

**THE DIVINE
SONSHIP OF
THE LORD —
JESUS CHRIST**

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Having seen the following papers in manuscript, I felt, with others, that they should be brought within the reach of saints generally, so have, with the permission of the author, had them printed.

May the Lord graciously use them to the blessing of many.

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H. S. PAILTHORPE.

PART I.

EVIDENCE OF THE DIVINE SONSHIP OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

In this brief tract I purpose to call attention to five Scriptures in St. John's gospel which, in the writer's judgment, present in the most holy and definite manner the great and essential truth of the Divine Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The truth which has been termed, "Eternal Sonship," would appear to present such a difficulty to some minds that they have arrived at a judgment which virtually sets it aside. In consequence of this, my present intention is to shew, as far as I may be able, how Scripture affirms a deeper and more solemn fact than that of eternal Sonship. It affirms the deep reality of **Divine Sonship**. And here I would add, that this reality **involves** the entire doctrine of God's revelation, and our consequent knowledge of the Father. So profound, so far-reaching, are the effects of this doctrine, this truth of Divine Sonship, that an immense volume would not exhaust its riches. Here I call attention only to the fact, shewing how Scripture teaches this truth with its own Divine unction and power.

One other deeply-important fact I would mention, that the truth of a Divine Person incarnate does not of itself constitute the Sonship of that Person Divine. Relationships all lie in nature; hence this Sonship relationship of Jesus to God the Father, if it is to be intrinsically Divine, **must** subsist in His **own** eternal Divine Nature, that which belongs to His Person because He is God. **He is God in His eternal Nature.** And His Sonship, which subsists in that eternal Nature, must be itself eternal; yet His Sonship belongs also to His holy perfect Humanity. Both facts are true; and together give us the vast scope of His glory in Sonship with God the Father.

St. John 5. 21: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth (them); even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." This word presents to us the truth of Divine sovereignty in the Sonship glory of the Lord Jesus. As Son, though found in Manhood in this scene, He retains His sovereign rights over men. The Father quickens; so also the Son. This is essentially a Divine character of activity. It is peculiar to God; and its manifestation in the work of the Son is glorified by its sovereign character. He exercises His own Divine claim upon the creature; He quickens **whom He will**. Neither does the Scripture say here that He receives this from the Father, as in verse 26. His Sonship greatness, in its display in this world, manifested alike His Divine Nature and His perfect Humanity. He does not abandon His sovereign rights as God by becoming flesh. He does not cease to be the Source of life, even though He shall say that the Father hath given to the Son to have life in Himself. Both are true; for "In Him **was** life." And on account of this supreme glory of His eternal Divine Nature He quickens **whom He will**. He does the Father's will, yet exercises His own, because He is the Son. Here, then, is shewn forth the Sonship of Jesus as that in which lies the right and power in quickening of Divine Sovereignty.

St. John viii. 14: "Jesus answered and said unto them, though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true; for I know whence I came and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go." Nothing could exceed the tremendous significance of these words of Christ. Why should His witness be true when He bore witness to Himself? Because He **knew whence He came and whither He went**. In the then present, He had full **conscious** knowledge of the place from which He came and to which He was going. What knowledge is this? Now, mark, the Lord Jesus does not say, "I know **that** I came," wonderful as that would be: but He says, "I know **whence** I came. This is His glory as God. This deep, marvellous **conscious** knowledge lies in His eternal Divine Nature. It is the holy consciousness of that Nature; just as chapter xi. 42 expresses the consciousness of His lowly dependent Humanity. "Whence I came." He had

come from the Father and was returning thither. St. John xvi. 28. That place was the home of His Divine affections. He did not come **out** from that place as Man ; He came forth as God. He was God **in** that place which He left to come here. He could not come here without, in one sense, leaving His eternal place. Thus, His knowledge of His own eternal place with the Father lay in the holy consciousness of His Divine Nature. For that Nature remained in his Incarnation in **all** its own infinite and eternal blessedness, though having united to it His holy, sinless Nature as Man, in His **ONE** eternal Person. We are thus in the presence of One to whom the present, the past, and the future, blend into one perpetuity of sublime Conscious Being, existing and subsisting through all. Yet it is the Son who speaks, affirming the Divine witness of the Father and the Son ; and He speaks according to His Sonship glory as that proper to His Divine Nature.

