

16 - The Great Cappadocians

“...that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

~ 1 John 1:3 ~

I. Who Were They?

A. Macrina (327-379)

B. Basil of Caesarea (330-79, brother of Gregory and Macrina)

C. Gregory of Nyssa (331-95, brother of Basil and Macrina)

“Ye that are strong with all might in the inner man ought by rights to carry on the struggle against the enemies of the truth, and not to shrink from the task.”

D. Gregory of Nazianzus (329-89)

II. Why Were They Important

A. The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

1. His Personality

2. His Deity

3. His Equality

Gregory Nazianzen: “Is the Spirit God? Yes, indeed. Then is He consubstantial? Of course, sine He is God.

4. Objection: If the Holy Spirit is homoousion with the Father, does that give the Father two sons?

a. Personal Properties (WCF 2.3)

1) Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding;

2) The Son is eternally begotten of the Father

3) The Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son

B. Biblical Exposition of the Doctrines

1. The Great Cappadocian Contribution here: clarifying the language “*una substantia tres personae*.”

a. Nature/Essence

b. Person

Basil: “*Everything that the Father is is seen in the Son, and everything that the Son is belongs to the Father. The Son in His entirety abides in the Father, and in return possesses the Father in entirety in Himself. Thus the hypostasis of the Son is, so to speak, the form and presentation by which the Father is known, and the Father's hypostasis is recognized in the form of the Son.*”

2. Textual Basis for the Doctrine of the Trinity

a. Unity of the Godhead

1) Gen 1:1; Deut 6:4-5; Deut 32:39; Isaiah 45:18-22

2) Mark 12:29-31; John 17:3; Eph 4:5-6; 1 Tim 2:5; James 2:19

b. Plurality in the Godhead

1) Gen 1:2; Ps 33:6; Ps 45:6(see Heb 1:8-9); Ps 102:25-27 (see Heb 1:10-12); Prov 8:12-31; Is 48:16

2) Matt 28:18-20; Mk 1:9-13; Eph 1:1-14; Rev 1:4-5

c. Deity and Personality of Each Person

III. What Lessons Do They Teach Us?

A. The Holy Defense of the Faith

1. Necessity

2. Manner

B. The Immeasurable Impact of God-honoring Family Relationships

C. The Gracious Wonder of God's Providence

D. The Purity of Doctrine and Devotion