

For Me: What Then Must I Do?

by William Edwin Boardman

The answer to the question 'What must we do?' is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: John 1:1-7, Acts 2:38, Romans 8:16, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 2:18, Colossians 2:9

Topics: "Salvation By Faith", "Holy Trinity"

Description

William Edwin Boardman preaches about the importance of repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and receiving the Holy Ghost for the remission of sins. He emphasizes that belief in the Lord Jesus Christ is the key to salvation, whether it be for justification or sanctification. Boardman highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding, empowering, and transforming believers, showing that salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit, but faith in Jesus is the object of faith for salvation. He clarifies the essential relations of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, illustrating how each person of the Trinity plays a unique yet unified role in the work of redemption.

Transcript

"THEN PETER SAID UNTO THEM, REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED EVERY ONE OF YOU IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS, AND YE SHALL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST." Acts ii: 38.

The Apostle Peter's answer to the question ["what must we do?"] of those pricked to the heart by his pungent words on the day of Pentecost, was substantially the same as the Apostle Paul's answer to the trembling, prostrate Philippian jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

John the Baptist taught repentance toward God and faith in the Messiah at hand, and his disciples, in pursuance of his teachings, were converted to God, receiving a change of heart by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. But at the same time, John taught his disciples that the Lord Jesus Christ -- the one standing amongst them -- the latchet of whose shoes the great prophet was not worthy to unloose -- would baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

And when the Holy Ghost came upon the disciples of Jesus on the day of Pentecost, in the power of this new baptism, the Apostle Peter assured the wondering multitudes that it was Jesus, who being risen from the dead had shed forth this which they saw and heard. It was the ascension gift bestowed upon his disciples by the enthroned and glorified Messiah.

The Scriptures everywhere teach us the same thing. They always answer the question, "What must we do?" by the assurance, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Whether the question relates to justification or sanctification the answer is the same. The way of freedom from sin is the very same, as the way of freedom from condemnation. Faith in the purifying presence of Jesus brings the witness of the Spirit with our spirits that Jesus is our sanctification, that the power and dominion of sin is broken, that we are free, just as faith in the atoning merit of the blood and obedience of Christ for us, brings the witness of the Spirit that we are now no longer under condemnation for sin, but freely and fully justified in Jesus.

In the next chapter the facts that Jesus is the all-sufficient Saviour, and that faith is the all-inclusive condition of salvation will be shown more at large. In this it may be well to guard against a misapprehension, almost sure to arise.

There may seem to be in what has already been said, and still more in what remains to be said, an engrossing of all the offices, attributes and relations of the Godhead -- as we are interested in them -- in the Son of God alone. God forbid that there should be even in appearance any robbery of the glory due to the Father and the Spirit. A few thoughts may serve now, to set this matter right before in appearance it shall have gone too far wrong.

The attentive reader of the Acts of the Apostles can hardly fail to see that if the title of that sacred book was changed to the Works of the Holy Spirit, instead of the Acts of the Apostles, it would be quite as appropriate as it now is. It opens with a history of the advent of the Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, and proceeds with an account of the fruits of this baptism in the boldness, energy, wisdom, and power of the Apostles, and in the activity, union, happiness, and fellowship of the disciples, and in the triumphs of the gospel. Everywhere it attributes to the Holy Spirit the government and guidance of the apostles. Separating them for their missions, hindering them when they essayed to go wrong, pointing out to them the right way, attending them with power in healing diseases, executing judgment, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, and giving efficacy to their words by falling upon those to whom they spoke while they were yet speaking, and, in general, carrying forward the whole work of God in the apostolic church. The Acts of the Apostles is really a history of the works of the Holy Ghost, just as the four gospels are the history of the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time the attentive reader must also see that the instructions dictated by the Holy Spirit himself; are always and only to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, for salvation. So that while salvation is the work of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ, and not the Holy Spirit, is the object of faith for salvation. And why? Why, simply because the Holy Spirit is the gift of Jesus through faith in his name.

This is the historical teaching of the case. And this is in full harmony with the personal assurances of Jesus concerning it.

"On the last and great day of the feast, (of tabernacles) when Jesus stood (in the temple) and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. Whosoever believeth in me, as the Scriptures have said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," it is added in explanation, "this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (St. John vii: 37-39).

And afterwards, just before his crucifixion, while promising the Holy Ghost as another comforter to his disciples to be given to them in his stead, our Saviour told them, that when he, the Spirit of truth is come,

he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself: but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you. (St. John XVI:13-15).

