one-sided Synoptic aspect of "life eternal", develops it evermore in a thoroughly characteristic way. Life, with John, is both a present and a future reality. Or, rather, it is the one and the same thing which begins just in this world by its actual impartition to men and will be continued in its fulness in the future world. There is only one life and this is naturally "eternal". It is even not necessary to determine it by this epithet for "life" and "life eternal" are perfectly synonymous (160). Hence, it would be a strange error to endeavour to make any distinction between that which is simply called life and that which is elsewhere spoken of as eternal, as if the latter contained anything more than the former or referred to another period of human existence. The ideas of duration and futurity, which are originally and properly expressed by the adjective *aionios*, have in Johannine usage only one element and that not the primary element in its significance. In the First Epistle and, generally, in the Gospel there is no passage where life, with or without the adjective "eternal", does not primarily signify a present state rather than a future immortal felicity (161). The latter, however, is always implicitly included in the very Johannine conception of life as being a present reality, which will be fully revealed in the future.

Thus, from St. John's viewpoint, the life imparted just here below to those who believe in Christ, is said to be enalogous to God's

158 Comp. Mt. 5.20; 7.21 with Mt. 18.8, 9; 19. 17; and Mt. 25.34 with 25.46; 19.29; cf. also Mt. 9.43-47; 10.17; Lk. 10.25.

159 Mt. 19.29; Mk. 10.30; Lk. 18.30.

160 Cf. 3.36; 5.24, 39f; 6.53f, 57f; I 5.12f; 1.2; 3.14f.

161 I 2.25 — "And this is the promise which he hath promised us, life everlasting" — may be the only exception to this general rule; it may be said to denote primarily a future happy life.

own life. It is "eternal", as Christ, who is "the true God", is "life eternal" (162). Eternal life is one kind of life, the divine kind of life, irrespective of its duration. Truly, it is impossible to conceive of a divine life which is liable to or capable of interruption. Its very idea of real existence such as is proper to God and to the Word, and of an imperishable existence — that is to say not subject to vicissitudes and imperfections of the finite world — is enough to supply us with the element of its essential property. It is a kind of life similar to that of God, it is an "eternal" or a divine life.

2. But the true nature of this "eternal life", as being a divine life already possessed by the believers, is nowhere better defined as Naturally enough, this idea implies, as we have just pointed out, the conception of an impartition of life, for the two concepts of life by the fact that it is said to come in virtue of a divine begetting, and of generation are correlative and perfectly equivalent.

In Jn 1. 12-13 this thought is very nicely expressed by the antithetic comparison between the natural and the supernatural begetting. As the human parents communicate human life by their act of begetting, so does God by spiritually begetting His children: He imparts to them His very divine life. Therefore, the phrase "begotten of God" points by itself to the communication of the life of God to the believers who thereby become the children of God. It refers to the first starting point or origin of life; it means the implanting of the first germ of life, the *sperma Theou*, in virtue of which the begotten soon develops into a new spiritual being, living of a new supernatural life. Hence, Johannine "life" is the transition from death into life, brought about by that act of divine self-communication, which is constantly and exclusively expressed by the expression *gennasthai* (or *gennethenai*) *ek Theou*. The word is indeed of far reaching significance. It implies not only that life has its ultimate source in God, but that its communication, by whatsoever means, is directly and wholly dependent upon the divine action of begetting (163). Begotten and born into the spiritual world, the children of God become partakers of the divine life.

162 I 1.2; 5.20.

163 The human subject of this action cannot indeed be regarded as merely passive; in 1.12 it is clearly stated that man, on his part, must cooperate with the grace of God by receiving the Word Incarnate.

Moreover, the strict connection between the divine life and the divine generation is still thereby indicated. Life in man is so much dependent upon the divine begetting that it can in no way be obtained if not by this very act of God. It is not inherent to man as he is naturally constituted by being born of the will of earthly parents. So, in order to have supernatural life one must be begotten of God. The idea of the necessity of a new birth from God in order to have life is clearly stated in Chapter 3, in the discourse of our Lord with Nicodemus. In the Synoptic Gospels when Jesus is asked what a man must do to inherit eternal life, the answer is given in terms of moral conduct (164). The same question recurs in this pericope of the Fourth Gospel, but the answer is different. Jesus interprets the visit of Nicodemus and his acknowledgement of Him as a teacher coming from God (3. 1-2) as a request for instructions about the conditions of the entrance into the Kingdom of God (165). And He answers it by a demand for a supernatural regeneration: "Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God ... Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God ... You must be born again" (166). A new birth, a regeneration from God is, therefore, a necessary condition to be admitted into the Kingdom of God.

It is interesting to note that this is the only passage where the expression "Kingdom of God", so much common in the Synoptic Gospels, recurs in John. Now, it is commonly agreed that the expression "life eternal" of the Fourth Gospel replaces that of Kingdom familiar to the three Synoptists (167). If, therefore, in these few instances John himself makes use of the Synoptic phrase, he must thereby mean the same thing as "life eternal" (168).

164 Mt 19. 16-21; Mk 10. 17-21.

165 Some authors even suppose that Nicodemus had explicitly asked Jesus about the conditions required to enter into the Kingdom of God. So B. LAMY, *Commentarius in harmoniam sive concordiam quatuor Evangelistarum*, Parisiis, 1699, p. 210, and A. CALMET, *Commentarium litterale in omnes ac singulas tum Veteris tum Novi Testamenti libros*, VII, Venetiis. 1732. p. 538.

166 3. 3, 5, 7.

