

Chapter 6THE SON OF GOD

We have considered the mission of Jesus contained in the title “Christ” and expressed in the statement “I believe in Jesus Christ”. Let us now move on to examine the second part of the same article that introduces the relationship of Jesus with God and is formulated like this: “I believe in His only Son, our Lord”.

This formula summarizes the two central ideas in the last verse of the prologue of Saint John: “*No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father’s side, has revealed Him*” (Jn. 1:18). This verse, heavy with theological meaning, works as a summary of everything that has been said about the Word throughout the prologue. This text touches two dimensions: the intra-Trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son, and the Son’s mission as the one who reveals the Father.

The expression “Son, who is at the Father’s side” indicates an interior, intimate presence carrying with it special affection, kindness and protection. The formula “the Son has revealed Him” means that He is able to reveal to the world the supreme and intimate secret of God, because only *He has seen Him*.

Our reflection swings between those two ends of a pendulum arc: the relationship of intimacy between Jesus and God, and Jesus’ mission in his role as He who reveals the Father. This revelation has to do with the mystery of the familiarity of Jesus with the Father, with the communion with His will, with God’s beauty reflected in the person of the Son, with the Love that unites the Father and the Son with the Cross, place of the supreme revelation of the face of God through Jesus’ Paschal Mystery. These topics will also be considered in the light of the experience lived by Concepcion Cabrera, reflected in her testimony and symbolized by the Cross of the Apostolate.

We will discuss this topic in two moments: the first one will try to determine exactly the meaning of the term “son”, a word that indicates relationship; from this relationship stem various aspects, towards the interior of the Trinity and towards the exterior of the Trinity; inward; Jesus’ love for the Father and his surrender to His will; outward: what His person reflects of the Father: His image, His beauty, His love. This revelation of God in the Son will be discussed in the following chapter. Let us now discuss Jesus’ relationship with the Father, the meaning of the word Son, the subordination of Jesus to His Father, and the love they have for each other.

Jesus, the Son of God

We first ask ourselves: what is the meaning of the expression “I believe in the only Son of God”? The answer relies on the witness of St John evangelist, a testimony of what he has seen and heard, of what he has looked upon and touched with his hands (cf. 1Jn.1:1) that Jesus is the only Son of the Father, his eternal Word, God, who lives with Him and in Him, in a unique intimacy, and that He is Life and Light for mankind (cf. Jn. 1:1-18).

We can also see the meaning of this confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God in the Christological reading that saint Paul makes on the Psalm: “*You are my son, today have I begotten you*” (Ps. 2:7). This statement that refers to God’s election of the king in the Psalms¹, is applied by Saint Paul to Jesus, in its full meaning, when he says, “*the promise that God made to our ancestors, He has brought to fulfillment for us, their children, by raising up Jesus, as it is written in the second Psalm: ‘You are my son, this day I have begotten you’*” (Acts 13:32ff)

The expression “son of God”, in Saint Paul’s school of thought becomes an understanding of a consubstantial union with God, which is eminently manifested in the Paschal mystery that integrates the cross and the resurrection². According to Saint Paul, Christ is the true Son of God, and the Son of God is the man Jesus, a historical man, through whom God comes to pass for mankind. In Jesus the quintessence of humanity appears and for that very reason He is at the same time God himself.³

When Jesus’ witnesses call him “the Son” – says Benedict XVI -, this statement is not meant in a mythological or political sense – those being the most obvious interpretations given the context of the time. Rather it is meant to be understood quite literally: Yes, in God Himself there is an eternal dialogue between Father and Son, who are both truly the one and the same God in the Holy Spirit.⁴

Jesus: a being dependent on the Father

If Jesus is the Son, from there a relationship of filial dependency stems in relation to the Father. This is one of the leading topics of the Christology of Saint John. The evangelist defines on various occasions the existence of Jesus as a *being of God*. Jesus is not *in himself* but *in the Father*, he is always one with him; he is united with his Father in such a way that “he cannot do anything on his own” (Jn. 5:19,30); and Saint Paul says that Christ made himself similar to man in everything (cf.

¹ Cf. H.J. Kraus, *The Psalms*, Sigueme, Salamanca 1993

² Cf. J. Ratzinger – Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 217

³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 194

⁴ J. Ratzinger – Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 320

Phil 2:7). This affirmation indicates that the Son is only able to work in harmony with the will of Him from whom he originated⁵.

Indeed, the whole being of Jesus is turned to God, as if waiting to hear His will. His life is lived in the contemplation of God in a unique way, like no one has ever seen Him (Jn. 1:18); He comes from the Father (Jn. 8:42); He is absolutely aware of the mysterious relationship that unites Him to the Father (Jn. 12:49). We frequently hear him say; “my Father”. And only He receives the answer: “you are my beloved son” (Mk 1:11); which indicates the mysterious union of His soul with the divinity in a total and complete reciprocity (Mt. 11:27).

His mission can be summed up with the words; “I have come to do your will”. He explains to the disciples: “my food is to do the will of He who sent me”. What Jesus does is nothing else than the mission the Father entrusted Him; He says what the Father suggests (Jn. 16:25,28,30); He can talk to Him in prayer, retreating in solitude or going to the top of the mountain. His prayer is continuous, and He knows the Father always listens to Him.⁶ His prayer life is the fountain from where the word *Abba*⁷ emanates. With this statement He makes it clear that the intimacy with God is very much His property.

