

# REFORMED DOGMATICS

GEERHARDUS VOS, PH.D., D.D.



VOLUME THREE: CHRISTOLOGY

Translated and edited by

*Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.*

with

*Jonathan Pater*

*Allan Janssen*

*Harry Boonstra*

*Roelof van Ijken*



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## PREFACE

My thanks to Harry Boonstra, Allan Janssen, and Jonathan Pater for their invaluable help in providing base translations for the various parts of this volume. As with the previous two volumes, I have reviewed and revised their work and given the translation its final form. The few editorial footnotes are mine. Again, thanks are due to the project manager, Justin Marr, and to the copy editors for their work.

The heart of any sound systematic theology or dogmatics is its treatment of Christology. Christ as the center of the entire saving self-revelation of the triune God finds full and rich expression in this present volume. There is much here to be read and reflected upon with great profit.

In the preface to volume one, I noted that with this translation English readers will be able to compare the early Vos of the *Reformed Dogmatics* (which was completed by the time he was 30) with his subsequent work in biblical theology. My statement then that such a comparison “will substantiate deep, pervasive and cordial continuity” is certainly proving to be true.

Still, there are some differences. One noteworthy difference is that in this volume (as he did in volume one), he cites Romans 1:4 as a proof text for the deity of Christ. This contrasts with the position—expressed in 1912 in “The Eschatological Aspect of the Pauline Conception of the Spirit”—that Romans 1:4 refers to the transformation of the incarnate Christ by the Holy Spirit in His resurrection. Also, he does not yet appear to have a clear understanding of the “already-not yet” structure of biblical eschatology, with its overlap of the two world-ages (aeons) in the

interadvental period. He would later provide a now-classic articulation of this understanding in chapter one of *The Pauline Eschatology*, which informs his biblical theological work as a whole.

On the other hand, in this volume he already holds, as he argues convincingly in his later biblical-theological work, that in the description of the resurrected Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:45 as “life-giving Spirit,” the reference is to the Holy Spirit.

*R. Gaffin, Jr.*

May 2014



## CHAPTER ONE

### *Introduction*

#### The Surety (Mediator) of the Covenant of Grace The Name “Surety” or “Mediator”

1. *Of the two designations, “Surety” or “Mediator,” which is most suitable to highlight the relationship of Christ to the covenant of grace?*

The name “Surety” has this advantage: that it renders more accurately what is meant by *μεσίτης* in most places in the New Testament—that is, one who, by assuming obligations and the guaranteeing of their fulfillment, brings about unity between separated parties. The name “Mediator” does emphasize the establishing of unity but leaves indefinite the manner in which this takes place (namely, by assuming obligations). Conversely, the meaning of the word “surety” in legal usage contains an element that suggests only the payment of an outstanding debt and loses sight of the other aspects of the work of Christ. It is therefore important with the use of both words to emphasize constantly that element that does not yet become clear in the usage of the word in itself. When one speaks of Christ as Surety, then one should remember that He does more than pay the outstanding penalty for the guilt of His people. When one speaks of Him as the Mediator, then one should accent that He is more than a means of mediation and only mediates by putting Himself in the place of the members of His body as their covenant Head. Thus both terms serve to supplement and explain each other.

2. *How can one develop the notion of Surety (Mediator) from the concept of the covenant of grace, as described above? In other words, how can you derive from the covenant of grace what Christ must be as Savior?*
- a) The covenant of grace was established with the Son, not as *Logos* apart from His incarnation, but as the Son to-become-incarnate. Thus one must deal here with the *Logos* as incarnated *Logos*. We must speak of the incarnation and the God-human existence of the person of the Son of God.
  - b) As God-man, Christ is the Head of the covenant who not only effects the covenantal unity between God and man but must also possess it as a reality in Himself. There is thus a close connection between the concept of unity that must be established through the covenant of grace and the concept that one must form concerning the person of Christ in relation to His divine and human natures. On this point, too, Christology may not be detached from the doctrine of the covenant of grace but must stand in a living relationship with it.
  - c) Christ is not the natural covenant Head of His people but the covenant Head in a covenant of grace. He does not begin His work as something completely new that has nothing to do with what was earlier. In back of the covenant of grace lies the covenant of works, which may not just be pushed aside but must be removed judicially—that is, the debt incurred through the breaking of the covenant of works must be discharged. At the same time, however, this covenant of works, which was violated by Adam, must be carried out. The benefits of the covenant of works must be obtained. This gives us the distinction between the passive and active obedience of Christ.
  - d) Both passive and active obedience, taken together, entail a state of humiliation for Christ that He, as God-man, must enter into according to His human nature. If now Christ were only the procurer of covenant unity in a judicial sense, then one could speak only of a state of humiliation, and after having endured that, the Mediator would have to put off His humanity in order to retain only the state of divine glory belonging to Him from eternity. This, however, is by no means the case. There is more than

a judicial representative unity between Christ and His people. On the basis of this, there is also a life-unity. He must not only establish covenant unity with God in a judicial sense, but also possess it in Himself and transmit it from Himself to the members of His body.

