

FIRST PART, QUESTION 34

Of the Person of the Son (In Three Articles)

We next consider the person of the Son. Three names are attributed to the Son—namely, “Son,” “Word,” and “Image.” The idea of Son is gathered from the idea of Father. Hence it remains for us to consider Word and Image.

Concerning Word there are three points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether Word is an essential term in God, or a personal term?
- (2) Whether it is the proper name of the Son?
- (3) Whether in the name of Word is expressed relation to creatures?

Whether Word in God is a personal name?

Ia q. 34 a. 1

Objection 1. It would seem that Word in God is not a personal name. For personal names are applied to God in a proper sense, as Father and Son. But Word is applied to God metaphorically, as Origen says on (Jn. 1:1), “In the beginning was the Word.” Therefore Word is not a personal name in God.

Objection 2. Further, according to Augustine (De Trin. ix, 10), “The Word is knowledge with love;” and according to Anselm (Monol. lx), “To speak is to the Supreme Spirit nothing but to see by thought.” But knowledge and thought, and sight, are essential terms in God. Therefore Word is not a personal term in God.

Objection 3. Further, it is essential to word to be spoken. But, according to Anselm (Monol. lix), as the Father is intelligent, the Son is intelligent, and the Holy Ghost is intelligent, so the Father speaks, the Son speaks, and the Holy Ghost speaks; and likewise, each one of them is spoken. Therefore, the name Word is used as an essential term in God, and not in a personal sense.

Objection 4. Further, no divine person is made. But the Word of God is something made. For it is said, “Fire, hail, snow, ice, the storms which do His Word” (Ps. 148:8). Therefore the Word is not a personal name in God.

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Trin. vii, 11): “As the Son is related to the Father, so also is the Word to Him Whose Word He is.” But the Son is a personal name, since it is said relatively. Therefore so also is Word.

I answer that, The name of Word in God, if taken in its proper sense, is a personal name, and in no way an essential name.

To see how this is true, we must know that our own word taken in its proper sense has a threefold meaning; while in a fourth sense it is taken improperly or figuratively. The clearest and most common sense is when it is said of the word spoken by the voice; and this proceeds from an interior source as regards two things found in the exterior word—that is, the vocal sound itself, and the signification of the sound. For, according to the Philosopher (Peri Herm. i) vocal sound signifies the concept of the

intellect. Again the vocal sound proceeds from the signification or the imagination, as stated in De Anima ii, text 90. The vocal sound, which has no signification cannot be called a word: wherefore the exterior vocal sound is called a word from the fact that it signifies the interior concept of the mind. Therefore it follows that, first and chiefly, the interior concept of the mind is called a word; secondarily, the vocal sound itself, signifying the interior concept, is so called; and thirdly, the imagination of the vocal sound is called a word. Damascene mentions these three kinds of words (De Fide Orth. i, 17), saying that “word” is called “the natural movement of the intellect, whereby it is moved, and understands, and thinks, as light and splendor;” which is the first kind. “Again,” he says, “the word is what is not pronounced by a vocal word, but is uttered in the heart;” which is the third kind. “Again,” also, “the word is the angel”—that is, the messenger “of intelligence;” which is the second kind. Word is also used in a fourth way figuratively for that which is signified or effected by a word; thus we are wont to say, “this is the word I have said,” or “which the king has commanded,” alluding to some deed signified by the word either by way of assertion or of command.

Now word is taken strictly in God, as signifying the concept of the intellect. Hence Augustine says (De Trin. xv, 10): “Whoever can understand the word, not only before it is sounded, but also before thought has clothed it with imaginary sound, can already see some likeness of that Word of Whom it is said: In the beginning was the Word.” The concept itself of the heart has of its own nature to proceed from something other than itself—namely, from the knowledge of the one conceiving. Hence “Word,” according as we use the term strictly of God, signifies something proceeding from another; which belongs to the nature of personal terms in God, inasmuch as the divine persons are distinguished by origin (q. 27, Aa. 3,4,5). Hence the term “Word,” according as we use the term strictly of God, is to be taken as said not essentially, but personally.

Reply to Objection 1. The Arians, who sprang from Origen, declared that the Son differed in substance from the Father. Hence, they endeavored to maintain that when the Son of God is called the Word, this is not to be understood in a strict sense; lest the idea of the Word proceeding should compel them to confess that the Son of God is of the same substance as the Father. For the interior word proceeds in such a manner from the one who pronounces it, as to remain within him. But supposing Word to be said metaphorically of God, we must still admit Word in its strict sense. For if a thing be called a word metaphorically, this can only be by reason of some manifestation; either it makes something manifest as a word, or it is manifested by a word. If manifested by a word, there must exist a word whereby it is manifested. If it is called a word because it exteriorly manifests, what it exteriorly manifests cannot be called word except in as far as it signifies the interior concept of the mind, which anyone may also manifest by exterior signs. Therefore, although Word may be sometimes said of God metaphorically, nevertheless we must also admit Word in the proper sense, and which is said personally.