167 See L. CERFAUX, *Le Royaume de Dieu*, Vie Spirituelle, 75 (1946) 648 and J. B. FREY, art. cit., p. 37f. J. DUPONT, *Essais sur la Christologie de Saint Jean*, Bruges 1951, p. 167.

168 Note that in these passages the phraseology is quite similar to that used by the Synoptists: "to enter into the kingdom of God" (Cf Mt 5.20; 7. 21; 18.3; 19. 23-24 etc.) "to see the kingdom of God" (comp. Lk 2.26; Acts 2.27 etc.).

Indeed, the whole contest recalls rather the idea of life than strictly that of a kingdom. A new birth is, in fact, better referred to the possession of a new life than to the enjoyment of a kingdom. But with John the two expressions are perfectly synonymous (169). Hence, it would have equally been after John's mind if Jesus's words were put like this: "Nobody can enter into eternal life, unless he is born again". The reason is no less clearly indicated. It is no matter of receiving a natural life, but a supernatural one like that of the Spirit and, consequently, it cannot be communicated if not by a spiritual divine begetting, for "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit" (3.6).

It should also be borne in mind that, according to the traditional interpretation, these verses refer to the Sacrament of Baptism and state its absolute necessity for salvation. If then Baptism is said to be so much necessary to that one may enter into the Kingdom of God, this happens precisely because it is the only "laver of regeneration". In this connection Baptism may be considered as the very act of God, by which the believer is begotten again and takes possession of a new life. Thus eternal life, which is a divine life, exists really at present in all those who by Baptism have been begotten of God and have thereby become the true children of God.

3. We have so far viewed the divine generation of the children of God from the point of its analogy to human begetting. As the latter points to the quickening power by which natural life is imparted, so the divine begetting is the starting point of the implanting of a divine life-principle in the soul. The analogy, however, is not quite adequate to give a complete understanding of the Johannine expression "begotten of God". The human parent once for all imparts his own nature to his offspring. The divine life, however, still in virtue of the divine begetting, is permanently imparted to the children of God. Indeed, the verb in the aorist (as in 1. 13, *egennethesan*) points rather to the divine action by which the *sperma* of God was once implanted within the believer. Never-

169 It should be remarked that the expression "Kingdom of God" is put only in the direct speech of Jesus. As soon as the Lord's discourse ends, the Evangelist resumes his favourite "life eternal" (vv. 15-16); cf. also v. 36, "to see life", and comp. the phrase "to see the kingdom of God" of v. 3.

theless, the Johannine conception goes even beyond this point. The whole of John's teaching in connection with the Christians' condition as children of God marks a striking difference between the human and the divine begetting. Unlike the human parent, God does not import His own life to the begotten only once for ever, but He continues to strengthen it habitually by His divine influence. So, whereas in the human relationship the life-germ thus communicated is developed in a separate and independent existence, in the higher relationship it is not so. The life imparted is developed in its sustainance and growth upon the continuous influx of life from the parent source.

Jn 1. 13 refers only to the first originating of life. But taking under consideration the parallel passages throughout the Johannine writings, we can easily perceive that the divine life is thought of as being permanently imparted to the child of God. The frequency of the verb *gennaō* in the perfect tense suggests the thought that the divine begetting, once carried out in germ, still goes on in its development. It is in the First Epistle that this aspect is chiefly taken in view. The whole conception of the Epistle is concentrated upon the growth and development of the divine life imparted to the children of God. But this conception might well be said to have had its origin in the Gospel similitude of the Vine and branches (15. 1-10). Truly, no better analogy could ever be adduced to show the idea of a continuous begetting than that of a tree exerting its vital influx into its branches. Taken from the facts of vegetable, rather than animal life, the similitude is excellently apt to illustrate in some way the wholly *sui generis* begetting of the children of God. "The branches of a tree are actually children of the tree. Structurally, a branch is a smaller tree rooted in a larger. Even a single leaf with its stalk is simply a miniature tree, exactly resembling what the parent tree was in its first stage of growth, except that it derives its sustainance from the parent tree instead of from the soil. Thus a great vine is, in fact, an immense colony or fellowship of vines possessing a common life" (170). This language is in no sense merely figurative. It shows that by the same divine power, wherewith life is originated in the begotten, it is also habitually sustained.

According to the analogy, it is moreover implied that the vitalising union, by which the influx of the divine life is maintained in those who are begotten of God, consists of two reciprocal activities: God's abiding in us and our abiding in God. As the sap of the parent-vine vitalises all the branches, so does the divine germ vitalise him in whom it abides, sustaining and fostering in him those energies which are the divine life itself. Thus the abiding of God in us is the continuous and progressive action of the same self-reproducing energy of the divine nature, the initial act of which is divine begetting. The seed of divine life once implanted by the act of begetting remains (*manet*) in the begotten as an immanent source of life (I 3. 9). This is what is equally implied in St. John's peculiar idea of our abiding in God and God's abiding in us, most commonly expressed by the verb *manet* (171). The mystical reciprocal union between God (or Christ) and men is thereby indicated (172). St. Augustine clearly explains what this mutual inhabitation consists in or, rather, what it is meant for, that is, so that Christians may have permanently the life-giving principle from the divine source (173). For as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, whose vital influx it receives continuously, so neither can Christians unless they abide in Christ (15.4). It is thus stated that the divine life implanted as a germ within us is only maintained and corroborated by our continuous vitalising union with Him as that of branches with the vine. From this viewpoint, therefore, the two Johannine phrases "to abide in God" and "to be begotten of God"