From this it follows that according to His humanity Christ must move on to a second state besides that of humiliation. All the benefits of the covenant, as they were acquired in the state of humiliation, must be exhibited in His human nature. The state in which this takes place is called the state of exaltation. According to this view, the doctrine of the states of Christ follows directly from the concept of the covenant of grace. It follows from the consideration that Christ is not the founder of the covenant but in a strict sense the Head of the covenant and thus, according to His human nature, shares in the benefits of the covenant.

Usually, the doctrine of the states of the Mediator is derived from the doctrine of redemption or salvation in general, in that one says: In the state of humiliation Christ had to earn salvation for us; in the state of exaltation He had to apply it. This explanation no doubt has great value for practical and catechetical use, and is perhaps more useful and transparent than that just given. It is, however, not completely logical. After all, it still by no means follows in itself from the fact that Christ must apply the accomplished salvation that He Himself must possess the benefits of the covenant to be applied. As far as we can judge, He could apply them without that. On the other hand, it follows from Christ's attribute as covenant Head that His human nature must be exalted. Naturally, then, this exaltation is connected with the application of salvation to the members of His body, but the application in its full extent cannot be explained from exaltation. The state of exaltation does not follow from application in general, but from the particular manner of the application of the merits of Christ (from the Head to the members). And the two states of Christ will also have to be treated in connection with the doctrine of the covenant, as a consequence of what has been said.

- e) From the consideration that the Mediator must not only earn but also apply salvation, something else follows directly. If He

were merely Mediator of reconciliation, debt-paying Surety, then He could appear exclusively as Priest and there would be one office. Now, however, the Mediator does much more than that. He does not stand at a distance, in between God and man, but as covenant-head of the covenant He has a personal interest in the further realization of the covenant, for which His atoning sacrifice has laid the basis. He has, in relation to the Father, taken upon Himself this further realization and, conversely, received the promise of a glorious body.

From this it immediately follows that His role as Mediator has a much wider scope than only that which flows directly from the payment of debt. In other words, there is a multiplicity of offices: Christ, besides priest, must also be prophet and king.

We find, therefore, that the doctrine of the offices of Christ, as well as that of the states, may be developed from the concept of the covenant of grace. Further support for the threefold division of the offices and the relationship of the three offices to each other can only be discussed later.

3. *Which topics must be dealt with, in succession, in this area of doctrine?*
- a) The names.
  - b) The God-human existence, that is, the person and the natures.
  - c) The states.
  - d) The offices of the Mediator.



## CHAPTER TWO

### *Names*

1. *Why does the discussion of the names come first here?*
  - a) Because in the revelation of God the name is never a meaningless sound, but expression of a reality. It is therefore a foregone conclusion that the names of the Mediator have something to tell us about His significance.
  - b) Because the names do not merely serve in general to express one or other aspect of the being, but what is the core of the being. They summarize the essential characteristics of a concept. Thus when God's Word introduces the Mediator through names, then the intent—in the midst of the multiplicity of the traits with which His figure is delineated for us—is to fix our attention on what is primary, what before anything else must enter our consciousness. The richness of the Mediator is so great, and the relationships of His work are so numerous, that we have need of the help the names provide us in order to survey all of this and to place it under single, small viewpoints.
  - c) Before the appearance of the Mediator in the flesh, the names were the great means of making Him into a living and personal figure. The various ways in which He was typically portrayed were summarized into a unity through the name. Thus within Israel a very specific thought was associated with what was to be understood by the name of the Messiah and of the Son of

God. When Christ actually appeared, He therefore did not begin by saying, “The Messiah, the Son of God is this or that,” but by declaring, “I am the Messiah, the Son of God.” He associated Himself with what the Old Testament had revealed about Him, and this association took place by means of the name.

2. *What may be observed about the meaning of the name Jesus?*

- a) Matthew 1:21 and Luke 1:31 report how at God’s explicit command this name was given to the Mediator. In the first mentioned verse, the explanation is also added, “for He will save His people from their sins.” That care was intentionally taken, for this name-giving had a twofold purpose: (1) The name had already been borne by certain persons in the old dispensation and so already had a history in back of it as a type. (2) The derivation of the name provided an insight into the work of the Mediator.
- b) The name Jesus, Ἰησοῦς, is the transcription in the Greek of the Septuagint of a later Hebrew form יֵשׁוּעַ, which occurs, for example, in Nehemiah 8:17 (of Joshua the son of Nun) and in Ezra 2:2 and 3:2 (of the high priest, son of Jozadak). The name is therefore not of Greek but of Hebrew origin, and its derivation from the verb *יָשַׁע*, “heal,” can only be regarded as popular etymology based on its sound.
- c) The older form of the Hebrew for יֵשׁוּעַ is יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, also transcribed by the Septuagint with Ἰησοῦς. The derivation of this must be *יְהוָה יִשְׁעַ*, “Jehovah is salvation.” Some have attempted to derive the name directly from *יִשְׁעַ*, without accepting composition with “Jehovah,” but there are preponderant objections against this. For example, that such a form cannot be constructed from the root *יִשְׁעַ* in any of its forms, that the similarity with the name *אֱלִישֶׁעַ* argues for the joining with “Jehovah,” and especially that the change in name that took place in regard to Joshua ben Nun, according to Numbers 13:16, must have had significance. According to the text cited, he was previously called *הוֹשֶׁעַ*, “Hoshea,” *hip’il* infinitive absolute of *יִשְׁעַ*. If the new name that he received were not composite with “Jehovah,” then a meaningless change of the infinitive to the future tense would have taken place, for *יְהוֹשֻׁעַ* would then be understood as a *hip’il* future, “He shall deliver.” This is

unacceptable. The change must rather have been that through the introduction of “Jehovah,” emphasis was placed on a new element in the significance as a type that Joshua the son of Nun had. In place of “salvation” in general, his name is now made very specific, “Jehovah is salvation.”