St. John x. 30 : " I and the Father are one." So much has been written upon this supreme affirmation of the Son of God, that I need not but to notice it as affording the central pillar of evidence in Scripture to the Divine Sonship of Him who uttered it. Certainly the noblest comment upon its truth is to be found in the witness to the great victory of Athanasius over the heresy of Arius in the fourth century. And every man of God who has examined the **complete** evidence of Scripture has recognised in this utterance of Christ, that essential and Divine oneness of Nature peculiar to the Father and to the Son. Whilst on the contrary, Rationalistic and Socinian efforts have been unavailing to destroy its tremendous unction and power. If, speaking according to His Sonship as a reality of His Manhood, Jesus says, " My Father is greater than I " ; so in this word, speaking according to His Sonship as a reality of His Divine Nature, He says, " I and the Father are one."

What spiritual person, approaching God's word with an unbiassed mind, would call in question these simple yet evident facts ? Clearly the position in the utterance of the Son here is distinct from that from which the

blessed Lord speaks in St. John xiv. 28. His glory in Sonship is not limited by the conditions He has taken upon Himself. Thus, as the Son, He **claims** this oneness with the Father by virtue of that eternal Divine Nature which was His, even as it was the Father's.

St. John xvii. 5 : " And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Speaking as the Son, the Lord Jesus, in His prayer to the Father, refers to this glory which attended and surrounded Him in His own eternal Person and Nature. Clearly this was a glory that belonged to Him, not only eternally, but as the Son ; for He speaks as the Son, without the least intimation of any interruption in that eternal Consciousness of glory which we have already noticed. Thus we do not isolate these Scriptures, but we bring them together and cause them to blend, so that we may perceive thereby a little more clearly the Divine Sonship of Jesus. Hence in uniting this word with St. John viii. 14, we are confirmed in this truth.

One great fact, however, we must notice with care : this glory of which Jesus speaks is evidently a glory proper to Him as God ; but we do not say it is what we refer to as " Godhead glory " ; rather is it a condition of glory belonging to His eternal Person. To explain : it is impossible for the creature to conceive of a greater glory than that by which God predicated His absolute Self-existence at " the bush," as recorded in Exodus iii. Now the glory of God subsists not only in the truth that He is the I AM ; but it subsists also in its positive display in His inalienable right to affirm it, as and when He pleases. Thus the affirmation of Christ, the Son, in chapter viii. 58, displays positively this **same** glory. That is Godhead glory. He did not lay that aside, nor leave it. What He left was the condition proper to its eternal manifestation on high. He left a **condition** of glory, not the immanent Majesty of God. For when we speak of glory in that sense, we affirm that it came here in His Person and was veiled. Chapter xviii. 5 and 6 proves this fully.

How clearly this shews that it was indeed the Son who came. He had the right, being the Divine Son, to

ask to be glorified again with that glory, even though His act of asking proves the perfection of His Manhood. Thus does His Sonship glory shine alike in that Manhood, and also in His Divine Nature ; for His Person is not complete without that Nature. And this leads us in what is undoubtedly a spiritual trend of thought to verse 24.

St. John xvii. 24: " Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am , that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given; me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Relationship would be meaningless without affection. As is the relationship, so will be the love proper to it. That love is the spontaneity of the relationship in its very **nature**. And in regard to the Divine Sonship of Jesus, that nature is the Nature of God, His **own** eternal Divine Nature. In that eternal Nature lay those ineffable affections. They had their **source** in that Nature. Thus was Jesus loved, as the Son, in the supreme active blessedness of that Nature, proper and peculiar to the Father and to the Son. That is surely Divine love in its loftiest expression ; and we have been called and chosen to the eternal contemplation of the glory characterising its Divine display in the Father's house. Yet clearly that love dwelt in the Son's Nature. Jesus is **still** and abidingly conscious of it as His own especial portion. He was loved before the foundation of the world : He was loved then. There is no interruption contemplated, either in the love or in the eternal Consciousness and communion of Him who was its Object.