- 171 Throughout the whole Johannine literature the verb *manet* recurs 67 times; in the rest of the N.T. writings it occurs 50 times in all.
- 172 Passages bearing this meaning are far numerous — 21 times in all. See G. PECORARA, *De verba, "manere" apud Joannem*, Divus Thomas (Piacenza) 14 (1937) 162-164. — It is remarkable that while in the Epistle the usual formula is that "God abides in us and we abide in God", in the Gospel it is "Christ who abides in us and we in Christ" (cf. 15.4-10). The latter, then, has its counterpart in Christ's "abiding in the Father" (15.10) and "the Father in Him" (14.10; 17.23). LAW, *o. c.*, p. 195, remarks: "The Gospel is Christocentric, the Epistle is Theocentric".
- 173 "*Manete, inquit, in me et ego in vobis. Non eodem modo illi in ipso, sicut ipse in illis. Utrumque autem prodest non ipsi, sed illis. Ita quippe in vite sunt palmites, ut viti non conferant, sed inde accipiant unde vivant: ita vero vitis est in palmitibus, ut vitale alimentum subministret eis, non sumat ab eis*" — *In Jo. Ev.*, 15.4, Tract. LXXXI, 1, PL 35, 1841.

bear a kindred significance, since both of them imply the idea of an active participation in the divine life and, as a matter of fact, the very same effect of impeccability is attributed on equal footing to both the abiding in God and the begin begotten of God (174).

Sometimes the abiding is set forth in its reciprocal form: God abides in us and we abide in God (175). This Johannine formula is still further developed to such a point as to reach the idea of man's fellowship with God, which is likewise much familiar to John. Indeed, "the characteristic message which St. John gives of life is through which fellowship with man and God — the end of human existence — is perfectly realised" (176).

This ineffable fellowship is commonly termed by John *koinonia* (177). The Greek word usually translated by the English word "fellowship" or "communion", denotes properly "partnership," "joint ownership" or the like (178). Every Christian is described as a "partner" or "joint shareholder" (*sunkoinonos*) with his fellow Christians (179). They hold shares together in the Gospel (180), in faith (181), in sufferings and consolation (182), in the Holy Ghost (183), in the future glory (184). *Koinonia* then has a special embodiment in the sharing of the body and blood of Christ, which

174 I 3.6, "Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not"; and I 3.9, "Whosoever is born of God, committeth not sin: for his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God". See E. M. BOISMARD, *art. cit.* RB 56 (1949) 382.

175 I 3.24; 4.13, 15, 16; Jn 6.56; 11.20; 15.5.

176 WESTCOTT, *Epistles*, p. 214 — Cf. Introduction, p. xvii.

177 I 1.3bis, 6.

178 "The word 'fellowship' renders a scarcely translatable Greek word, *koinonia*, which is often rendered 'communion'. Neither English word is wholly adequate to convey the meaning of the Greek. 'communion' is etymologically the nearest, but in English usage it is too specialised" — C.H. DODD, *The Johannine Epistles*, London, 1945, p. 6.

179 Phil. 1.7; Rev. 1.9.

180 I Cor. 9.23.

181 Philm. 6.

182 Phil. 3.10; II Cor. 1.7.

183 II Cor. 13.13; Phil. 2.1.

184 I Pt 5.1.

185 I Cor. 10, 16-17; cf. also Acts 2.24. The same "partnership" finds expression when Christians share their money and goods with one another (Rom. 15.26; II Cor. 8.4-5; 9.13; Phil. 4.15), the reason being that they are partakers of the same spiritual benefits (Rom. 15.26). Note that these passages are nearly all borrowed from the Pauline Epistles; really, the word *koinonia* is much more common to Paul than to John.

among ourselves is often called the "Communion" *par excellence* (185). But the more exact meaning of *koinonia* is set forth in the New Testament under two special figures, that of a tree and that of a human body. As the branches of the vine (186) or olive-tree (187) draw their life from the root and parent-stem and so are joint shareholders in the richness of the olive (188), so do Christians share a common life drawn from the divine stem. Similarly, as in a human body life is within the common possession of all the members of the same body, so it is with regard to Christians, who altogether reproduce the organic unity of a human body (189). Life, the divine life imparted to each individual Christian by his being begotten of God, is the one and the same as that possessed by his fellow Christians and brethren in the same Father. These metaphors clearly enough show that the partnership of Christians is not a mere pooling of their own individual resources, whether material or spritual, for neither tree nor body is constituted by an association of separately living parts. The application of the metaphors makes it clear that the life possessed in common by all Christians is the divine life communicated to them by God. Thus life, as it streams from the divine source, creates a family fellowship by which Christians, being begotten of the same Father, are truly "brethren" (190). The Christian community is the family of God, it exists by sharing in common the divine life. It is the fellowship of those who are in fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (191). And since all this implies an active partnership and a common possession of the same property, to have "fellowship" with the Father and with the Son is really equivalent to having participation in what is God's own, that is to say — as St. Peter nicely puts it — to be made "partakers of the divine nature" (192).

Thus the idea of *koinonia* with the divine Persons — the worthy consummation of the theology of St. John — is even raised up to

186 Jn. 15. 1-6.

187 Rom. 11. 16-24.

188 Rom. 11.17.

189 I Cor. 12.12ff; Rom. 12.4-5.

190 I 3.16; 4.20f; 5.1, 16.

191 I 1.3, 7.

192 II Pt. 1.4.

the idea of *oneness*, in the analysis of which the two elements of reciprocity and identification are readily discovered. It reaches the height of personal and mystical union, such as is implied in the many passages which state that the believer abides in the Father and the Father in him (193), or that he dwells in Christ and Christ in him (194). It is this mystical union that is most wonderfully represented by the brief and absolute form *en einai* — "to be one" (195). God, the Father, His Only-begotten Son and all those who are begotten of God are the one and the same thing. This is indeed the culmination of Christian life!