- d) One does not have to look far for the basis for this change. According to Hebrews 4:8 and the general representation of Scripture that the earthly Canaan is a type of the rest of heaven, the typical significance of Joshua the son of Nun lay in the fact that he brought Israel into the land of Canaan. As the Mediator delivered His people from the misery of sin, so Joshua delivered the Israelites from the misery of the wilderness. Since Joshua, however, was a mere human being and this deliverance was brought about (or might seem to be brought about) through human means, type and antitype did not agree completely. The Mediator would be more than man. He would be Jehovah, the self-existing God, and with the omnipotent strength of His deity bring His people into heaven. So that this would be seen clearly, Hoshea’s name is changed and becomes Joshua so that it would be evident how also for Israel’s entry into Canaan more than just human power was at work—how God through His miraculous deeds was the originator of their typical liberation and, consequently, even much more, the great and antitypical salvation pictured by that typical liberation.

Thus the meaning of the name Jesus evidently includes that a divine salvation will be wrought through Him. It is not correct to find expressed in Jesus’ name exclusively the human side of the Lord’s being. The name speaks to us of the divine omnipotence of salvation. The modern usage, endemic especially in the English-American world, that associates purely human predicates with the name of Jesus and puts the Mediator close to man in so familiar a fashion that all the splendor of His deity disappears, in order to make place for a sickly sentimentality, is not scriptural. One need not fall into the opposite extreme, however, and say that the name of Jesus expresses the deity of the Lord directly. One must, however, maintain that there are two elements that point to the deity of the Lord, namely:

1. The salvation to be brought about by Jesus would be a salvation planned and wrought by God. God Himself would provide the ransom. "Jehovah, salvation" is thus on a line with "Jehovah, our righteousness." And in the time of the New Testament it would be revealed more clearly that righteousness and salvation would be planned and wrought by God Himself so that the Second Person of the Triune Being would appear in the flesh as Surety. For us, then, there lies in such expressions nothing less in fact than the deity of the Mediator.
  2. The salvation that Jesus also wrought according to and in His human nature would not take place without a communication of gifts of grace and support from the side of His deity. As Jehovah would support and protect Joshua (and therefore his name was changed), so also the deity of the Lord, His being Jehovah, would equip and powerfully support His humanity for the work of salvation.
- e) The Mediator was pictured through Joshua the son of Nun, especially in his kingship. He was a type of Jesus through his conquering of enemies and a powerful communication of the external benefits of the covenant.

The salvation produced through the Mediator may also be viewed from yet another side. Sin is not only a power, and not only brings about servitude. It is also guilt and demands atonement. Besides the kingly office, the Mediator also has a priestly office. In order to show this, Joshua the son of Jozadak bore the name that the Mediator would bear. He was the high priest, and specifically the high priest who represents the sinful, polluted people: Zechariah 3:3-4, "Now Joshua was clothed with *filthy* clothes," etc.; 13:1, "a fountain against *sin* and *uncleanness*." The Mediator was pictured by this Joshua to show His work in atoning for guilt, as well as liberating and providing blessedness. That this is in fact so is stated amply in 6:13 (see above on the doctrine of the covenant). The words "and He will sit and *rule* on His throne; and He will be a priest on His throne; and the counsel of peace will be *between those two*" (that is, between kingship and priesthood) mean nothing other than that the singular calling of Joshua was to picture the unity of these two offices in Christ.

It is completely in agreement with this when the angel says to Joseph, “For He will save His people from their sins.” Here, too, saving activity is brought directly into relationship with sin. And here, too, the modern propensity to portray Jesus as a friend of wretched people in general, as a comforter of the afflicted for whatever reason, as a compassionate martyr, must be opposed. He is, in the first place, the Surety who assumes guilt and a compassionate high priest. The point of contact must always be sought in sin. He must be commended not as a *friend* of children but as the Savior of *sinful* children. The center of gravity must always be where Scripture places it and nowhere else.

- f) In our language [Dutch], Jesus is translated as *zaligmaker* [“savior”]. The question is how far that translation has maintained the force of the original. *Zalig* means “happy, blessed,” which is again related to the Greek ὅλος, “whole,” and Latin *solus*, “sole.” So, “to save” means to “make happy,” “to fill with good.” This expresses only one side of the original concept, for in the Hebrew the basic concept of צַדִּיק, “to make room,” points back to the oppression and misery that preceded the salvation. Thus, if we paraphrase, “to save” is to deliver from the greatest evil and to bring to the greatest good. Then the warrant for this paraphrase does not rest on the Germanic etymology of *zalig*, but on the Semitic meaning of צַדִּיק. It may also be noted that the derivation of *zalig* from words such as *gelukzalig* [“blissful”], *armzalig* [“pitiful”], etc., as if *zalig* meant “full,” appears to be wrong.