An intelligent minister of Jesus, whose experience is ripe, precious and full in the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit, in answer to the question, "How do you think of the Holy Spirit?" said "As Jesus Omnipresent." And his answer is in perfect accordance with the sacred word which calls the Holy Spirit the spirit of Jesus.

The modern Italian reformer, Gavazzi, a man of genius, amongst other stirring and significant things, delivered a discourse in London, entitled "Christ the justifier, Christ the sanctifier, Christ the glorifier." At first view this seems to be attributing to Christ the work of the Spirit; and so it is in the strict construction of the words in the form Gavazzi has given them. Literally and strictly the Holy Spirit and not Christ is the justifier, and sanctifier, and glorifier, for he it is who is the actual worker, the power that worketh in us, preparing the heart, producing the faith, and effecting the salvation in every step. But in the sense doubtless intended, Jesus is both justifier, sanctifier and glorifier; that is, he is the object of faith alike for each and all. And as the giver of the Holy Spirit he is the worker also of all.

In a sense perfectly true the artist who takes on likenesses in any form of the modern art of printing by light, is the daguerreotypist, or photographer, or whatever; but in a sense equally true it is the sun itself that does the work. The artist prepares the plate, arranges the instrument and the attitude, lets in the light and shuts it off again at the right moment, but it is the sun itself who by his rays takes every line and feature of the person, and dashes them all upon the plates. So while it is the work of the Spirit to prepare the heart, open it to the light and give the faith of Christ, it is Christ himself whose image is formed in the heart, the hope of glory. And who at the same time is himself the Sun of Righteousness unveiled by the Spirit, whose rays paint the image on the prepared tablet. According to the apostle's saying, that we all beholding Him as in a glass, are changed from glory to glory into his image even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians iii. 18).

Strictly and literally, Jesus is our justification and sanctification and glorification; and the Holy Spirit is our justifier, sanctifier and glorifier. When therefore we trust wholly in Jesus for all, we do not rob the Holy Spirit of the honor justly his due, but we honor him by complying with his teachings and showing his work; for as the Scriptures have said, No man can say that Jesus is the Christ, (understanding what he says,) but by the Holy Ghost. So, likewise, by trusting wholly in Jesus, we honor also the Father. And this for two reasons, not to speak of others at present. First, Jesus is the express image of the Father -- the Father's representative to us, the fulness of the Father made manifest to us in the flesh, and so honoring Jesus we honor the Father.

And then, again, the Father is the author and planner of salvation through faith in his Son; and when we trust in his Son we honor the Father, because we accept of his plan of salvation for us, justify his wisdom, and act, in accordance with his will in the matter. A glance at the official and essential relations of the persons of the Holy Trinity to each other and to us, may throw additional light upon our pathway. Upon this subject flippancy would border upon blasphemy. It is holy ground. He who ventures upon it may well tread with unshod foot, and uncovered head bowed low.

Speculation here, too, is entirely out of place, unsafe, not worth the ink used in the writing. The lamp of human reason is a light too dim to guide us through the profound mysteries of the mode of the divine

existence and the methods of the divine manifestation and working. God alone knows what God is. And God only can communicate to man what man can be made to know of God, especially of the personalities of the Godhead, and of their relations to each other and to us.

Revelation must be our guide. Beyond what God has revealed, we know nothing. The sacred Word is all the light we have in this matter. In a sense scriptural, and true Christ is "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "The express image of the invisible God." "The fulness of Him who filleth all in all." The fulness of the Father and of the Spirit. In a sense equally scriptural and true, the Father is all the fulness of the Godhead; and so also is the Spirit.

The Father is the fulness of the Godhead in invisibility, without form, whom no creature hath seen or can see.

The Son is the fulness of the Godhead embodied, that his creatures may see him, and know him, and trust him.

The Spirit is the fulness of the Godhead in all the active workings, whether of creation, providence, revelation, or salvation, by which God manifests himself to and through the universe.

The counsels of eternity are therefore all hidden in the Father, all manifested by the Son, and all wrought by the Spirit. Let us glance first at the official relations of the persons of the Godhead. To gain something like distinct ideas of these divine relations we need to be lifted up in thought, as the eyes of the patriarch Jacob were at Bethel, by a ladder with its foot on the earth but its top in heaven. Such a ladder the Bible sets up before us in the names and similies of the persons and work, especially of the Son and the Spirit. The Son is called the Word, the Logos. Now a word before it has taken on articulate form is thought. The word is the express image of the thought, the fulness of the thought made manifest. So the Son is the fulness of the Godhead made manifest. The thought is the fulness of the word not yet made manifest. So the Father is the fulness of the Godhead invisible. Again the Spirit is like the thought expressed and gone forth to do its work of enlightening, convincing, changing. When a thought has been formed into words, risen to the tongue, fallen from the lips upon other ears, into other hearts, it works there its own full work. So the Holy Spirit is the fulness of the Godhead at work fulfilling the designs of God.