The love of the Father and the Son

This intimacy between the Father and the Son comes to life through the love they have for each other. Mark’s gospel gives us a declaration of love; “you are my beloved son; in you I am well pleased” (Mk. 1:11). John’s gospel says: “The Father loves the Son and has given everything over to Him” (Jn. 3:35; cf. 5:20). A love of which the disciples are witnesses because Jesus himself has revealed it to them (cf. Jn. 17:23, 26), and because they heard the voice of the Father: “this is my beloved son, my Chosen one, listen to him” (Lk. 9:17). It is a love that blends in the intimacy of one person in the other; a reciprocated love, an eternal love. Jesus himself says: “The Father loves me before the foundation of the world” (Jn. 10:17; 17:24), and He confesses it in public: “the world must know that I love the Father” (Jn. 14:31).

Jesus expresses the intimacy with the Father in many ways and on different occasions: “I and the Father are one” (Jn. 10:30). This expression indicates that He’s talking about a dynamic and reciprocal union, a true inhabitation; “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (Jn. 14, 11,20; cf. 10:38; 17:21). This is why, whoever sees Jesus, sees the Father (14, 18). And whoever knows Jesus, knows the Father (Jn. 8:19).

⁵ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 318

⁶ Prayer places Jesus at the heart of this unique intimacy, the most personal and intimate of all. The gospels talk about Jesus’ prayer in many different passages (cf. Mk. 1:35, Lk. 3:21; 6: 12-13; 9:18; 22:31-32; Jn. 11:22, 42; 12:27-28; 14:16; 17, Rom. 8:34; Heb 5:7; 7:25)

⁷ Cf. J. Jeremias’, *The central message of the New Testament*, lecture

The love of the Father and the Son in the mystical experience

The love of the Father and the Son that we know through biblical revelation, finds a profound resonance in the spiritual experience of many Christians. Let us look at Concepcion Cabrera's testimony, who identifies herself with Jesus in this ardent love:

Beloved Father, help us be, like Jesus, only love to you: in that divine passion, our feelings, our sufferings, and our works must come together. And these need to come forth from, center around, and receive life from your divine love. Our love for you must be unique, total, aflame, tender, selfless, and active, like Jesus' love. It must be a love of self-emptying, of adoration, of abandonment and sacrifice.⁸

This prayer that arises from the contemplation of the mystery of the Holy Trinity expresses the mystical experience of this mutual love of the Father and the Son: "the Word is the caress, the tenderness, the infinite love of the Father in whom He is eternally delighted because He is His Son" (AC 56: 344-346: Jan. 24, 1931).

A love that gets inside her through Jesus, present in her heart:

The love of the Father is the ideal of all the holy love relationships; it is the source, the fountain of perfect, tender, faithful, pure, generous, delicate, and immense love. The Father loves only His Word, and the creatures He loves in as much as they reflect His image; and the more they transform themselves into Jesus, the more He loves them. (AC 45: 194-195: July 2, 1924).

Concepcion Cabrera has introduced her soul into the mystery of God and this is why she can experience the Risen Jesus in her heart. This experience manifests how the knowledge of God that comes from revelation finds its shocking resonance in the mystical life:

With my soul very much inside the focal point of the eternal gaze of the Trinity... Even if faith did not teach me, I feel it in a very particular way. I feel, and I can't say how, this second divine person in Jesus, and how, from all eternity, this was in the divine mind, this mystery of the most holy incarnation of the Word (AC 9:97ff: March 5, 1897).

Concepcion sees this experience of faith in the mystery of the Trinity and of the incarnation of the Word reflected in the Cross of the Apostolate; here she finds a new drive that takes her to the contemplation of Christ in His glorious state: *This cross carries me away, I want it, and after I*

⁸ Cf. C. Cabrera, *What Jesus is like (Como es Jesús)*, 31-42 in the unabridged Spanish edition

contemplate it, it reminds me of the one in heaven (AC 3,44: April 27, 1894) This is a cross that summarizes the fundamental truths of our Creed, a cross that contains the stages of a mysterious journey that begins in pain but ends in glory:

First the large cross, rough and bloody, soon after, the royal abode of the Heart of Christ, encircled by light, enveloped in flames and embittered by pain. Through the wound of this heart, you penetrate into the august sanctuary (AC 64, 182A: Nov. 16, 1935).

She scarcely had “wings”, Concepcion says, in order to penetrate into this sanctuary, so she could fly over those immense regions, when love performed the miracle: her “wings” spread inside her soul, and led by Mary, she toured the temple of love and pain. Love took her into the ocean of bitterness that is the wood of the cross, and bathed in this bitterness, she reached the mysterious small cross that crowns the Heart of Jesus, and she was able to share in that mysterious love. Through that cross she climbed and reached the inaccessible light that the Holy Spirit pours down on it, and the mystical ascension to the splendors of the Divinity, in the bosom of the Father. (AC 64, 182-183: Nov. 1935).

The word “Father” – says Benedict XVI – when applied to God implies a summons to us: to live as “child”, as son or daughter. “All that is mine is thine,” Jesus says in his high-priestly prayer to the Father (Jn. 17:10), and the father says the same thing to the elder brother of the Prodigal Son (cf. Lk. 15:31). The word *father* is an invitation to live from our awareness of this reality... We see that to be God’s child is not a matter of dependency, but rather of standing in the relation of love that sustains man’s existence and gives it meaning and grandeur.⁹

The words of Benedict XVI and the testimony of Concepcion Cabrera about the journey that the Cross of the Apostolate takes you on reminds us of the passage in the gospel of John: “the Son has told us”, an expression that speaks about the mission of Jesus Christ to reveal the Father.

⁹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 138-139