All these peculiarly Johannine ideas — reciprocal abiding, fellowship, oneness — being strictly connected with the dominating conception of life eternal, are thereby naturally included in the idea of divine childhood. Life, having its source in God, is communicated to the believer by some kind of divine generation. So, the only way to have fellowship with God or to be made partaker of the divine nature and mystically identified with Him, is the being begotten of Him. Divine sonship cannot be without communion with God. Everyone, who is begotten of God actually possesses the very life of God — he abides in God and God abides in him; he has fellowship with the divine Persons and is really mystically united with Them all.

B. ASSIMILATION TO GOD

1. Following still the thread of our argumentation, we must naturally come to the next point, namely that the children of God, in virtue of their divine begetting, are in some way assimilated to God. The universal law that like begets like has to make its way also in the supernatural sphere of the divine begetting of the children of God. For this is a matter of a true — though analogous — generation. No need to say that this does not mean that men, becoming children of God, cease thereby to be what they are by nature and change their human being into the divine. But still remaining human beings as they are, they receive within themselves

193 I 2.24; 4.12, 15f.

194 Jn 6.56; 15.4ff; I 3.24; 4.13; — cf. I 2.6, 27, 28; 3.6.

195 Jn 17. 21-23.

something which inwardly renews their very natural being and turns it to the likeness of their divine Begetter. It is the divine life-giving principle, implanted in them by God, by which, as we have just seen, they are entitled to the participation of the divine nature. They are admitted to share with God the highest good He is in Himself. For, indeed, a generation from God implies community of nature.

Now, it is this ineffable "fellowship" with God, just spoken of in the past section, which makes the child of God inwardly similar to his divine Begetter. Born again or regenerated from above, man enters into the supernatural world and lives of a new life, of the very life of God. He is, therefore, transferred to the higher order, in which he undergoes such an intimate and intrinsic transformation of his being that he reaches in some real sense a state of likeness of God. As a plant's seed imparts its nature to its successor, or a man's seed imparts his nature to his offspring, so no less true it is, that the divine "seed" abiding in us in virtue of the divine begetting conveys and imparts to us the very nature of God. The divine begetting is thus a renewal — and even a gradual renewal — of our human nature after the likeness of Him, who begets us His children.

It is precisely this wonderful transformation which marks most the striking difference between the human and the divine begetting. Begotten of blood and flesh, we receive a human nature like that of our human parents; but begotten of God and being granted to share His own nature, we become thereby assimilated to Him. Jesus's words to Nicodemus bear some evidence of this: "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit" (3.6). The allusion to the general law of nature, that "like begets like", is clear enough. As a man cannot but beget another man, so he who is begotten of the Spirit becomes himself "spirit", he is renewed and changed to such an extent by the action of the Spirit, that he becomes like to Him, having got within him the spiritual character of his Begetter (196). But this likeness,

196 It is in this sense that the Fathers do not shrink from attesting that Christians, in virtue of their supernatural regeneration, become "deified" and may even be called "gods". These daring expressions are quite familiar to them all, particularly to the Greek Fathers. — See J. GROSS, *La divinisation du Chrétien*, Paris, 1938, and E. MERSCH, *Fili in Filio*, N^oTh 65 (1938) 565-582.

based on the spiritual nature of God. is not at all simply external, concerning only the moral character of the newly-born. The thought, as included in the idea of being begotten of the Spirit, implies rather an inward renewal. Of course, the idea of a moral change of character is also underlied, but simply as a natural consequence of a higher life-principle infused in the soul. Hence, the meaning of the whole phrase is that in order to lead a spiritual life, one must first be inwardly spiritualised by the divine begetting of the Spirit. As those who are born of the flesh, being flesh, lead a fleshly life, that is, act according to their nature. so those who are born of the Spirit, having been renewed after the likeness of the Spirit, naturally lead a life which corresponds to their new nature. The use of the substantives *sara* and *pnema* might thus be explained as referring not only to external qualities, but also to some kind of likeness of nature between the begotten and the parents (197). This is, indeed, strictly true with regard to "that which is born of the flesh"; it must then be also true, in some analogous sense, with regard to "that which is born of the Spirit".

2. Nevertheless, the most definite and most important Johannine testimony on our assimilation to God points in clear terms to a future stage. Addressing his disciples, St. John said: "Dearly beloved, we are now sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know, that, when he shall appear, we shall be like to him" (I 3.2). Indeed, this passage deserves particular consideration. Now and here, in this world, we are really the children of God (*nun tekna Theou esmen*); but our likeness to Him has still to be revealed in the future glory (*homoioi auto esometha*).

It is interesting to remark first how spontaneously the thought of the divine sonship recalls to John's mind that of our assimilation to God. The two ideas are in the Johannine mind so intimately connected as to be really equivalent to each other. Hence, if we are now the children of God, we must also necessarily be like Him even

197 So WESTCOTT, *Gospel*, p. 51: "It must be noted that that which is born of flesh and spirit is described not as "fleshy" and "spiritual", but as "flesh" and "spirit". In other words the child, so to speak, is of the same nature as the parent, and does not only partake in his qualities".