How willingly do I own the sublime nature of these holy things of which I write ! How gladly do I own the Divine transcendency of their eternal reality to our own frail finite minds ! Yet I could never own them either obscure or mystical. I hold them in their supreme blessedness as revealed truth to the soul, treasured by faith and in the Holy Spirit's power ; because the One in whom they all centre is so precious to our hearts, so glorious in the appreciation of our souls.

And just as Scripture affirms the truth of Divine Sonship according to the realities we have considered,

that is, Divine Sovereignty, Divine Consciousness, Divine Oneness, Divine Glory, and Divine Affections, so do we recognise **fully** the presentation of the Sonship of Jesus according to the lowly subject conditions of His perfect Manhood, as expressed by such Scriptures as St. Mark xiii. 32; St. John v. 26; and xiv. 28. But these latter, though they affirm one aspect of the truth, must **not** be used to set aside the other and greater aspect. Both are true; and both are vitally necessary to the **unity** of Divine truth. Indeed, Divine Sonship is the basis of Divine revelation. For if we divorce the Divine affections of St. John xvii. 24 from the blessedness of God's Nature disclosed in 1 John iv, we shall destroy in finality the very essence of truth itself.

Thus we live in the full light of God, revealed in the blessedness of His own eternal Nature and Glory; and we walk in the light of the glory of Him Who has thus revealed God to us, even in the light of the glory of Christ, the Divine Son. All truth centres in His holy and eternal Person, and is revealed truth to us because of His Divine and eternal Sonship.

ADDITIONAL NOTE

As the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ possesses His own **intrinsic** place and portion, life and glory, in that holy blessed Nature of God which He has made known to men. He did not reveal One whose Nature He knew only objectively. (St. John viii. 55.) He did not declare God from a distance. He possessed in His own Divine Nature—He was, the love He made known to men; He was the Only-begotten that this might be so. As the Son of God He possessed the Nature of God. He was not merely Son in a unique way as Man, though that be true enough; He was Son in His Divine Nature; and, also, as the Only-begotten He was in the place proper to the One who **alone** shared that Nature with the Father, even in the Father's bosom. (St. John i. 18.) Thus His Nature and place were wholly and eternally in Divine correspondence.

Jesus knew and loved the Father in the depths of His own Divine Nature; and He knew Him consciously in that Nature. And the Father's love went out to

the Son, and rested upon Him, as its fully adequate Object. Presented **objectively**, under the eye of heaven, **all** the Father's pleasure was in Him. The Father's love could **satisfy** itself, infinitely and Divinely, in its one Divine Object on earth, even the Son. Blessed, wondrous reality ! And thus the Son's Divine affections, full and adequate answer to the Divine love of the Father, flowed out from, and thereby expressed, the Son's Divine Nature. For we cannot receive that the infinitely-blessed love which flowed between the Father and the Son on earth was a poor, meagre thing, as contrasted with the fulness of God's Nature in His eternal conditions. For the Nature of God is not one thing to Himself, that is, within His own eternal Being, and something different to the creature to whom He makes Himself known. For, whatever the character of a relationship, in finality its blessedness is defined for us by virtue of the love of which it is capable. Is then, the relationship of the Father and the Son incapable of the **fulness** of Divine love ? No, indeed, no ! That relationship is wholly commensurate with that fulness, whilst it reveals the love to our wondering and adoring hearts.

For the entire scope of John's gospel proves this conscious oneness of the Son with the Father : chapter x. 30, 38 ; xiv. 10, 11 ; xvii. 21, 22. And this consciousness of oneness lies in the Divine Nature **peculiar** to the Father and to the Son. The relationship is thus the expression of the Nature in which it lies and subsists : chapters x. 17 ; xiv. 31. And, hence, within the relationship and belonging to the oneness, the ineffable communion of that all-perfect love was the eternal, changeless portion of the blessed Son of God.