Reply to Objection 2. Nothing belonging to the intellect can be applied to God personally, except word alone; for word alone signifies that which emanates from another. For what the intellect forms in its conception is the word. Now, the intellect itself, according as it is made actual by the intelligible species, is considered absolutely; likewise the act of understanding which is to the actual intellect what existence is to actual being; since the act of understanding does not signify an act going out from the intelligent agent, but an act remaining in the agent. Therefore when we say that word is knowledge, the term knowledge does not mean the act of a knowing intellect, or any one of its habits, but stands for what the intellect conceives by knowing. Hence also Augustine says (De Trin. vii, 1) that the Word is “begotten wisdom;” for it is nothing but the concept of the Wise One; and in the same way It can be called “begotten knowledge.” Thus can also be explained how “to speak” is in God “to see by thought,” forasmuch as the Word is conceived by the gaze of the divine thought. Still the term “thought” does not properly apply to the Word of God. For Augustine says (De Trin. xv, 16): “Therefore do we speak of the Word of God, and not of the Thought of God, lest we believe that in God there is something unstable, now assuming the form of Word, now putting off that form and remaining latent and as it were formless.” For thought consists properly in the search after the truth, and this has

no place in God. But when the intellect attains to the form of truth, it does not think, but perfectly contemplates the truth. Hence Anselm (Monol. ix) takes “thought” in an improper sense for “contemplation.”

Reply to Objection 3. As, properly speaking, Word in God is said personally, and not essentially, so likewise is to “speak.” Hence, as the Word is not common to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, so it is not true that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one speaker. So Augustine says (De Trin. vii, 1): “He who speaks in that co-eternal Word is understood as not alone in God, but as being with that very Word, without which, forsooth, He would not be speaking.” On the other hand, “to be spoken” belongs to each Person, for not only is the word spoken, but also the thing understood or signified by the word. Therefore in this manner to one person alone in God does it belong to be spoken in the same way as a word is spoken; whereas in the way whereby a thing is spoken as being understood in the word, it belongs to each Person to be spoken. For the Father, by understanding Himself, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and all other things comprised in this knowledge, conceives the Word; so that thus the whole Trinity is “spoken” in the Word; and likewise also all creatures: as the intellect of a man by the word he conceives in the act of understanding a stone, speaks a stone. Anselm took the term “speak” improperly for the act of understanding; whereas they really differ from each other; for “to understand” means only the habitude of the intelligent agent to the thing understood, in which habitude no trace of origin is conveyed, but only a certain information of our intellect; forasmuch as our intellect is made actual by the form of the thing understood. In God, however, it means complete identity, because in God the intellect and the thing understood are altogether the same, as was proved above (q. 14, Aa. 4,5). Whereas to “speak” means chiefly the habitude to the word conceived; for “to speak” is nothing but to utter a word. But by means of the word it imports a habitude to the thing understood which in the word uttered is manifested to the one who understands. Thus, only the Person who utters the Word is “speaker” in God, although each Person understands and is understood, and consequently is spoken by the Word.

Reply to Objection 4. The term “word” is there taken figuratively, as the thing signified or effected by word is called word. For thus creatures are said to do the word of God, as executing any effect, whereto they are ordained from the word conceived of the divine wisdom; as anyone is said to do the word of the king when he does the work to which he is appointed by the king’s word.

Objection 1. It would seem that “Word” is not the proper name of the Son. For the Son is a subsisting person in God. But word does not signify a subsisting thing, as appears in ourselves. Therefore word cannot be the proper name of the person of the Son.

Objection 2. Further, the word proceeds from the speaker by being uttered. Therefore if the Son is properly the word, He proceeds from the Father, by way only of utterance; which is the heresy of Valentine; as appears from Augustine (De Haeres. xi).

Objection 3. Further, every proper name of a person signifies some property of that person. Therefore, if the Word is the Son’s proper name, it signifies some property of His; and thus there will be several more properties in God than those above mentioned.

Objection 4. Further, whoever understands conceives a word in the act of understanding. But the Son understands. Therefore some word belongs to the Son; and consequently to be Word is not proper to the Son.

Objection 5. Further, it is said of the Son (Heb. 1:3): “Bearing all things by the word of His power;” whence Basil infers (Cont. Eunom. v, 11) that the Holy Ghost is the Son’s Word. Therefore to be Word is not proper to the Son.

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Trin. vi, 11): “By Word we understand the Son alone.”

I answer that, “Word,” said of God in its proper sense, is used personally, and is the proper name of the person of the Son. For it signifies an emanation of the intellect: and the person Who proceeds in God, by way of emanation of the intellect, is called the Son; and this procession is called generation, as we have shown above (q. 27, a. 2). Hence it follows that the Son alone is properly called Word in God.

Reply to Objection 1. “To be” and “to understand” are not the same in us. Hence that which in us has intellectual being, does not belong to our nature. But in God “to be” and “to understand” are one and the same: hence the Word of God is not an accident in Him, or an effect of His; but belongs to His very nature. And therefore it must needs be something subsistent; for whatever is in the nature of God subsists; and so Damascene says (De Fide Orth. i, 18) that “the Word of God is substantial and

has a hypostatic being; but other words [as our own] are activities if the soul.”

