C. The Three Persons Considered Separately.

1. THE FATHER OR THE FIRST PERSON IN THE TRINITY.

a. *The name "Father" as applied to God.* This name is not always used of God in the same sense in Scripture. (1) Sometimes it is applied to the Triune God as the origin of all created things, I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:15; Heb. 12:9; Jas. 1:17. While in these cases the name applies to the triune God, it does refer more particularly to the first person, to whom the work of creation is more especially ascribed in Scripture. (2) The name is also ascribed to the triune God to express the theocratic relation in which He stands to Israel as

His Old Testament people, Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4; Mal. 1:6; 2:10. (3) In the New Testament the name is generally used to designate the triune God as the Father in an ethical sense of all His spiritual children, Matt. 5:45; 6:6-15; Rom. 8:16; I John 3:1. (4) In an entirely different sense, however, the name is applied to the first person of the Trinity in His relation to the second person, John 1:14,18; 5:17-26; 8:54; 14:12,13. The first person is the Father of the second in a metaphysical sense. This is the original fatherhood of God, of which all earthly fatherhood is but a faint reflection.

b. *The distinctive property of the Father.* The personal property of the Father is, negatively speaking, that He is not begotten or unbegotten, and positively speaking, the generation of the Son and the spiration of the Holy Spirit. It is true that spiration is also a work of the Son, but in Him it is not combined with generation. Strictly speaking, the only work that is peculiar to the Father exclusively is that of active generation.

c. *The opera ad extra ascribed more particularly to the Father.* All the *opera ad extra of* God are works *of* the triune God, but in some *of* these works the Father is evidently in the foreground, such as: (1) Designing the work of redemption, including election, of which the Son was Himself an object, Ps. 2:7.9; 40:6.9; Isa. 53:10; Matt. 12:32; Eph. 1:3-6. (2) The works of creation and providence, especially in their initial stages, I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 2:9. (3) The work of representing the Trinity in the Counsel of Redemption, as the holy and righteous Being, whose right was violated, Ps. 2:7-9; 40:6-9; John 6:37,38; 17:4-7.

2. THE SON OR THE SECOND PERSON IN THE TRINITY.

a. *The name "Son" as applied to the second person.* The second person in the Trinity is called "Son" or "Son of God" in more than one sense of the word. (1) *In a metaphysical sense.* This must be maintained over against Socinians and Unitarians, who reject the idea of a tri-personal Godhead, see in Jesus a mere man, and regard the name "Son of God" as applied to Him primarily as an honorary title conferred upon Him. It is quite evident that Jesus Christ is represented as the Son of God in Scripture, irrespective of His position and work as Mediator. (a) He is spoken of as the Son of God from a pre-incarnation standpoint, for instance in John 1:14,18; Gal. 4:4. (b) He is called the "only-begotten" Son of God or of the Father, a term that would not apply to Him, if He were the Son of God only in an official or in an ethical sense, John 1:14,18; 3:16,18; I John 4:9. Compare II Sam. 7:14; Job 2:1; Ps. 2:7; Luke 3:38; John 1:12. (c) In some passages it is abundantly evident from the context that the name is indicative of the deity of Christ, John 5:18-25; Heb. 1. (d) While Jesus teaches His disciples to speak of God, and to address Him as "our Father," He Himself speaks of Him, and addresses Him, simply as "Father" or "my Father," and thereby shows that He was conscious of a unique relationship to the Father, Matt. 6:9; 7:21; John 20:17. (e) According to Matt. 11:27, Jesus as the Son of God claims a unique knowledge of God, a knowledge such as no one

else can possess. (f) The Jews certainly understood Jesus to claim that He was the Son of God in a metaphysical sense, for they regarded the manner in which He spoke of Himself as the Son of God as blasphemy, Matt. 26:63; John 5:18; 10:36. — (2) *In an official or Messianic sense.* In some passages this meaning of the name is combined with the one previously mentioned. The following passages apply the name "Son of God" to Christ as Mediator, Matt. 8:29, 26:63 (where this meaning is combined with the other); 27:40; John 1:49; 11:27. This Messiah-Sonship is, of course, related to the original Sonship of Christ. It was only because He was the essential and eternal Son of God, that He could be called the Son of God as Messiah. Moreover, the Messiah-Sonship reflects the eternal Sonship of Christ. It is from the point of view of this Messiah-Sonship that God is even called the God of the Son, II Cor. 11:31; Eph. 1:3, and is sometimes mentioned as God in distinction from the Lord, John 17:3; I Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:5,6. — (3) *In a nativistic sense.* The name "Son of God" is given to Jesus also in view of the fact that He owed His birth to the paternity of God. He was begotten, according to His human nature, by the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, and is in that sense the Son of God. This is clearly indicated in Luke 1:32,35, and may probably be inferred also from John 1:13.