How precious and blessed is all this, and how obviously and Divinely true ! And what rest to the heart ; for we are assured of the knowledge of the Father because revealed and manifested in the Son, according to His own blessed portion of oneness in conscious Nature with Him.

PART II

FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE DIVINE SONSHIP OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Having already considered a number of Scriptures in St. John's Gospel which prove the truth of the Divine Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ, and being conscious of its greatness, I propose to consider other Scriptures, outside that gospel, which teach the same truth. I am encouraged in this service, because of the supreme place that the Lord Jesus occupies in the hearts of His own, and their consequent readiness to consider anything that relates to Himself. I am persuaded, therefore, that my brethren will not lightly pass over such comments on the Scriptures which unfold this doctrine.

In the first part of our consideration we saw that the Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a state involving Divine relationship, subsists within, and is both characteristic and expressive of, His Divine Nature. And here I would add a fact of the utmost importance. The Sonship of Jesus as a reality of His Humanity, resulting from His coming here in flesh, unique in glory and preciousness as it is, does not extend beyond His Humanity. And a full and adequate recognition of Scripture, giving us, as it would, to appreciate that aspect of His Sonship to the utmost extent possible, would never lead us to set aside the "Divine" aspect. This can be seen in the spiritual outlook of the true believer upon those Scriptures which severally affirm the Godhead and Manhood of the Lord Jesus. The evidence of the Word is full, definite and overwhelming to the reality and perfection of His Manhood. Yet, however much we are pleased to allow justly the force of that overwhelming evidence, it does no more than to establish Divinely that **one** truth. And, however true that reality of Manhood may be, we never permit it to lessen in our souls the sense of the reality of His Godhead. And the same principles precisely apply to the Scriptures as teaching and setting forth these two aspects of His Sonship glory.

The first Scripture to which I would call attention is St. Matthew xi. 27 : " All things are delivered unto me of my Father : and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Two thoughts are presented to us in this word as characterising the Sonship of our Lord : The possession of a **full** knowledge, and The activity of a **sovereign** revelation, of the Father. So profoundly unique in the Son is this knowledge, that He says, " Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son." His knowledge was more than objective, and involved the Son having the same Nature as the Father. Thus, and only thus, could He **reveal** the One whom He knew. Divine revelation necessitates Divine knowledge. And any other which **subsists** apart from the Nature of God could not make that Nature a Divine reality to men. Clearly, then, the spiritual glory resident in nature, which underlies this act of revelation, must not only extend beyond the Humanity of Christ, but it must subsist also as distinct from It. Thus the Word guards against any confusion of the two Natures of the Lord Jesus. And the basis of this knowledge and revelation of the Father lies in the truth of His Divine Sonship.

How perfectly this utterance of the Son harmonises with St. John's gospel will be clear to all. Chapters xiv. 8-11, and 20, shew us the One who was Divinely one with the Father : " He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." No one could question the glory of the Son on earth, manifesting and glorifying the Father. Only One Who was Divine on earth in the Nature He revealed could possibly reveal the Father according to it. The purpose, grace, love, and glory of the Father were all thus seen in display in the Divine Son, rejected indeed of men, but received and loved by those born of God. Spiritual intelligence always recognises the Son's glory. It is unquestioned. For a sonship proper only to the Humanity of Christ, belonging only to the region of created things, could not reveal the Father in this way, nor be **sovereign** in it. So the Son on earth can say, " And he to whomsoever the Son may will to reveal (Him)." Divine sovereignty in

revelation, commensurate with Divine knowledge, proved the Divine Sonship of Jesus in all.

The next Scripture I purpose noticing is Romans viii. 3, 32. I will quote the words: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." And, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Two great truths come to light in these Scriptures, firstly—the judgment of God, and secondly—the love of God. The whole weight of God's condemnation of sin in the flesh, that which is above all else utterly abhorrent to the **holiness** of His Nature, has been expressed upon His **own** Son, and measured in its tremendous judgment in the Divine holiness of His Divine Nature. Only One who was Divine in His Nature as God's **own** Son could thus measure and exhaust the **fulness** of the judgment of God's Nature in its absolute holiness against this sin in the flesh. Because He was Man, He could be in man's place in righteousness bearing that weight of condemnation that man could not; but in His eternal Divine Nature, because He was the Son of God, He could and none else could, prove the **full measure** of the Divine judgment He was bearing. Thus is the very Nature of God perfectly glorified in regard of its holy judgment of the flesh, because of the sufferings on account of it of this holy, Divine Son of God.