now in this world. What does the distinction between the present and the future state mean, then? Does it imply that in the world to come we shall be like God in a way different from what we are now and here? Not at all, if by this it is meant that now we are children, and in future we shall be no more such, but anything else which is still hidden to us. On the contrary, we are children of God now and in this world, but it is in the coming world that our assimilation will reach its highest degree. The difference between the two stages is only a matter of degree and not of quality. What we are now — children of God — will then be fully manifested. The thought, fully expressed, is that what we are can be fully realised only in what we shall be. The sole and simple contrast is between what we are now, as children of God, and what we shall be hereafter as such. But “it doth not yet appear”. There is a veil still hiding that glory from our eyes. One thing, however, is certain, that we shall be like Him, whose children we really are now in this world. Our present divine filiation is the reason and the foundation of our likeness to God both at present and in future when we shall be perfectly like to Him. Then, when our likeness to God will be complete, our divine childhood will also be perfectly realised. Our present sonship cannot but be imperfect. Owing to the obstacles of our present life, the fuller manifestation, which it is apt to produce in us, is disturbed and, consequently, it cannot transform us completely here. When these impediments will be removed in the future glory, then we shall be totally transformed in Him and, having reached the highest degree of assimilation to the divine nature, we shall be perfectly the children of God.

Moreover, in the passage just quoted, I 3. 2, John attributes our perfect future likeness to God to the consoling fact that in heaven we shall enjoy a perfect vision of Him: “We shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is”. The Apostle thus delineates in some way the very essence of our future assimilation to God. He points to that for which and through which we shall become like Him, namely, the beatifying vision. When “we shall see him as he is” — and because of this intuitive vision — we shall be turned to the perfect likeness of God. This is, therefore, what the divine assimilation of the children of God consists in: That in heaven they

will be empowered to see and enjoy God as He is in Himself (*katos estin*), revealed to them in the fulness of His Divinity.

Truly, it does not make any difference for our purpose whether the object of the beatifying vision spoken of in this passage be God or Christ (198). For we know that with St. John the intuitive vision of Christ, the Son of God, is thoroughly equivalent to the vision of God the Father (199). Nevertheless, it would be much more consistent with the ordinary Johannine thought if the pronouns *auto* and *auton* were said to refer to Christ, who, when He will appear (*phanerothe*) in His *parousia*, will mark the final stage of the glorification and divine assimilation of the children of God (200). In this sense, then, it is to Christ that we shall be like, whom we shall see as He is in the full splendour of His glory. And it is precisely in virtue of this glorious vision of Christ that our perfect likeness to Him will be reached (201). Or, rather, the very beatifying vision of Christ glorified will itself constitute our assimilation to God. In other words, our assimilation to God (or to Christ) is defined by John as being a direct and intuitive vision of Christ as He is now in His glorious state. The more fully He is revealed to us, the closer will be our likeness to Him. When He will be fully made manifest to us, we shall be consumed to the fulness of the divine likeness to which we tend as children of God.

What our Theologians — undoubtedly based on I John 3.2 — teach with regard to the intuitive vision of God may help to get a better understanding of St. John's thought as just now brought out. The beatifying vision — they say — being a direct intuition of God, is a prerogative strictly and exclusively due to the divine nature (202). Hence, when man by a special grace of God is elevated to such a high position, as far as possible to a mere creature, he really

198 The pronouns *auto* and *auton* may be equally referred to God or to Christ. Similarly, the subject of *phanerothe* might be the preceding *ti esometha* or the understood name of Christ.

199 12.45; 14.9.

200 Cf. Col. 3.4. — With regard to I John 3.2, BONSIRVEN (*Epître*, p. 162) remarks: "*Est-ce insinuer que les bienheureux verront Dieu dans son Fils, dans son image éternelle?*"

201 Evidently, the phrase "for we shall see him as he is" must be regarded as the premise from which the conclusion is drawn that we are to be like Him.

202 S. THOMAS AQUINAS, *S.Th.*, I, II, q. 3, a. 8; III *C.G.*, c. 51.

shares with God in that which is His own, i.e., His divine nature (203). He sees and knows God as God sees and knows himself, not, of course, in the same degree of intuition, but really in the same way. Thus, the Blessed in heaven enjoy to some extent the same divine perfection and become "partakers of the divine nature", although in a way infinitely inferior to that of God. But they are thereby really like God, they really share His spiritual and divine nature for they "see him as he is" — as He Himself sees His very divine essence. So, it will be in the future glory that, raptured in the intuitive sight of the Son of God, we shall be assimilated to the divine nature to the highest point ever attainable by a human being and shall reach the highest stage of our divine sonship.

3. The Johannine argument of I 3.2, though logical enough, shall nevertheless demand another premise, for, according to the general principle that like is known by like, it should be supposed that those who are to see God as He is must already be like God. Our assimilation to God, therefore, which in the beatifying vision will reach the fulness of its perfection, must already exist within us to some extent here below. We must already be like God so that we might be able to see God as He is. Our likeness to the divine nature, then, cannot be a thing which will befall us only in the future glory. It must be already realised in some way also here in this world. And, as a matter of fact, it is really so. Indeed, we are now and here the true children of God. So, now and in this world we have to be truly assimilated to God, though not to that perfect point we are destined to reach as a consequence of our divine filiation. If, then, our present assimilation is of the same kind as that which will be bestowed upon us when He will appear, it must naturally also consist in some kind of vision of God. So it is with St. John. Of course, there can be no matter of a direct intuitive vision which at present cannot be within the reach of any human being (204). But it is a reality of the same nature most properly termed by St. John "knowledge" of God or of Christ.

In order to bring out the Johannine mind with regard to such

203 Nicely St. Irenaeus: "*Participatio Dei est videre Deum et frui benignitate eius*" — *Adv. Haer.*, IV. 20. 5 PG 7. 1036.