b. *The personal subsistence of the Son.* The personal subsistence of the Son must be maintained over against all Modalists, who in one way or another deny the *personal* distinctions in the Godhead. The personality of the Son may be substantiated as follows: (1) The way in which the Bible speaks of the Father and the Son alongside of each other implies that the one is just as personal as the other, and is also indicative of a personal relationship existing between the two. (2) The use of the appelatives "only-begotten" and "firstborn" imply that the relation between the Father and the Son, while unique, can nevertheless be represented approximately as one of generation and birth. The name "firstborn" is found in Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:6, and emphasizes the fact of the eternal generation of the Son. It simply means that He was before all creation. (3) The distinctive use of the term "Logos" in Scripture points in the same direction. This term is applied to the Son, not in the first place to express His relation to the world (which is quite secondary), but to indicate the intimate relation in which He stands to the Father, the relation like that of a word to the speaker. In distinction from philosophy, the Bible represents the Logos as personal and identifies Him with the Son of God, John 1:1-14; I John 1:1-3. (4) The description of the Son as the image, or even as the very image of God in II Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3. God clearly stands out in Scripture as a personal Being. If the Son of God is the very image of God, He too must be a person.

c. *The eternal generation of the Son.* The personal property of the Son is that He is eternally begotten of the Father (briefly called "filiation"), and shares with the Father in the spiration of the Spirit. The doctrine of the generation of the Son is suggested by the Biblical representation of the first and second persons of the Trinity as standing in the relation of Father and Son to each other. Not only do the names "Father" and "Son" suggest the generation of the latter by the former, but the Son is also repeatedly called "the only-begotten," John 1:14,18; 3:16,18; Heb. 11:17; I John 4:9. Several particulars deserve emphasis in connection with the generation of the Son: (1) *It is a necessary act of God.* Origen, one of the very first to speak of the generation of the Son, regarded it as an act dependent on the Father's will and therefore free. Others at various times expressed the same opinion. But it was clearly seen by Athanasius and others that a generation dependent on the optional will of the Father would make the existence of the Son

contingent and thus rob Him of His deity. Then the Son would not be equal to and *homoousios* with the Father, for the Father exists necessarily, and cannot be conceived of as non-existent. The generation of the Son must be regarded as a necessary and perfectly natural act of God. This does not mean that it is not related to the Father's will in any sense of the word. It is an act of the Father's necessary will, which merely means that His concomitant will takes perfect delight in it. (2) *It is an eternal act of the Father.* This naturally follows from the preceding. If the generation of the Son is a *necessary* act of the Father, so that it is impossible to conceive of Him as not generating, it naturally shares in the eternity of the Father. This does not mean, however, that it is an act that was completed in the far distant past, but rather that it is a timeless act, the act of an eternal present, an act always continuing and yet ever completed. Its eternity follows not only from the eternity of God, but also from the divine immutability and from the true deity of the Son. In addition to this it can be inferred from all those passages of Scripture which teach either the pre-existence of the Son or His equality with the Father, Mic. 5:2; John 1:14,18; 3:16; 5:17,18,30,36; Acts 13:33; John 17:5; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:3. The statement of Ps. 2:7, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee," is generally quoted to prove the generation of the Son, but, according to some, with rather doubtful propriety, cf. Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5. They surmise that these words refer to the raising up of Jesus as Messianic King, and to the recognition of Him as Son of God in an official sense, and should probably be linked up with the promise found in II Sam. 7:14, just as they are in Heb. 1:5. (3) *It is a generation of the personal subsistence rather than of the divine essence of the Son.* Some have spoken as if the Father generated the essence of the Son, but this is equivalent to saying that He generated His own essence, for the essence of both the Father and the Son is exactly the same. It is better to say that the Father generates the personal subsistence of the Son, but thereby also communicates to Him the divine essence in its entirety. But in doing this we should guard against the idea that the Father first generated a second person, and then communicated the divine essence to this person, for that would lead to the conclusion that the Son was not generated out of the divine essence, but created out of nothing. In the work of generation there was a communication of essence; it was one indivisible act. And in virtue of this communication the Son also has life in Himself. This is in agreement with the statement of Jesus, "For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself," John 5:26. (4) *It is a generation that must be conceived of as spiritual and divine.* In opposition to the Arians, who insisted that the generation of the Son necessarily implied separation or division in the divine Being, the Church Fathers stressed the fact that this generation must not be conceived in a physical and creaturely way, but should be regarded as spiritual and divine, excluding all idea of division or change. It brings *distinctio* and *distributio*, but no *diversitas* and *divisio* in the divine Being. (Bavinck) The most striking analogy of it is found in man's thinking and speaking, and the Bible itself seems to point to this, when it speaks of the Son as the Logos. (5) The following definition may be given of the generation of the Son: *It is that eternal and necessary act of the first person in the Trinity, whereby He, within the divine Being, is the ground of a second personal subsistence like His own, and puts this second person in possession of the whole divine essence, without any division, alienation, or change.*

Louis Berkhof *Systematic Theology*, (Eerdmans: 1972, pp. 91-94