The second Scripture, read in its harmony with St. John iii. 16, and Romans v. 8 and 10, calls for little explanation; its meaning is so evident to the heart. For this is God's heart, yes, His Nature in the fulness of its free-giving, its **sovereign** liberality, to the creature who asked it not. If the Divine Nature of God's own Son were a necessity if the fulness of His Nature's judgment in its holiness should come to light; equally so must that blessed One be Divine in His Nature to constitute in this wondrous way the expression, the very revelation, of the heart of God. His Divine Sonship thus becomes the basis of the manifestation of God's Nature alike in the **fulness** of its judgment and of its free-giving.

We pass on now to St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, chapter iv. 4: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father." The ruling thought here is that of redemption as involving the Nature and purpose of God. That purpose, having its source in His love, an eternal purpose flowing out of eternal love, counselled sonship for the objects of so full and blessed a redemption. Who could be, in Nature as well as in Person and in inherent might, equal in all things to so great a work, to so manifest a triumph of God's glory in all that He is essentially? Only the Son of God, sent forth from Him. Nothing could be more evident. The essential Nature and character of God were **fully** concerned in this act of redemption. Sonship results for us because the Son had become Man; but this Son is Son of God in His Nature in order to bring the glory of God's Nature into manifest display in such redemption. Only the Divine Son could do this.

Then further, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father. Here the Holy Spirit is presented in all His greatness as a Divine Person; but He is presented also as the Spirit of the Son of God. Clearly this proves the oneness of the Divine Nature of the Son and of the Spirit. Abba, Father, expresses the deep preciousness of the relationship enjoyed by us as sons; but it affirms for Him Whose Spirit we have a glory in such relationship infinitely beyond our's, inasmuch as God's Spirit can be, in this relationship, presented **objectively** as the Spirit of His Son. Only of the Divine Son could this be affirmed. Sonship in the Divine Nature of Him Whose Spirit we have received is thus fully proved.

The next Scripture we turn to is in Colossians i. 12-17: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. . . . And he is before all things, and

by him all things consist." Two great and precious truths come before us here in this presentation of Him who is the Son of the Father's love, namely, Intimacy and Complacency. His kingdom has that character; only the Divine Son could thus give a Divine character to His kingdom.

As J. N. Darby has expressed it: "The apostle, having thus introduced the Son in His relationship to the Father, as the central and mighty object which was to attract the heart of the Colossians and set them free from the yoke of ordinances, sketches now the different parts of the glory of that Person. . . . The Lord Jesus is the image of the invisible God. It is in the Son of His love that we see what God is. (Compare John i. 18; and also 1 John i. 2.) This is the first character of His personal glory, the essential centre of all the rest. Now, in consequence of this proper character of His Person, He takes by right the position of representing God in the creation. Adam was created in some sort in the image of God, and placed as centre in a creation that was subjected to him. But, after all, he was only a figure of the Christ, of Him who was to come. The Son, in His very Person, in His Nature (and for us as in the bosom of the Father), is He who makes God known, because He presents Him in His own Person and in a full revelation of His being and of His character before men and in the whole universe; for all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Him." (Synopsis, Vol. V., pp. 11, 12.)