If we now recapitulate, we find the following elements in the name Jesus: (1) He is deliverer from the oppression and anxiety of sin as guilt, the reconciling high priest. (2) He grants the space in which the happiness of man exists as the King conquering all enemies and saving His people. (3) He does this not as mere man but as “Jehovah of our salvation,” both according to His deity and according to His humanity. The thought that He has earned salvation is not exclusively present in the name Jesus, but also certainly the thought that He applies it. That is, the name has not only a general but also a particular meaning. In the fullest sense, it can be used only by the elect: “He will save *His people* from their sins” [Matt 1:21].

### 3. *What is the specific meaning of the name Christ?*

The difference between this name and Jesus can be expressed best by saying that Christ is the designation of an office, while Jesus is derived from the *benefits* of the office acquired by Christ. From this flow different things, as we will see later.

Χριστός means “anointed” and is the verbal adjective of χρίω, “smear,” “anoint.” Χρίω is the Septuagint translation for the Hebrew מָשַׁח, of which מְשֻׁחַ is a passive nominal form, which accordingly corresponds with χριστός. In the Old Testament, it is said of many things that they are anointed—mostly, however, of persons who are called to an office in the theocracy. The high priest is called מְשֻׁחַ הַכֹּהֵן הָאֲרֻחִיבֵּי, ἀρχιερεὺς ὁ κεχρισμένος, “the anointed priest” (Lev 4:3). Most frequently the term מְשֻׁחַ occurs, in short, for kings, “the anointed” or “the anointed of Jehovah” (1 Sam 2:10, 35).

An anointing of the prophets occurs only in 1 Kings 19:16, where Elijah receives the command to anoint Elisha. The reason for this seems to be that for the priests and kings there was an ordered succession, and there were appointed persons, even office bearers, to perpetuate the office. This was not the case for the prophets. They did not form an order with succession but were called immediately by God, and where this direct call took place, there was no longer need for anointing, since the gifts of the Spirit would also have been imparted directly. That at the time of the appearing of the Messiah the Jews mainly gave the meaning of “king” to the name Christ appears from various places in the New Testament (e.g., Luke 23:2, 37, 39; “Christ, the Lord,” 2:11; “the Christ, the king of Israel,” Mark 15:32).

The significance of anointing is twofold:

- a) It is a declarative, explanatory act that occurs both for the person himself as well as for others and is the proof that he is authorized to exercise a certain office.
- b) It is at the same time an equipping act whereby the gifts of the office are granted to the anointed person. This is to be so understood that the ability necessary for the office is effected not by the external anointing but inwardly at the same time by the power of the Holy Spirit. The anointing oil that is poured on the head or put on various parts of the body portrays legitimation by the Holy

Spirit. The expression “outpouring” of the Spirit is related to this concept of anointing.

To rightly grasp the significance of Old Testament anointing, one needs to remember that it was a type that pointed forward to the anointing of the Mediator. The prophets, priests, and kings were (1) types of Christ, and (2) His organs through which He carried out His three offices. Now, we must not derive from their offices what Christ was, but must rather infer from Christ what their offices were. They were anointed because He would be anointed; He was *not* anointed because they had been. That for them an anointing was necessary, while under the new dispensation this no longer takes place, follows from the fact that the only effective anointing—that of the Mediator become man—had not yet occurred. There still was something lacking for full mediatorship. At the same time, however, the appointing of all these organs rested entirely on the official appointment of Christ Himself. Only because He Himself was clothed with the dignity of the Messiah by the Father could they be clothed with their office. Even under the old dispensation, God’s church had no other prophet, priest, and king than the only Mediator. Thus, while these office-bearers point forward as types to the body that would come, at the same time they point back as organs to the eternal image of this body as it was present in God’s counsel of peace. That is to say, His anointing, insofar as it was equipping, Christ received in time; His anointing, insofar as it is appointment, He did not first receive in time, but from eternity, since by the power of this anointing He already exercised His threefold office through the service of the shadows.

If we so understand anointing, it means the following, and the following elements are contained in the name Christ:

- a) The Mediator is an office-bearer who has received an appointment and appears in the world on behalf of the Father. An office always presupposes someone higher who appoints and installs. It is something that requires a formal mandate. Christ has received a mission from the Father. He has not set Himself up as covenant Surety, but He has become Mediator in complete subjection to the will of the Father. His mediatorship stems from the Father, since in its entirety the covenant of grace has its origin in the inscrutable love of the Father. Every thought as if God the Father first had to be moved to pity through the work of Christ

is excluded, for the Christ who satisfied God's righteousness is a Christ of *God*, that is, given to us by God for our complete salvation. This fact that He was chosen by the Father and appointed from eternity in the counsel of peace, and that consequently in all His work the good pleasure of the Father rests on Him, gives a singular coloring to the covenant of grace in its entirety (cf. 2 Cor 5:19–20).