204 I. 18: 1 1.12.

an important point of his theology, we must recall again to our mind the concept he affords of life eternal. It has been said in the previous section that St. John's concept of having life actually means being admitted to share in some way the divine nature itself. But we purposely missed to state what does this participation in the very life of God precisely consist in. It is now the time to take this point under consideration, approaching it rather from its particular aspect of likeness to the divine nature. For, this time, it is life eternal and not strictly assimilation that is put in direct contact with "knowledge". Eternal life is, in fact, clearly defined by our Lord Himself in H's priestly address to the Father as being equivalent to knowledge: "This is eternal life: that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus-Christ, whom thou hast sent" (205). Clearly enough, a definition of life eternal is hereby stated. Life eternal is that they know (*hina ginoskosin*). Particularly noteworthy is the peculiarly Johannine use of *hina* in the explicative or, as they say, epexegetical sense, most commonly meant to give a fuller declaration of some demonstrative pronoun by which any proposition opens. Thus *hina ginoskosin*, as it were an infinitive or a simple substantive in nominal clause, is the correlative of *haute* (*he aionios zoe*), which is therewith explicitly defined (206).

The divine gift of life, then, is said to consist in knowing the Father and Jesus Christ. That is life eternal and knowledge are particularly identified as being one and the same thing. However, though the one defines the other, each offers a different aspect. But such difference does not carry on with it any essential distinction: it simply implies that life eternal and knowledge are two different views of one and the same reality. This is what is naturally implied in virtue of the strict definition of life eternal by knowledge. So, it is the knowledge of God and of Christ what the divine life imparted to the Christian essentially consists in. Now, this life is a communication of the very life of God, it is a real participation of His divine nature. By our Lord's declaration in Jn 17, 3 it is, therefore, stated that our participation in the divine nature, by which we are in some

205 17,3. — The name of "Jesus Christ" is most probably an addition of St. John or of some other later scribe: cf. J. HUBY, *Le discours de Jesus après la cène*, Paris, 1932.

206 Such as 15,8 and 15,12f. Cf. also 1 3,11, 23; 53; 11 6.

way assimilated to God, is realised by the knowledge we have of God. This is a fact. We shall soon see how far life eternal is referred to the knowledge of God. But before passing on to any other detail, we must still give a look at some other Johannine expression, which, being more or less parallel to Jn 17. 3, may still better bring out the fact that with John the knowledge of God is really equivalent to the participation of the divine life.

The First Epistle will easily afford us with the required information. In the whole Gospel it is only 17.3 that shows explicitly a close connection between life and knowledge, at least, so far as knowledge is expressed by that verb *ginosko* (207). But the high conception which Jesus showed in His solemn discourse, made its way into the Epistle where it plays an important part together with the other peculiarly Johannine themes. The last passage, I 5.20, is the first to attract our attention on account of its clear reference to Jn 17.3. "And we know that the Son of God is come: and he hath given us understanding that we may know the true God, and may be in his true Son. This is the true God and life eternal". The discernment (*dianoia*), the spiritual science, consists in that we know God and in that we are in His Son (208). The object of this knowledge (*ton alethinon*, the true God) is the same as that of the knowledge spoken of in Jn 17.3: here the knowledge of God is said to be the equivalent of life eternal; there it is put in the same line with our abiding in

207 Many times it is used to denote any ordinary knowledge as 4.53; 8.52; 13.28; 7.51; or even some deeper acquaintance of anything, 1.48; 2.24f.; 3.10; 10.14; very often it is said of the Jews who did not know Jesus or the Father who sent Him, 8.55; 16.3; 17.25; inversely, the disciples are said to have known Jesus, 10.14; 17.25. In these last two passages knowledge is a synonym of faith in Jesus (cf. 6.69 and comp. 1.10ff.). A much more profound meaning is attributed to *ginosko* when used of the knowledge Jesus Himself has of the Father and vice-versa, 10.15; 17.25. Hence, the idea of participation in the divine life between Jesus and the Father is thereby implied. — Another Johannine verb of "knowing" is *oida*. It is remarkable that in the Epistle it is never used to indicate knowledge of any person, but, generally, refers only to "facts" of revelation. Nor is it ever adopted in the last words of Jesus (Chapters 16-17). The reason might perhaps be because *oida*, which is simply "to know", falls back from bringing out such spiritual meaning of *ginosko*, as "recognise", "feel", "sympathise with". See E. A. ABBOTT, *Johannine Vocabulary*, London; 1905, 120ff.

208 *Hina*, with the indicatives *ginoskomen* and *esmen*, denotes, the objects contained in the gift of the *dianoia*. Cf. BONSIKVEN, *Epistres*, p. 276, n. 1.

Christ. To know God, therefore, means to be in His true Son. We know well enough what a deep meaning such a phrase *cinai* or *mencin en to hyio* carries with it from the Johannine point of view. It points to our close union with Christ or our abiding in Him, which is but another aspect of our "fellowship". Abiding in Him we have life, because He is the source of life — "he is the true God and life eternal" (209). Thus our knowledge of God is described by the correlative idea of our fellowship with Christ. The same conclusion may be inferred from the analysis of I 2. 3-6 and 3. 5-6, where again "to see him and to know him" is put in perfect parallelism to "to abide in him" (210). Again, in I 4.7, it is precisely the divine begetting, by which life is said to have its origin, that is made kindred to the knowledge of God: "Every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God". The love of brethren is likewise the effect of knowledge as it is of the begetting and both of them are made known by the same test. For it is equally true that "he that loveth not, knoweth not God" (I 4.8). Similarly, "he who knows God" is that "who is of God" (211). Hence for the very same reason that the world does not know God our Father, it does not know us, His children (I 3.1) — because like are known only by like.