Reply to Objection 2. The error of Valentine was condemned, not as the Arians pretended, because he asserted that the Son was born by being uttered, as Hilary relates (De Trin. vi); but on account of the different mode of utterance proposed by its author, as appears from Augustine (De Haeres. xi).

Reply to Objection 3. In the term “Word” the same property is comprised as in the name Son. Hence Augustine says (De Trin. vii, 11): “Word and Son express the same.” For the Son’s nativity, which is His personal property, is signified by different names, which are attributed to the Son to express His perfection in various ways. To show that He is of the same nature as the Father, He is called the Son; to show that He is co-eternal, He is called the Splendor; to show that He is altogether like, He is called the Image; to show that He is begotten immaterially, He is called the Word. All these truths cannot be expressed by only one name.

Reply to Objection 4. To be intelligent belongs to the Son, in the same way as it belongs to Him to be God, since to understand is said of God essentially, as stated above (q. 14, Aa. 2,4). Now the Son is God begotten, and not God begetting; and hence He is intelligent, not as producing a Word, but as the Word proceeding; forasmuch as in God the Word proceeding does not differ really from the divine intellect, but is distinguished from the principle of the Word only by relation.

Reply to Objection 5. When it is said of the Son, “Bearing all things by the word of His power;” “word” is taken figuratively for the effect of the Word. Hence a gloss says that “word” is here taken to mean command; inasmuch as by the effect of the power of the Word, things are kept in being, as also by the effect of the power of the Word things are brought into being. Basil speaks widely and figuratively in applying Word to the Holy Ghost; in the sense perhaps that everything that makes a person known may be called his word, and so in that way the Holy Ghost may be called the Son’s Word, because He manifests the Son.

Objection 1. It would seem that the name ‘Word’ does not import relation to creatures. For every name that connotes some effect in creatures, is said of God essentially. But Word is not said essentially, but personally. Therefore Word does not import relation to creatures.

Objection 2. Further, whatever imports relation to

creatures is said of God in time; as “Lord” and “Creator.” But Word is said of God from eternity. Therefore it does not import relation to the creature.

Objection 3. Further, Word imports relation to the source whence it proceeds. Therefore, if it imports relation to the creature, it follows that the Word proceeds from

the creature.

Objection 4. Further, ideas (in God) are many according to their various relations to creatures. Therefore if Word imports relation to creatures, it follows that in God there is not one Word only, but many.

Objection 5. Further, if Word imports relation to the creature, this can only be because creatures are known by God. But God does not know beings only; He knows also non-beings. Therefore in the Word are implied relations to non-beings; which appears to be false.

On the contrary, Augustine says (QQ. lxxxiii, qu. 63), that “the name Word signifies not only relation to the Father, but also relation to those beings which are made through the Word, by His operative power.”

I answer that, Word implies relation to creatures. For God by knowing Himself, knows every creature. Now the word conceived in the mind is representative of everything that is actually understood. Hence there are in ourselves different words for the different things which we understand. But because God by one act understands Himself and all things, His one only Word is expressive not only of the Father, but of all creatures.

And as the knowledge of God is only cognitive as regards God, whereas as regards creatures, it is both cognitive and operative, so the Word of God is only expressive of what is in God the Father, but is both expressive and operative of creatures; and therefore it is said (Ps. 32:9): “He spake, and they were made;” because in the Word is implied the operative idea of what God makes.

Reply to Objection 1. The nature is also included indirectly in the name of the person; for person is an individual substance of a rational nature. Therefore the name of a divine person, as regards the personal relation, does not imply relation to the creature, but it is implied in what belongs to the nature. Yet there is nothing to prevent its implying relation to creatures, so far as the essence is included in its meaning: for as it properly belongs to the

Son to be the Son, so it properly belongs to Him to be God begotten, or the Creator begotten; and in this way the name Word imports relation to creatures.

Reply to Objection 2. Since the relations result from actions, some names import the relation of God to creatures, which relation follows on the action of God which passes into some exterior effect, as to create and to govern; and the like are applied to God in time. But others import a relation which follows from an action which does not pass into an exterior effect, but abides in the agent—as to know and to will: such are not applied to God in time; and this kind of relation to creatures is implied in the name of the Word. Nor is it true that all names which import the relation of God to creatures are applied to Him in time; but only those names are applied in time which import relation following on the action of God passing into exterior effect.

Reply to Objection 3. Creatures are known to God not by a knowledge derived from the creatures themselves, but by His own essence. Hence it is not necessary that the Word should proceed from creatures, although the Word is expressive of creatures.

Reply to Objection 4. The name of Idea is imposed chiefly to signify relation to creatures; and therefore it is applied in a plural sense to God; and it is not said personally. But the name of Word is imposed chiefly to signify the speaker, and consequently, relation to creatures, inasmuch as God, by understanding Himself, understands every creature; and so there is only one Word in God, and that is a personal one.

Reply to Objection 5. God’s knowledge of non-beings and God’s Word about non-beings are the same; because the Word of God contains no less than does the knowledge of God, as Augustine says (De Trin. xv, 14). Nevertheless the Word is expressive and operative of beings, but is expressive and manifestive of non-beings.