- b) Sovereignty attaches to every office. Toward the one who is superior, who confers it, it includes submission; toward the persons on whom it is conferred, it bestows official authority. Christ as anointed comes to us in each of His offices with authority, and demands submission. That is true in the first place in His kingly office, but it is also true of His priestly and prophetic activity. Everywhere Christ appears as having authority over us. In the realm of truth He is king (John 18:37). He teaches as one who has authority and not as the Pharisees and scribes. For everyone who scorns Him as high priest, no other sacrifice remains. As a consequence of His anointing, Christ cannot appear otherwise than with this sense of office, and the office bearers who speak on His behalf may not be satisfied with anything less. They must not preach a Christ who still has to obtain authority but always such a one who has been ordained by the Father and sent into the world (John 10:36; 6:27: "Work for the food ... which the Son of Man will give you, for God the Father has *sealed* Him"). Christ does not come as a philosopher who commends or presses His ideas but as the anointed of the Father. And because all preaching is an official task that is performed in His name, it may never depart from these claims. It may not at any cost deny Christ's sovereignty of office; and where it nevertheless does, it will soon become evident that it has lost its power.
- c) Also belonging to the anointing is an equipping of the human nature of Christ by the Holy Spirit for the exercise of His offices as Mediator. This equipping, unlike His appointment, cannot be related to the person of the Mediator according to both His natures, but only to His human nature. As such, however, the equipping was real and not merely apparent. The human nature of the Lord was weak and frail because of our sins and accordingly was not

able in itself to perform His offices. Therefore, it was endowed in an exceptional manner with gifts of the Spirit and equipped for the work of Mediator. This occurred especially on two solemn occasions: at the baptism in the Jordan and at the transfiguration on the mountain. On both occasions, the equipping was accompanied by an open declaration from God. See Matthew 3:17, “a voice from heaven saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’”; Matthew 17:5, “Behold a voice from the clouds saying, ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear Him.’” See also what is said about this anointing of the Son by the Holy Spirit in the discussion of the economic work of the Spirit.

- d) As the Mediator, Christ stands in a relationship to the members of the covenant of grace in which He cannot stand to them as Jesus. Being anointed is something that He has not only for His members or for the benefit of His members but also in fellowship with His members. Saving, in contrast, belongs exclusively to Him and takes place entirely outside of them.

On the other hand, believers, like Him, are sealed and anointed by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 1:21-22; Eph 1:13; 4:30). In particular, they are prophets, priests, and kings because something of the Holy Spirit, whose fullness dwells in Christ, has flowed down upon them, so that they, in turn, proclaim God’s counsel, dedicate themselves to God as a thank offering, and reveal the power of grace in the warfare against enemies (Rev 1:6; Acts 2:17).

4. *Which name for the Mediator, besides Jesus and Christ, occurs most often in the writings of the New Testament?*

The name *κύριος*, “lord.” *Κύριος* is the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew אֲדֹנָי, אֲדֹנָי, both where this is used of men as well as where it occurs in an absolute sense of God (cf. Gen 18:12, Sarah calls Abraham her lord; 18:3, Jehovah is so addressed by Abraham). In the Septuagint, *κύριος* also occurs where in the Old Testament יהוה is used, not to serve as its translation but simply since it had already become the custom not to speak aloud the name יהוה and to put *Adonai* in its place. In the New Testament, too, *κύριος* occurs of God in general or of God the Father = Jehovah; for example, *ἄγγελος κυρίου*, “an angel of the Lord” (Matt 1:20, 25; cf. v. 22, “what was spoken by the Lord”).

When now in the New Testament the Mediator is called *κύριος*, “Lord,” then the question arises for us whether this is to be understood in the same sense in which it refers to God, or in a changed sense. Does the relationship in which He is our Lord stem from His being one in essence with the Father, in terms of the divine nature, or from His worth as Mediator that He possesses in both natures as God-man? When the question is posed in that way, we must answer: the latter. Christ is called Lord not in the first place as the Second Person in the Divine Being, but as Mediator. This is sufficiently clear from the expression *ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” [Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3], where God the Father is thus called the God of Christ as Lord, and “Lord” therefore cannot mean His deity but only His worth as Mediator. It is to be understood in the same sense when Paul says *ἡμῖν εἷς θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ... καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*, “We have one God, the Father ... and one Lord, Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 8:6), where existence as God and existence as Lord are clearly distinguished, without it therefore being denied that in Himself Christ is God and the Father is Lord.

Christ is therefore called our Lord as Mediator:

- a) By the gift of the Father in election.
- b) By His suffering and death He has obtained an exclusive right of possession to believers, before which all other rights must give way.

The name “Lord” accordingly expresses approximately the same thing as we found in the name “Christ,” namely, the idea of “authority” (*potestas*, to be differentiated from *potentia*, “might”). Still, “Lord” is not completely synonymous with “Christ.” The latter recalls the origin of the Mediator’s capacity for power and reminds us that it is derived from the sovereignty of the Father; Christ is the anointed of God. The former, in contrast, places the emphasis on the relationship between Christ and His servants, without, in doing that, the thought being so much on the origin of that relationship. The significance of the names comes out clearly in the following texts: Luke 6:46, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not what I say?” John 13:13-14, “You call me Master and Lord, and you are right, for so I am” (cf. 2 Cor 5:15; Rom 14:8).