THE FATHER IS LIKE THE THOUGHT UNEXPRESSED.

THE SON IS LIKE THE THOUGHT EXPRESSED IN WORDS.

THE SPIRIT IS LIKE THE WORD WORKING IN OTHER MINDS.

Another of the names of Jesus will give the same analogies in a light not less striking -- The Sun of Righteousness.

All the light of the sun in the heavens was once hidden in the invisibility of primal darkness; and after this, the light now blazing in the orb of day was, when first the command when forth, Let light be! and light was, at most only the diffused haze of the gray dawn of the morn of creation out of the darkness of chaotic night, without form, or body, or centre, or radiance, or glory. But when separated from the darkness and centered in the sun, then in its glorious glitter it became so resplendent that none but the eagle eye could bear to look it in the face.

But then again its rays falling aslant through earth's atmosphere and vapors, gladdens all the world with the same light, dispelling the winter, and the cold, and the darkness; starting Spring forth in floral beauty, and Summer in vernal luxuriance, and Autumn laden with golden treasures for the garner.

THE FATHER IS AS THE LIGHT INVISIBLE.

THE SON IS AS THE LIGHT EMBODIED.

THE SPIRIT IS AS THE LIGHT SHED DOWN.

One of the similies for the blessed influences of the SPIRIT while giving the self-same official relations of the persons of the Godhead, to each other and to us, may illustrate them still further -- The Dew -- The dew of Hermon -- the dew on the mown meadow. Before the dew gathers at all in drops, it hangs over all the landscape in invisible vapor, omnipresent but unseen. By and by as the night wanes into morning, and as the temperature sinks and touches the dew point the invisible becomes the visible, the embodied; and, as the sun rises, it stands in diamond drops trembling and glittering in the sun's young beams in pearly beauty upon leaf and flower, over all the face of nature.

But now again, a breeze springs up, the breath of heaven is wafted gently along, shaking leaf and flower, and in a moment the pearly drops are invisible again. But where now? Fallen at the root of herb and flower to impart new life, freshness, vigor to all it touches.

THE FATHER IS LIKE THE DEW IN INVISIBLE VAPOR.

THE SON IS LIKE THE DEW GATHERED IN BEAUTEOUS FORM.

THE SPIRIT IS LIKE THE DEW FALLEN TO THE SEAT OF LIFE.

Yet one more of these Bible likenings -- by no means exhausting them -- will not be unwelcome or useless -- the Rain.

Rain, like the dew, floats in invisibility, and omnipresence at the first, over all, around all. Seen by none. While it remains in its invisibility, the earth parches, clods cleave together, the ground cracks open, the sun pours down his burning heat, the winds lift up the dust in circling whirls, and rolling clouds, and famine gaunt and greedy stalks through the land, followed by pestilence and death. By and by, the eager watcher sees the little hand-like cloud rising far out over the sea. It gathers, gathers, gathers; comes and spreads as it comes, in majesty over the whole heavens: -- But all is parched and dry and dead yet, upon earth.

But now comes a drop, and drop after drop, quicker, faster -- the shower, the rain -- sweeping on, and giving to earth all the treasures .of the clouds -- clods open, furrows soften, springs, rivulets, rivers, swell and fill, and all the land is gladdened again with restored abundance.

THE FATHER IS LIKE TO THE INVISIBLE VAPOR.

THE SON IS AS THE LADEN CLOUD AND PALLING RAIN.

THE SPIRIT IS THE RAIN -- FALLEN AND WORKING IN REFRESHING POWER.

These likenings are all imperfect. They rather hide than illustrate the tri-personality of the one God, for they are not persons but things, poor and earthly at best, to represent the living personalities of the living

God. So much they may do, however, as to illustrate the official relations of each to the others and of each and all to us. And more. They may also illustrate the truth that all the fulness of Him who filleth all in all, dwells in each person of the Triune God.

THE FATHER IS ALL THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD INVISIBLE.

THE SON IS ALL THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD MANIFESTED.

THE SPIRIT IS ALL THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD MAKING MANIFEST.

