

II. The Work of the Spirit of God

A. The Work of the Spirit in General

Having stressed the oneness of essence and the plurality of Persons in the godhead, we must now turn to the work of the three Persons of the godhead.

The three Persons of the godhead are equal in essence but unequal in their working. Technically, this is referred to as the difference between essential equality and economic subordination.

The three Persons of the godhead accomplish different functions in the outworking of God's Plan; and they are involved in superordinate/subordinate working relationships even while they are equal in essence.

Although all analogies and illustrations ultimately fail when we attempt to find similarities to the Trinity, one analogy which has been found slightly helpful has been that of an ocean liner on which we find captain, a chief executive officer, and a crew. The captain is likened to the Father, the chief executive officer to the Son, and the crew to the Spirit. The captain makes ultimate decisions and gives orders; the chief executive officer goes to carry out the orders and see that they are fulfilled; and the crew actually fulfills the tasks assigned to them.

In one sense the captain, the chief executive officer, and the crew are all human beings, and equally so; yet on ship they do quite different things to keep the ship functioning and moving toward its intended destination.

And although the Father, Son, and Spirit are equally God; yet they do quite different things in making the Plan of God function and in moving all things toward their intended goal.

of course, this analogy falls when applied to essential equality, because the persons of the officers and crew of the ship are quite different beings in many of their characteristics. But perhaps it can serve to aid our understanding of subordination of office and working.

In any case, throughout the Bible it is the Spirit of God who implements the plans of the Trinity. He Is the one who does the work, as far as carrying the purposes of God into effect. He Is the one who gets the job done, in the sense of bringing it into actuality. He is the power of God, the one who actually exerts divine efficiency to accomplish the will of God.

Scripture clearly teaches these distinctions of office and function in the outworking of God's Plan. For example, scripture teaches that the Father sends the Son (not that the Son sends the Father), and that the Father and Son send the Holy Spirit (not that the Spirit sends the Father or the Son).

Scripture also teaches that it is the Father who initiates redemption by sending His beloved Son; that it is the Son who accomplishes redemption through His atoning work; and that it is the Spirit who applies redemption by uniting us to Christ and to the benefits of His atonement.