Although the lordship of Christ over us is in the first place a mediatorial lordship and does not have in view His divine sovereignty, still, on

the other hand, it must also be granted that it proves indirectly the deity of the Mediator. It would be impossible for a mere man to exercise that sovereignty and to possess that unlimited right of possession over soul and body that is attributed to Christ as our Lord. These are rights that are due God alone and that cannot be transferred to another, unless this other is Himself God. It is only the deity of Christ that enables Him in this respect to be the Mediator.

5. *Does the name “Son of God” also have reference to Christ as Mediator, and if so, what reference?*

It has been said repeatedly that the name “Son” in its deepest significance indicates an eternal-essential constitutive relationship between Father and Son—thus within the Triune Being—that exists entirely apart from the work of the Mediator and does not first flow from it. If Christ had never become Christ, He still would always have been Son, since it was not a positive, free ordaining of the Father that made Him Son, but an immutable, immanent law of the Divine Being itself that must exist in three hypostases [persons].

Still, on the other hand, it must be maintained that Christ’s existence as Son has significance for His mediatorship. That He was the Son is in part the basis for His appearance as Surety and Mediator of the covenant of grace. The relationship in which this Surety and Mediator had to appear was fitting for the relationship in which the Son by nature stands to the Father. When one will be sent, anointed, made subservient, glorified, and endowed with an inheritance, then one expects that it is the Son to whom all of this happens on behalf of the Father. As eternal Son of the Father, He can accomplish and undergo these things without anything abnormal taking place.

From this it follows that in Christ’s role as Mediator something of His eternal sonship shines through at the same time; and to the degree that the former appears increasingly in the full daylight of revelation, the latter will come out more clearly. In His wisdom, God has been pleased to bring the eternal relationship between Father and Son to clarity by degrees, by means of this shadowing of it in the mediatorship. Already in the days of the old covenant, God had so spoken about the relationship that He intended to establish with the Messiah that one had to sense how from such promises an eternal Fatherly love was expressed and how the person to whom they applied must be more than an ordinary

man. God called the Mediator, the future theocratic king, “Son,” since He would receive an inheritance (Psa 2 and 2 Sam 7:14).

Consequently, it came about that the name “Son of God” became synonymous with that of “Messiah.” However, as the pious, the spiritual Israel, saw more and more the glory of the eternal sonship of the Mediator radiating through this designation, and furthermore as the revelation of the New Testament expressly pointed back to this inner-Trinitarian relationship as the basis for the economic relationship (Gospel of John, Letter to the Hebrews), Israel according to the flesh remained attached to the theocratic sense of this name and expected in the Son of God nothing more than a human king, on whom the good pleasure of Jehovah would certainly rest in an exceptional measure, but who, without preexistence, would still be born in the ordinary manner from the seed of David. The starting point for the Jewish and the biblical-Christian conception was therefore the same, but from that point on the lines ran in different directions.

In the mouth of the people, the name “Son of God” in the Evangelists usually has the meaning in which it is synonymous with “Messiah” (Mark 14:61). In the mouth of the Savior, it usually has a much deeper meaning, since He apparently connects it with His eternal sonship. This is especially the case in the Gospel of John. Occasionally, the Jews also realized that Jesus, by calling Himself “God’s Son,” ascribed to Himself more than human worth as Messiah. They therefore accused Him of blasphemy (John 10:36; 19:7). On the other hand, Christ Himself sometimes employed the customary usage of the word and called Himself “Son of God” in the sense in which this name was already used in the Old Testament—that is, as Mediator on whom the good pleasure of the Father rested (cf. John 10:36; Matt 26:63).

The relationship between Christ’s sonship and His mediatorship is seen in what follows, which in part has already been discussed earlier:

- a) The reason why Christ has become our Mediator and our covenant Head is in His eternal sonship (Gal 4:6). He is the firstborn among many brothers (Heb 2:11–12; Rom 8:29).
- b) Christ has assumed human nature into the unity of His person. His human nature is therefore borne in the person of the Son of God. Through this human nature and the Holy Spirit indwelling it, He is one with all the members of His body, so that there is

therefore a bond between His sonship and theirs. Still, there always remains the difference that He is Son from eternity through generation, and therefore only Son (Mediator) through foreordination and the preparation of His human nature, while they are children of God exclusively through adoption and re-creation according to the image of Christ.

Already in the Old Testament, it was clearly depicted that there existed such a connection between the eternal Son of the Father and the members of His body. For more than once, all Israel is called the Son of God (Exod 4:22; Hos 11:1; Isa 63:16; Jer 31:19–20; Mal 1:6; Deut 14:1–2). At the same time, the Messiah-king of the future was called God’s Son (2 Sam 7:14). And in the New Testament, what was said of Israel as a whole is simply transferred to Christ (cf. Matt 2:15, with Hos 11:1). The explanation of this phenomenon is that Israel is a type of the spiritual covenant people and the Messiah, again, the unity and representative of the covenant people, so that as Mediator and covenant Head He is also called the Son—not, however, without the coordinate thought that it is precisely His metaphysical sonship that qualified Him to be invested with this office of Mediator.