How clear was this truth of Divine Sonship in the mind of the writer. "The Son, in His very Person, in His Nature . . . is He who makes God known." He who knew the intimacy and complacency of Divine love in its full blessedness in His own Divine Nature, and because He is Man, can thus make known that blessedness to men. And thus, as Man, He establishes conditions of complacency in His own Person in the power and good of which we are reconciled. (Chapter i. 21.) But in His Divine Nature He presents God to men. If God is invisible, His Nature is not unknown, being perfectly and livingly presented to men in Him who shares it, whose Divine Nature it is, even in the Son of the Father's love. What was so fully known in

the conscious depths of His own Nature, the intimacy and complacency of that eternal love, becomes the glory of His Divine revelation to the creature. But all is established in Him, the kingdom as all else; and we have our part there to know and enjoy the blessings that fill it, because of the Divine Sonship of Him who is supreme there. Blessed reality to the soul! Thus the glory of the intimacy and complacency of the Divine Son fills that scene with its Divine effulgence, whilst the communion of Divine joy has become the heart's portion in that wondrous Person.

We must pass on now to Hebrews i. 1-3: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophet, hath in these last days spoken unto us by (His) Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Once again in this Scripture the glory and greatness of the Son are presented to us. In Him God has spoken, not using Him as His mouth, as with the prophets; but in the Son's speaking God speaks, whatever He may say. As J. N. Darby expresses it: "It is God Himself who speaks; not by another; not as the Father or in the Person of the Father; not merely by the Holy Ghost using a person not divine, but as Himself a Divine Person, and that Person the Son." (Note c, New Translation, Hebrews i. 2.) Clearly, then, the Son is in His Nature Divine, for He **speaks** according to that. What has been the character of the speaking? Infinite and eternal love, with, as we have seen already, a redemption and a purpose in Divine correspondence with it as their source. If the prophets spoke according to a dispensation governed by the law, the Son has spoken so as to introduce a dispensation of love. God, speaking "in Son," manifests of necessity the fulness of what He is.

This is further developed when we read, "Who being the effulgence of his glory and the expression of his

substance" (J. N. Darby, N.T.). Is He the effulgence of something the nature of which He does not share? Is He separated from "the substance" of which He is "the exact expression"? How then could He express the "essential Being" of God? His part subsists eternally as the Son, in the glory the effulgence of which as Man, He is to men. He shares in the essential Being of which He is the exact expression. He expresses thus what He Himself is in His own eternal Nature and Being. However far-reaching the meaning of this word, "Substance," however profound or however little understood by us, the **Son** is its expression to men. He is that as Man; but in His eternal Being, as Son, He shares inalienably in that which He expresses. The glory of the full manifestation to men of the glory and the essential Being of God, is the Son's glory, could be only His, who as Son is in His Nature Divine in order to reveal to men what God is. For there is nothing greater or more marvellous than the substance of God, nothing more perfect than its exact expression. Thus are we assured of all eternal reality in the Son seen and known on earth; yet His glory—God's glory, His Being—God's Being, that this might be so; the foundation, indeed, of the soul's faith and blessing in Him.

The next word we may notice is in chapter viii. 1-3: "For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent (genealogy), having neither beginning of days nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually." Very evidently does the Holy Spirit present to us in this Scripture One so great that even Melchisedec could be made like unto Him. Clearly the Person **was** for this to be so. But there is more; this wondrous Person is presented to us in the characteristic features of His Nature, obviously Divine. His Nature is originless; His genealogy inexpressible. That is the glory of the Son of God. To no human conditions could this apply. It is not the Nature of Christ's perfect Humanity to

which the Holy Spirit refers in this word. Rather is it to His Divine Nature. He expresses the Nature that is outside all **human** reckoning, a Person known in time, the Son of God, but whose Nature hath no origin, clearly Divine. I do not linger over this, because the case is so simply true to the spiritual mind.

There is here, however, another thought, the **Precedence** of the Son of God. As St. Paul writes to the Colossians: "And He is before all things, and by him all things consist." (i. 17.) This is what many do not seem to realise. The **Son** takes precedence of all, is before all, both as to His Person **and Nature**. He is as Divine in His Nature as in His Person. Remove the Divine **Nature** of the Son of God, and His "Person" becomes nebulous. The glory of this eternal Divine Person depends upon the reality of His eternal Divine Nature. Hence, both in Person and in Nature He is before all, the Son of the Father's love, the Son of God, outside of all and beyond all that applies to the creature, yet such that even in His greatness he can be assimilated to Him. (Hebrews viii. 3.)