From the clear parallelism contained in these passages we may rightly conclude that to John's mind the knowledge of God or of Christ is another aspect of the communion with God. "To know God or Christ" and "to abide in God" point equally to the one and the

209 It does not make any essential difference for our purpose whether these words would be referred to Christ or to God. Grammatical construction suggests rather the reference to Christ. This is also in conformity with the ordinary Johannine usage of calling Christ "the life" itself (11.25; 14.6; comp. I 5.12).

210 I 2. 3-6: By this we know that *we have known him*...

He who saith that *he knoweth him* ...

By this we know that *we are in him* ...

He that saith that *he abideth in him* ...

I 3. 5-6: Whosoever *abideth in him*, sinneth not;

and whosoever sinneth, hath *not seen him nor known him*.

Note that there is no real difference between the verbs *coraken* and *egnoken*. Perhaps the thought of the personal appearance of the Son of God might have suggested the use of the verb "to see", to which, however, the full sense of *ginosko* is attached (cf. also Jn 14. 7-9).

211 I 4.6: note again the strict antithetic parallelism:

He that *knoweth God*, heareth us;

He that *is not of God*, heareth us not.

same reality, that is, to the possession of the divine life, by which we are made partakers of the divine nature. So, the knowledge of God as well as the conception of divine sonship, is put in close connection with the idea of our assimilation to God. Or, rather, that our likeness to God is made to be identified with the knowledge of God, so far as it is this supernatural knowledge which actually makes us participants in the divine nature.

It follows, therefore, that the Johannine knowledge of God is not merely speculative science, but necessarily implies real communion with God. It is a unitive knowledge or, as one may say, an assimilating knowledge: when we know God, we are united to Him, we become partakers of the divine nature and are assimilated to Him. The very radical idea of knowing a thing implies in same way an intellectual assimilation to the thing know. Now, when knowledge is not purely intellectual, but rather mystical, as in the case of the Johannine knowledge, he who knows does not unite himself with the person or thing known only intellectually. but also morally, by love. Thus, the Johannine idea of knowledge carries on with it also that of loving. "God is love" (I 4.8, 16): St. John does not describe God as the supreme Being, but as the Being, whose nature is love itself. Therefore, knowing God, who is love, we cannot but love Him; we cannot know Love without sympathizing with it (212). Thus, we get united to God not only intellectually, but also morally. All this, however, states nothing which, strictly speaking, is not realised also in any intellectual knowledge of God. When we know and love, the person or thing known and loved may equally be said to be in us, morally united to us (213).

But this is not all that the Johannine conception of knowing and loving God implies. Union with God, established by the knowledge and love of God, is a *koinonia*, a participation in what is God's own. In the mind of John, then, the idea of knowledge implies that of

212 HUBY, *o. c.*, p. 159: "*On ne peut connaître Dieu qui est amour sans sympathiser en quelque façon avec cet amour*".

213 "*Sicut cognitum in cognoscente et amatum in amante*". So S. THOMAS, *S. Th.*, I, q. 43, a. 3. But see I, q. 43, a. 3, ad 1: "*Per donum gratias gratum facientis perficitur creatura rationalis ad hoc quod non solum ipso dono creato libero utatur, sed ut ipsa divina persona fruatur*"; cf. the comment on these words by H. RONDET, *La Divinisation du Chrétien*, N^RTh 71 (1949) 459f.

fellowship being, namely, accompanied by the love of God. To know God means necessarily to love Him; (214) thus, both knowledge and love together establish that wonderful reciprocal abiding of God in us and our abiding in God. For, "God is love, and he that abideth in love, abideth in God and God in him" (215). It is thus explained why Johannine knowledge is no mere intellectual enlightenment, but carries with it a divine energy, which is the presence of God within us. Hence, eternal life, which Christ is and gives, is described as lying in the continuous effort to gain a fuller knowledge of God and of Christ (216). To have life is to have fellowship with God and, consequently to have some kind of assimilation to the divine nature. Rightly enough, then, fellowship and union with God is involved in the idea of knowledge. "For spiritual knowledge is not external but sympathetic; and necessarily carries with it growing conformity to God" (217).

4. We have now come to such a point as to understand how far is our present assimilation to God by knowledge related to the future assimilation by the intuitive vision. Both of them bear an eminently intellectual character. The knowledge of God in the future glory is, however, most appropriately called "vision", owing to its utmost perfection, which can only be attained when "we shall see him as he is" (I. 3.2). The only difference, therefore, lies in the way we know God here and hereafter. The object of both knowledge and vision is the same, namely, God and His Son Jesus Christ. In heaven, when He will appear, we shall see Him in the full splendour of His immortal glory; here and now we see and know Jesus, too, as He that has appeared in this world (I 3. 5f.) and through Him we see and know God also.

Hence, knowledge in our present state is based on our faith in Jesus and follows faith. Now we know not because we see but because we believe. So our present knowledge of God is much less perfect

214 I 4.8: "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is charity". Note that in this passage it is dealt with the love of the brethren, which to St. John is the same as the love of God.

215 I 4. 16; — comp. v. 12: "If we love one another, God abideth in us". The love of brethren brings about the same effects as the love of God, I 4. 20-21; 5. 1-2 — comp. Jn. 14.23.

216 17.3; I 5.20 etc.