6. *What is the significance of the name “Son of Man,” with which Christ designated Himself?*

This name is also derived from the Old Testament, specifically from Daniel 7. After the description of the four world monarchies, portrayed by as many animals (a lion with eagle’s wings, a bear, a panther, a beast not mentioned by name), reference is made to one “who is like a son of man” and who by the “Ancient of Days” is given “dominion and honor and a kingdom that all peoples and nations and languages should honor him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed” [Dan 7:13–14]. It is not subject to doubt that the Messiah is intended here, although not the Messiah by himself. Since the Son of Man comes to supersede the earlier world-kingdoms, he must be taken here, together with his kingdom and its subjects, as ruler over Israel representing his people. He is called a son of man because over against the wild and animal-like world-kingdoms he represents true humanity as it must be in God’s kingdom.

Thus, in part, the question of what may have given Christ occasion to make use of this name for signifying His office is already answered.

He apparently wanted to counter the faulty conceptions that people had formed about the Messiah as an outward king. The kingdom in which He is Messiah and King is not according to the manner of the kingdoms of this world—which find their image in an animal-type, but it bears a human countenance—is like a son of man. If Christ had repeatedly called Himself Messiah, He would have given support to the fleshly expectations, with drawn bow, of his contemporaries. He therefore could use the title that let the emphasis fall on the human and less warlike nature of His kingdom, and, moreover, that was not understood by most people in its Old Testament messianic significance and gave less occasion to draw erroneous conclusions from it.

At the same time, there is in the name a not-unclear pointing to the deity of the Lord. He is *the* Son of Man, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, who is thus distinguished from all other men through something special, as comes out clearly in the predicates that are ascribed to Him as such: “So that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins” (Matt 9:6); “From now on, you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (26:64); “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He shall repay every man according to His works” (16:27); “For the Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath” (12:8). For the mysterious nature of this title, as a consequence of which the multitude did not comprehend Him, see the question in Matthew 16:13, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”

7. *Is the name παῖς, “child,” used with reference to the Messiah, and if so, what is its distinguishing significance?*

Παῖς expresses the relationship of child to parent, and also, by inference, the relationship of one who serves to the one who commands. In this derived sense, it is thus synonymous with δοῦλος, with the difference that the latter places more emphasis on constraint and servitude, while παῖς simply indicates subordination without compulsion. In the Septuagint, παῖς is the translation of the Hebrew עַבְד, “servant,” specifically of עַבְד־יְהוָה, “servant of the LORD.”

In the last-mentioned sense, it occurs repeatedly of Christ (Matt 12:18, citation from Isa 42:1); “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has glorified His child (better, ‘servant’) Jesus” (Acts 3:13). In these places, one

should not understand the name “child” in the sense of “Son,” as if the reference were to the eternal sonship of Christ. “Child” is here exclusively a name of the Mediator, which mainly in the latter part of the prophet Isaiah is ascribed in a distinctive way to the Mediator, namely insofar as He represents the people of Israel and accomplishes that to which the nation had been called, but it had not been able to accomplish because of its sins and imperfections. In the concept of “servant of the LORD,” as it is developed in this prophecy, the following elements are present: (1) The Messiah is God’s possession and on the basis of confidence in Him is like a trusted servant with his lord. (2) He carries out God’s work on earth, as the servant does the work of his lord. (3) He is lowly and needy in carrying out this servant work, and appears in the form of a servant. That the Messiah here appears so closely tied to spiritual Israel will have its basis in the distinctive nature of the prophecy that is intended to portray the Mediator as prophet and priest. Especially as priest, the Messiah is Head and representative of His people, so that He can easily be identified with them. This also allows explaining the error as if the term “servant of the LORD” were no more than a symbolic term for the people of Israel as a *collectivum* [collective]. This may be the case in a few places, but in most by far the reference is to one particular person, who can be none other than the Mediator.

8. *Was there another name by which Jesus was frequently called and that He acknowledged?*

The name “Son of David,” by which allusion was made not only to his lineage according to the flesh from David, but above all to His royal worth as successor of this king. Among the Jews, “Son of David” had become a fixed title of the Messiah, like “Son of God” and “Anointed” (Matt 9:27; Mark 10:47). When the Lord did not protest against the use of this name, more was involved in that than an accommodation to the ideas of the people. Only when the scribes understood the term in such a limited sense that the principal aspect of His messianic glory was eliminated did Jesus see it necessary to remind them that this Son of David was at the same time also David’s Lord and that His kingdom is of a higher order than that of an ordinary, earthly successor of David (Matt 12:35-37).



## CHAPTER THREE

### *Person and Natures*

1. *As a result of the meaning of these different names, what can already be established provisionally concerning the person of the Mediator and His natures?*
  - a) That He is truly God. We found that included:
    1. in His name Jesus;
    2. in the name Lord and the absolute sovereignty expressed by that;
    3. in the name “Son of God,” insofar as that also has an official meaning and is synonymous with Messiah.
  - b) That He is truly man. This is implied:
    1. in the official name Christ, since at least equipping for an office can only take place in His human nature;
    2. in the name “Son of Man.”
  - c) That in these two natures He is anointed to three offices, as is clear from the name Christ.
  - d) That for exercising His work as Mediator, He had to pass through a state of humiliation as well as a state of exaltation, as is to be derived from the names “Servant of the Lord,” “Son of David.”

