

Resource Sheet 52

Activity 1

“This I give you to share, and to defend all your life, the one Godhead and power, found in the three in unit, and comprising the three separately; not unequal, in substances or natures, neither increased nor diminished by superiorities nor inferiorities; in every respect equal, in every respect the same; just as the beauty and the greatness of the heavens is one; the infinite conjunction of three infinite ones, each God when considered in himself; as the Father, so the Son; as the Son, so the Holy Spirit; the three one God when contemplated together; each God because consubstantial; one God because of the monarchy . No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am illumined by the splendor of the three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one. When I think of anyone of the three I think of him as the whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking escapes me. I cannot grasp the greatness of that one so as to attribute a greater greatness to the rest. When I contemplate the three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the undivided light.”

– Gregory Nazianzen, Orations 40.41, as quoted by Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 378

<https://ericcsmith.wordpress.com/2010/05/28/gregory-of-nazianzus-on-the-trinity/>

Nor should we minimize the Father's rank as ultimate cause, insofar as he is Father and begetter (for he would be the cause of minor and unworthy beings, if he were not cause of the divinity that we recognize in the Son and the Spirit). If, then, we must necessarily hold on to the one God, while confessing the three hypostases, surely we must speak of three Persons, each one with its own distinctive properties. So, according to my argument, the unity of God would be preserved, and Son and Spirit would be referred back to one original cause, but not compounded or blended with each other; their unity would be based on the single, self-identical movement and will of the divine being, if I may put it that way, and on identity of substance. (20.6-7)

KEY QUESTIONS

1. What does the “monarchy” of the Father mean?
2. How does St Gregory relate the “one” and the “three” in the Trinity?
3. There are three hypostases (persons) – Father, Son and Holy Spirit but a unity that is guaranteed by the Father and one substance shared equally by all three. How does the doctrine of the Trinity combine the belief in one God with the experience and revelation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?
4. Those who deny the divinity of Christ and the Spirit are not Christians. What happens to the gospel when the Trinity is disbelieved?