The persons are not mere offices, or modes of revelation, but living persons of the living God.*

Now as to the essential relations of the three, the Scriptures speak of each precisely as if each were living person, and not a mere official relation of the one person in three different connections, or adaptations. And we are also fully justified in the belief that in the personalities of the living God, in whom is all the fulness of all things, society exists. The beau-ideal of society as it is but imperfectly wrought out in the social relations of angels and men. Society in its first and highest form, first and best of all in the Godhead. And society amongst the creatures of God in its best estate, but a feeble and yet a noble image of its blessedness and glory as it is in the perfect social relations of the perfect three in one.

To go fully into the Scripture proofs, justifying these statements, would break the thread of our general course. To say this much seemed necessary lest the reader should be stumbled by the thought that the glory due to the Father and the Spirit was all given to the Son. Enough has been said to show the way clear for full trust in Jesus for full salvation. There is no fear of honoring the Father or the Spirit too little by honoring the Son too much. The deeper and fuller and stronger our trust in Jesus, the sweeter and richer the indwelling presence of the Spirit will be. And the more we have of the indwelling presence and in-working power of the Spirit, the higher our love and veneration will rise for the Father. Having the Son we have the Father also. And trusting the Son we receive the Spirit who reveals to us the Father and the Son. Full trust in Jesus therefore, brings the full revenue of honor due to the Father and the Son and the Spirit, while, from the Triune God's grace, mercy and peace are multiplied to us, and so the angelic song is fulfilled --- "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men."

To return for a moment to the Apostle, and to the Pentecostal scene: Once when Peter was in self-confident mood the Master told him, that Satan had desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat, but that he had prayed for him that his faith should not fail: and he added the prophetic charge: "When thou art converted -- that is converted again, for already long before Peter had been converted -- strengthen thy brethren."

Satan did have the Apostle, and did sift him, too, but the prayer of Jesus was answered nevertheless. Peter was sifted but saved, as many others have been. The chaff of self-confidence was all threshed off and winnowed away, leaving the wheat in its naked integrity.

By and by, on the day of Pentecost, the time came for the apostle's second conversion. The Holy Spirit -- the promise of the Father was received by the Son and shed down upon him and his fellow disciples. Fire crowns sat upon their heads, and with other tongues they spake of the wonderful works of God. These tongues of fire and tongues of eloquence were, however, only the outside symbols and the outspoken manifestations of the glorious work wrought in their hearts. They knew something of Jesus before -- but now for the first they began to comprehend the length and breadth and depth and height -- and to know

the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and to be filled with all the fulness of God. And now for the first the wisdom of God in the plan of redemption began to unfold to their view. Great as were the external signs of that work the internal work itself was far greater. And it was the beginning of a life-long process, in the course of which, more and more, from day to day, the things of God were unfolded to them, and more and more they were transformed into the image of Jesus.

This for themselves. Then also began the promised power, with them of witnessing effectively for Jesus. That very day, what a work was wrought by means of their testimony.

The fame of these things was noised abroad, from street to street through the city, and multitudes thronged to the temple to see and hear these strange things for themselves. Many believed and received like baptism from on high. Others mocked, saying, "These men are filled with new wine." This charge of drunkenness -- a blasphemy against God who wrought it, and a slander upon the disciples in whom the glorious excitement was wrought -- brought Peter quickly to his feet. Now he was ready to obey the Master's sacred command. He rose amidst his brethren -- in the full strength, and glow, and boldness of his new conversion -- to strengthen and defend them, and give glory to God.

The adversaries were silenced by his arguments, and cut to the heart by the charges boldly brought against them as the betrayers and murderers of the Lord of glory -- the Lord Jesus, who had shed down the Holy Spirit whose works they saw and heard.

Some gnashed on him in their rage, but others were stricken down into contrition, and when in broken-hearted penitence, they earnestly inquired what they should do, Peter directed them at once to Jesus as the sole object of trust, telling them to "Repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," and assuring them that they should "receive the Holy Ghost." Thousands believed, and obeyed, and realized the promise in their own happy experience.

A great work was wrought on that day -- a work to be had in everlasting remembrances. Many were then for the first time convinced of their sins and converted to God. Many more who had already been converted under the preaching of John the Baptist, and of Jesus himself, and of the twelve, and the seventy, were converted anew, and filled with faith and the Holy Ghost. And one thing may be safely affirmed of both alike, those converted again, and those now converted for the first, that in every case, trust in Jesus was the sole condition of the work wrought in them.