2. *How may one derive the deity of our Lord from the requirements for His work as Mediator?*

- a) At every point of his existence, every man (human person) is claimed by the demands of God's law such that there remains no area where he would have no need of those demands for himself and would be able to be at the disposal of others. God claims him entirely, and if he gives himself entirely to God, then the measure of his own righteousness is only just full and so never overflows it.

Through the covenant of works, guilt was personally imputed to all human persons. Consequently, whoever is born as a merely human person has personally imputed guilt and cannot pay for the guilt of others. It was otherwise for Adam. With the establishment of the covenant of works, there was no personal guilt for those who were included in it, and God was therefore free, through a gracious determination, to let Adam's deed and situation be determinative for the status of all. This does not at all mean, however, that Adam earned more (quantitatively) than he needed for himself. The latter is the case only with Christ. This can never happen with man, and therefore Rome's doctrine of *opera supererogationis* [works of supererogation], with everything connected to it, must be rejected.

- b) When we consider the same issue from a different side, we can formulate it as follows: Not only is no one in a position as mere man to act as a substitute for other men, but neither is anyone *sui juris* ("by his own right") in the sense that he can freely give himself as surety. Since, in the final analysis, every man is not his own but God's possession, he cannot give himself. But it is precisely in this free giving up of self, in this giving away of self, by one who was completely *sui juris*, and as eternal God possessed Himself perfectly—it is just in this that the value of the suretyship of the Mediator lies. Scripture teaches everywhere that the Father gave the Son, but that same Scripture also teaches that the Son gave Himself. And because this voluntary character is noteworthy throughout the work of the Mediator in its entirety, this characteristic must no less be sought and presupposed in the initial origin of that work. This may be assumed only if the Mediator Himself is the independent God, the eternal source of all right.

- c) Considered apart from the natural relationship of man as man to God, a merely human person cannot be excluded from the covenant of works. This was established with all human persons. If Christ had been a human person, He would have fallen under that covenant. Now one could ask whether, by possessing a (nonpersonal) human nature, He is not already placed beyond the pale of the covenant of works, so that there would be no need of deity—in other words, whether a (nonpersonal) human nature could not in itself be our Mediator. This question must be answered in the negative. God cannot deal in justice with an abstract nature. There must always be a person underlying nature, a *suppositum* [subject] upon whom justice terminates and from whom it originates. So here, too, we reach this result: The Mediator cannot be a human person (otherwise he would fall under the covenant of works), and at the same time must be a person (otherwise he could not act for us in justice). Therefore, He must be a divine person.
- d) The covenant of grace is so ordered that the Mediator who makes reconciliation is at the same time also the Mediator of the application of the accomplished salvation and that all those who share in the covenant must be placed in a direct relationship to Him. They do not draw near only to God the Father in Christ, or to the triune God in Christ the Mediator, but also to Christ Himself. Their faith, their love must embrace Him; they are subject to Him in body and soul. He is their “Lord” who has absolute sovereignty over them. In everything His word is the final decision, from which no higher appeal is possible. He must make disposition of the Spirit, who Himself is God, must send the Spirit into the hearts of His members, regenerate them with omnipotence, unite them to Himself, sanctify, and glorify them. It is completely impossible that all these predications could be attributed to one who is a mere man. No man can place himself in this way between God and the sinner and presume from the latter the service that is due only to the former. The Arian heresy, even in its most developed form (Socinianism), has therefore always seen itself compelled to have Christ elevated, after His ascension, to the status of deity. It did not wish to ascribe to Him original,

preexistent deity; He had to be created or born as an ordinary man. But still it did see that His position as Mediator, in the state of exaltation, is elevated far above the limits of the purely human. Therefore, recourse was taken to an apotheosis, to a divinization of the man Christ. He was said to be clothed with divine power and majesty by the Father.

We, on the other hand, conclude from this entirely unique, more than human place that Christ occupies in His exaltation, back to His more than human origin, His eternal deity. After all, everything that exists is one or the other: God or creature. Scripture does not recognize intermediate stages. Even a creature made to be God could not be a mediator nor assume that relationship with the redeemed in which the Mediator must stand to them.

- e) Likewise, the covenant of grace is so constructed and arranged that the honor for the salvation of men resides not with man but with God. The triune God—as the one who elects, as Savior, as applier of salvation—is here the one who does everything and secures the covenant in every respect. Man may not ascribe to himself anything of the glory of the covenant of grace. In it, all things must be from God, through God, to God. The entire Triune Being must be revealed in it; the Trinity must be reflected most clearly in its economy.

Now with all this it is incomprehensible that the Mediator who occupies such a prominent place in the covenant of grace would be a mere man. The beautiful order in the work of grace would then be disturbed. No longer would a triune God reveal Himself in it, but it would be a work shared between God and man. When the faith of the sinner is directed to Christ and he is justified before God through faith, the significance of that is that by faith he acknowledges and becomes conscious how all salvation is located in God. Faith is the subjective side of monergistic divine grace. Therefore, a faith that is directed to a man is a *contradictio in adjecto* [contradiction in terms]. The object of saving faith cannot be a man, but must be God.

- f) Christ's work as Mediator must possess an infinite value, since that work must extend to the satisfaction of the eternal wrath of