This sublime fact opens up a line of thought I can only indicate but do not pursue here. When answering Job out of the whirlwind, Jehovah says: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. . . . When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." (Job xxxviii. 4, 7.) Who is this that takes precedence of all the sons of God? Are we to conceive of created "sons" antecedent to "the Only-begotten," either in Person or in Nature? The first part of the question is readily answered; why not the second part also? Are we to conceive of "sons of God," in **nature** alike holy and so capable of the most marvellous appreciation of God's mighty activities that they shout for joy in contemplation of His creational glory, yet antecedent in that nature to the Son of God? My brethren, what shall we say to these things? There are **no** "sons of God" antecedent either in person or in nature to **the** Son of God! And that is what we learn, alike from Hebrews vii. 3, and Colossians i. 17; from St. John i. 1, and 18. This supreme Person is at once the glorious Archetype of all the "sons of God," the glorious Archetype of all the "morning stars." In Person as in Nature,

He precedes all, is above all, God blessed to the ages.

We have noticed six Scriptures so far ; I purpose to notice one more only at this time, the seventh, in 1 John iv. 15, 16. The apostle writes : “ Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” This word constitutes perhaps the clearest evidence in Scripture to the Divine Nature of the Son of God. And here I would explain something that may be a difficulty with certain minds. The expression, “ **the** Son of God,” with reference to our Lord Jesus Christ, undoubtedly signifies that as Son of God He possesses in all its fulness the Divine Nature. But let none think that this shall be confounded with any doctrine of Personal origin. “ The Son of God ” does not mean that Jesus has any origin, for He is God, without beginning, even as the Father and the Holy Spirit. In contrast to this, the Arian heresy taught that the Son of God had a beginning. He defined Christ’s Sonship by means of a personal origin, saying, “ Before He was begotten . . . He was not,” and not by means of a true, eternal Divine Nature. The very life and soul of our Christian faith and doctrine depends upon the Son of God being such in His Divine Nature.

Now what does this Scripture teach ? the truth of God’s Nature ? Most certainly. “ God is love ” : this is certainly, absolutely and uncontingently true. This sublime fact depends upon nothing. If no creature existed to know it, yet “ God is love.” If creatures had existed eternally by God’s power, and had never known it, yet still, “ God is love.” Apart from all that owes its existence to the fiat of His will ; above all the ruin of the creature, whether angel or man ; throughout the limitless eternities of His own infinite Self-existence ; one great blessed truth shines in its own transcendent glory—“ **GOD IS LOVE.**” And we know the Nature of God alone in Him who is the Object of it, Who is **THE SON OF GOD** in it. And the sense of the reality of this in the soul is consequent upon the confession that Jesus **IS** the Son of God. The soul is liberated by such confession for an unhindered enjoyment of God !

Thus we perceive this great fact, that the truth of the Son of God is linked indissolubly, inalienably, to the knowledge and enjoyment of God's Nature in its **absolute** sense and meaning. Now I must ask, Is only a part of that Nature known to us, only a phase of its blessedness, in the Son of God? Far be the thought! The very meaning of Divine revelation is that the Nature of God, in **all** its own infinite fulness and blessedness, is truly known to us in and by the Son of God. We know it in Himself, in His own Divine Person and Nature; and we know it also through His coming here and on account of His precious death. (1 John iv. 8, 9, 10 and 14; v. 20.) Hence the apostle is not content with a single affirmation of this truth, "God is love"; he must repeat it. But it is no abstract dogma to him; it is the greatest, utmost, living truth; Divine centre of all the rest; the reality that belongs to the **coming** of the Son of God, to the Father's sending the Son.

Hence I need not labour what is so obviously true. This fulness of the Divine Nature is, and can be, alone known on earth in Him whose Nature it is, in Him of whose fulness we have Divine witness, even in the Son of God. That is the glory of the Son of God, not only a Divine Person on earth, not only a Divine Person **truly** incarnate; but One whose true Divine Nature revealed God's Nature in perfect grace to men. Thus, confession is, that Jesus is the Son of God. Why then, should **that** particular confession result in what it does? How have we known and believed the love that God ~~has~~ has to us? **God is** love; but His love is also towards us. By and in Whom? His Son; is not that the apostle's meaning? If not, by what means or in whom? In fact, he says, The Son of God is the revelation of God, the confession of that Person brings the soul into the most profound blessing of dwelling in love and so dwelling in God. Plain, perfect witness to the Divine Nature of Him whom I confess!