The apostle Peter did not say to the one, Believe in the Lord Jesus and ye shall be converted, and to the other, Watch, pray, struggle, read, fast, work, and you shall be sanctified. But to one and all he said, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. And yet another thing may be as safely affirmed of them all alike; that every one who did really believe and obey did actually receive the Holy Spirit, whether in the power of first or second conversion. Wherefore as the sum of all, let it be settled as truth never to be doubted, that for salvation in any stage or degree

Jesus alone is The Way,

And Faith alone is the Means.

Connected with this line of thought there is one thing more to be noted, which must conclude this chapter. There is often a fearfulness in addressing prayer to Christ and to the Holy Spirit. Frequently the devout

and earnest worshipper appeals to Christ and then checks himself as if it were wrong, and turns in his appeal to the Father in the name of the Son, as if afraid that the appeal to the Son might be offensive to the Father.

This fear is groundless. When, in the days of his flesh, Jesus was appealed to, whether for light and instruction, or for healing power, or whatever, none were ever checked by him for it. Peter sinking in the water cried out, "Lord save or I perish!" and Jesus rebuked him for his unbelief, but not for calling upon him instead of the Father. The Syrophenician woman appealed to him in behalf of her daughters and although the Lord tried her faith exceedingly, first by silence, then by saying "It is not meet to give the children's bread to dogs;" yet when she persevered, and said, "Truth Lord," you are right, I am not worthy, "Yet even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table," Jesus commended her, saying, "O woman! great is thy faith! Be it unto thee even as thou wilt;" and her daughter was healed from that hour.

And when, after the Lord's resurrection and ascension to glory, he met the persecuting Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, and rebuked him, saying, "Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou me?" Saul, fallen upon his face, and stricken blind by the glory of the Lord, tremblingly inquired, "Who art thou, Lord?" The answer was, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Then Saul, obedient to the heavenly vision, asked, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" And Jesus answered, saying, "Go into the city and there it shall be told thee what thou must do." Then after three days, Ananias came to him, saying, "Saul! Jesus who met thee in the way hath sent me to thee, that thou mayest receive thy sight;" upon which as it were scales fell from his eyes. Now in all this there was no going round about, no feeling of necessity for it, no rebuke from the Lord for not doing it. When the earnest soul appeals directly to Jesus it will not be rebuked or sent away empty. And the same may be said of appeals to the Father direct, or to the Spirit.

When, in the language of that precious hymn, Rock of Ages, we in the same breath praise and pray:

"Rock of Ages cleft for me

Let me hide myself in thee,"

We are in the spirit of the gospel and in the line of perfect propriety. And so when we at one and the same moment invoke the Spirit and make melody unto God with heart and voice, saying:

"Come Holy Spirit Heavenly Dove,

With all Thy quickening powers,

Kindle a flame of sacred love

In these cold hearts of ours."

We are in no more danger of offending the Father than when, in the words put upon our lips by the blessed Saviour himself, we pray,

"Our Father who art in heaven."

In each and every case of the three the appeal is direct to the person of the trinity addressed, and in all alike proper, amid in all alike availing, if the plea is the fervent effectual outgoing of the heart in its fulness.

* Olshausen in his commentary, vol. ii. p. 310, Am. edition, on John 1:3, makes a profound suggestion of the relation between the Father and the Son, well worthy of being expanded, and weighed with all candor and care.

On critical grounds, as inadmissible without manifest violence to the text, he discards the Sabellian idea of no distinction, save that of office, between the Father and the Son; and also the Arian idea, on the other extreme, of a distinction not only, but of an inequality both of honors and powers, the Son being intermediate between God and man, a sort of divine creature.

And then putting together the two definite doctrines well established by the Scriptures, the unity of God, and the perfect equality of the Father and the Son in honors, and in properties, together with the clear distinction between the two, shown by the fact that the Son was not only God, but was also with God in the beginning; he remarks that these afford an idea of the relation of the Son to the Father, viz., that the Son is the self-manifestation of the Father to himself, or the perfect conception of himself imaged forth to himself. "The perfect God forms a perfect conception of himself, his conception is essence, and his conception of himself is an essence like himself." These are his words.

A moment's consideration of the difference between God and man, as to the embodiment of their respective conceptions, will show the profound beauty of this suggestion of the learned commentator, whether his idea shall be received as true or not.