217 WESTCOTT, *Epistles*, p. 215.

than that which is to follow in future. It is, nevertheless, in the same line so that it may be rightly considered as the beginning and the anticipation of the future intuitive vision (218). So both knowledge by faith and knowledge by vision point to two different stages of the same reality and both carry with them the idea of the participation in the divine nature and of the assimilation to God. As by the intuitive vision the Blessed in heaven are made partakers of the divine nature in as much as they share in some way the very same knowledge and love of God, so do we in this world by our mystical knowledge of God: we share in common with the heavenly beings the same divine knowledge and love, though in a much imperfect way. And, as by their intuitive vision they become like God, so also we by our present knowledge of God are assimilated to Him. Our likeness to God — in some analogous sense — that which is strictly and naturally due to the divine nature, that is, the divine attributes of knowing and loving Him as He knows and loves Himself. This is, indeed, a real and true participation in the divine nature. We are thus really assimilated to God imperfectly here and now, much more perfectly in the future; we are, in this sense, really spiritualised or “deified” — being empowered by the divine life-principle abiding in us to exercise those actions which are by nature exclusively due to God (219).

If, then, our assimilation and our participation in the divine nature consist in that we are apt to act, in some analogous way, as God Himself acts, does it follow that we are begotten of Him by the very action of knowing Him? Indeed, this thought seems to be included in 1.12 where faith in the Word Incarnate is considered to be the condition on men’s part so that they may become the children of God. The same may be said with regard to the many passages in which to have life is made absolutely dependent upon faith in

218 Hence, it is in this sense that our present knowledge, as well as faith, may be also designated by the verb “to see” — cf. 14.7, 17; I, 3.6.

219 Having brought out St. John’s mind regarding our assimilation to and participation in the divine nature, we recognize that it falls in perfect harmony with the ordinary theological explication, such as stated, for example, by G. Van NOORT, *Tractatus de Gratia Christi*, ed. 3a, Bussum, 1920, p. 128: “(Participamus) spiritualitati, sive intellectualitati divinae, quatenus haec est radix intellectiois, qua Deus seipsum intuitive videt et illius amoris quo Deus seipso fruitur. See *S.Th.*, I, q. 93, a. 4.

Christ (220). Now with John faith and knowledge, though not thoroughly equivalent, are, nevertheless, very closely associated. Our present knowledge of God and of Christ is a knowledge by faith. Faith is the beginning of knowledge (221), and the absence of faith proves the absence of knowledge (222). However, this applies only to true living faith, to that Johannine faith which normally implies self-union with Christ. For to St. John's mind faith "is no mere possession of truths which lies dead and cold in the mind; it is a vital alliance with Christ, the abiding of our life with him in God" (223). From this point of view, therefore, faith and knowledge may really be said to be equivalent. They are not, however, perfectly identified or confused, not only as being two different concepts, but also as being thought of — logically, at least — to happen at different stages of time. Knowledge follows the act of believing (224). So that what could be said of faith as the condition of divine sonship is not applicable to the knowledge of God. Faith itself is rather the condition and the means of knowing God. Now, as to receive Christ by faith is the condition of divine sonship on the human part, so to be begotten of God is the condition on God's part. We cannot become children of God if we are not begotten of God. So the divine together with faith its antecedent. Hence, the one's being begotten begetting, far from being the consequence of knowing God, is of God is the remotest and final reality upon which all others, naturally connected with it, depend.

220 3.15, 36; 5.24; 6.40, 55; 20.31; I 5.13.

221 6.69; 17.8; — in these passages, however, *ginoskein* is rather a synonym of *pistenein*.

222 1.10; comp. v. 12.

223 STEVENS, *o. c.*, p. 367; HUBY, *o. c.*, pp. 128, 160; BONSRVEN,

224 Such is the ordinary conception in St. John. J. H. BERNARD, (*A critical and exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, I, Edinburgh, 1928, p. 222) remarks on Jn. 6.69: "While John does not lay down formulae as to the relative precedence of faith and knowledge in regard to the things of the spirit, his teaching is nearer the *credo ut intelligam* of the saints, than the *intelligo ut credam* of the philosophers. The apostles had 'believed' in Jesus, and therefore they 'knew' who He was". — In the Epistle the relation of faith to knowledge is viewed from a different standpoint, namely, as being a proof of the divine begetting and, consequently, of the true knowledge of God (5.1: 1.5; — comp. 2.23f.: 1, 2-3, 15). See BOISMARD, *art. cit.*, RB 36 (1949) 385f.

This is, indeed, in perfect harmony with the ordinary law of nature. The very conception of generation naturally implies that the starting point of any kind of activity is to be begotten. Naturally enough, no action can be ever brought forth of anything still deprived of existence (225). And, as by the human begetting a human being is brought into existence and is thereby enabled to act as a man, so it is in the higher spiritual order :only after having been begotten of God and after having received within him the divine life giving principle, can a man produce such actions as are only proper to the divine nature (226). Our likeness to God consists really in that we know and love God in the same way as He Himself knows and loves. But these ineffable actions, being thoroughly supernatural and divine, exceed, in a way that lies beyond human comprehension, our own natural faculties. We could never be able to exert such actions unless we are first supernaturalised and deified in virtue of assimilated to Him. Henceforth, we are empowered to act in such a way as if we were "gods". We know and love God as He knows and loves Himself, imperfectly and by faith in this world and much the divine begetting. By our being begotten of God we become more perfectly in the future, when "we shall see him as he is".

225 So we say: "*Prius est esse, deinde operari*"; or. "*Operatio sequitur esse*".

226 A kindred thought to this is contained in St. Augustine's comment on Jn 14.17: "*Spiritus sanctus videri et sciri, quemadmodum videndus et sciendus est, non potest a nobis, si non sit in nobis.*" — *In Jo. Ev.*, Tract. LXXIV, 5, PL 35. 1829.

FR. DONATUS O.F.M. CAP.

(concluded).



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