I close these brief thoughts with the heartfelt prayer that my brethren may be prepared to consider the immense reality of the truth that they so poorly convey. Their preciousness no one questions. They constitute the very heart's core of our knowledge of God; and all else is surely dependent upon that. May the Lord

be graciously pleased to use this humble labour to quicken spiritual consideration of His Divine Sonship, not only as an expression of His Divine glory, but also as the foundation of God's revelation in Himself, for His own Name's sake. Amen.

ADDITIONAL NOTE

Much having been said and written of late concerning the eternal Person of the blessed Lord Jesus, and which is true and excellent, I would point out that we cannot think or conceive of this eternal Person apart from His eternal Nature. An eternal Person **must have** an eternal Nature. Thus these two greatest realities of our faith have ever been the foundation in the soul of the truth that Jesus is God—His eternal Personality and His eternal Nature. And I doubt not that the first is intimately though not exclusively linked with the truth that He is the Word, the second with His Sonship. Thus true saints have spoken and do speak of the Eternal Word—His Personality, and of the Eternal Son—His Nature. For His true, real, Divine Nature, necessarily eternal, depends on His true, real oneness with the Father. As J. N. Darby writes on St. John xiv: "The Lord only expresses that which belongs to His being really and Divinely one with the Father—'I am in my Father.'" And again, "But if He has entered into possession in this character, all that He possesses in it is His, as a Son to whom (being one with the Father) all that the Father has belongs" (Synopsis, Vol. III., pp. 481, 505).

Now there is another thought. Surely if we have not God giving His **Son** from heaven we can have no true revelation of the Divine **Nature**. He is sent and given from heaven, in the power, and as the manifestation, of the Divine Nature; though He is certainly sent and given on earth in the precious perfectness, of His Holy Humanity. I would ask you to turn again to 1 John iv. 7-14, a brief section of Scripture containing some of its most profound truths. Certainly in these verses we have the great reality of the Nature of God itself displayed and manifested on earth. That love has reached us from heaven. The Nature of God did not belong here. It came here in the Person and Nature of the Only-begotten Son of God. Thus, in order that we

may have the most perfect and complete Divine assurance, the Holy Spirit affirms three truths, presenting the three-fold character of the Divine Sonship of the Lord Jesus. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." And, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son (to be) the propitiation for our sins." And again, "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son (to be) the Saviour of the world." The Only-begotten Son of God, The Son of God, The Son (in relationship with the Father); a threefold cord of Divine witness to the Divine Sonship of the blessed Lord.

In a threefold way Divine love has thus been manifested on earth. That eternal, unchanging love came down out of heaven. It was no growth or development in the human Nature of Christ. It was the absolute Nature of God, manifested in this scene; but belonging eternally to those heavenly scenes on high. And it has come to us here in the Divine Nature of the Son of God. Had He not been Son in His Divine Nature as come from God, He could not have been its **living** manifestation on earth to men.

Indeed, as I apprehend Scripture, and in particular this fourth chapter of John's first epistle, that is its **intentional** teaching. So the apostle can speak as a personal witness, "We have seen and do testify." He could testify with the utmost power regarding what He had seen, even that the Father has sent the Son. Why? because he had known the Son on earth in the lowly Jesus, even though the faultless value of his testimony depended on the coming of the Spirit. The apostle had known that love in Him who was the Son of the Father's love, who brought that love here, who was alone in the place of its perfect, ineffable communion, even in the Father's bosom. That place of love became Him who was the Divine Object of its blessedness, Who alone by virtue of His own Divine Nature could make it known here. "God is love"; but that is a Divine reality to men alone in the Son of God. He whose Divine Nature that love was on high came here to reveal its eternal blessedness to men, even the Son of God.

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