The conceptions of men are only imperfectly realized in their productions. A man's own conception of himself may be partially embodied in a statue chizzled from the marble. But however perfect he may make it as a work of art, it is all imperfection as a realization of his own conception of himself. It is only a cold, lifeless, colorless piece of marble at last, and not at all the living being, bodied in his own idea of what he himself is. He may make a better representation of himself on the canvas, if his is the skill of the painter, and the genius of the Master but the best he can do after all, with the genius of a Raphael, or a Reynolds, will be no more than a painted representation of the picture of his own real self, in his own living conception.

Better still he may do, if his is the pen of the ready writer and the genius of a Shakespeare to depict in action, by word and deed, his own true character; but even then, his is only a pen and ink man in a book at last, and not at all the living man in the living world, of his own true conception of himself. Even if represented by the skill of a Keene, or a Kemble, on the stage to the very life, it is only a mock of reality, and not reality at all.

But God's conception of himself, is himself perfectly bodied forth to himself, and with himself, a living, acting being, or his conception of himself realized in actual existence, and not in mere representation.

God's ideas embodied, are all realities, not representations. His idea of a rock for example, when embodied, is a rock, and not a mere picture, or description, or imitation of a rock, as any representation by man of his idea of a rock would be. God's idea of a world when embodied is a world, and not a papier mache globe, or an outspread map, or an elaborate description. God's idea of the great orrery above and around us, embodied as it is, is this mighty universe of real suns and systems, and not a mere celestial map, or a magic lantern representation.

God's conception of living beings, and living scenes, such as have come upon the stage, from that first scene of love and loveliness in Eden, and the fall, onward to the end when the recovery shall be

celebrated in the Eden above, embodied is not a mere poetic, dramatic, and scenic embodiment, like Milton's and Shakespeare's conceptions, but the realities as conceived, coming on the stage of actual life, in the solemn march of truthful existence.

Just so God the Father's conception of himself, is himself realized in form, or imaged forth, not in mere representation by description, but in actual living existence, a divine person, as real an existence as he is himself. And this living being, the embodiment of the Father's own conception of himself is the Son. The Son of God, and he embodied in the man, incarnated and born of the virgin is also the son of man, as well as the Son of God.

And in the same way God the Father's own conception of himself, working in the actual process of creating, sustaining, and redeeming -- of himself working all things according to the counsel of his own will is, himself, his other self so to speak, a real being, truly personal as either himself or his Son, with every attribute, natural and moral, all complete, entire, wanting nothing. And this being, the God working all things is the Holy Spirit; and he like the Son, is both coequal and coeternal with the Father.

This is the commentator's suggestion expanded. Weigh it at your leisure. If we accept it as truth, it will harmonize some things, in the Sacred Word apparently in conflict, and free others from obscurity. Nevertheless in this matter of the essential relations of the divine persons in the Holy Trinity, we do well to be not over confident, not at all dictatorial or alogmatic, but modest and moderate.

In this view, we can easily see how the Scripture order of the persons of the Trinity come to be as they are in the record, and always so. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, because from the Father proceed both the Son and the Holy Ghost. And we can see how the three are each equal to each and to all, for the Son is the Father in all his fulness imaged forth. And the Spirit is the Father working or making manifest the Deity as imaged forth in the Son, and all the planes of the Deity in the works of creation, having the Son for the centre of all.

And we can see at the same time, how the Son though equal with the Father, can yet be subordinate to him, working only the works given him to do, and doing always the will of the Father, and being in fact less than the Father -- that is officially less -- because his office work in the Divine economy is subordinate, although all power is given him on earth, and in heaven. And we can see how, while Jesus is the giver of the Holy Spirit to all who believe on his name, yet the Holy Spirit is promised as from the Father, for he is both from the Father, and yet he is the ascension gift of the Son.

And we can see how the Holy Spirit can be, and is equal with both the Father and the Son, while yet he is officially subordinate to both, sent by the one given by the other, and glorifying both, but not speaking of himself.

And we can see how the Son and the Spirit can be truly said both to proceed from God, and yet to have been with God, and to have been God from the beginning, that is from eternity. For from eternity, God's conception of himself both as embodied and imaged forth in the word, and as working out his own counsels in the created universe, was perfect, and these conceptions were perfectly realized, and were the Son and the Spirit.

And finally, to come back to our starting point, the paradox which gave birth to this suggestion, we see the consistency of the apostle's sayings, that in the beginning the Word was with God, and was God, and the same was in the beginning with God. For from the first the word was formed in the Infinite mind, and was

the Infinite mind embodied in the form, and imaged forth to itself, at one and the same time himself God, and yet with God.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-edwin-boardman/for-me-what-then-must-i-do/>

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