

Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology and its Philosophical Background in *Ad Graecos* and *Ad Ablabium*

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Gregory of Nyssa's short treatises, *Ad Graecos* and *Ad Ablabium*, —besides the *Contra Eunomium*—are most significant for his Trinitarian thought which offered a wider theological context for a particular interpretation of Nicaea's terminology and which provided the foundation for the orthodoxy defined in the early 380s. His thought must naturally be affected by contemporary theological factional rivalries and supported by his understanding of ancient Greek philosophy. Thus, in this paper, firstly, some interpretations about the philological backgrounds of these two texts are briefly presented. On the basis of this outline, secondly, some arguments in the main parts of *Ad Graecos* and *Ad Ablabium* are analyzed in detail to exemplify the philosophical framework and strategy of this Cappadocian author's Trinitarian theology.

Ad Graecos opens as follows: If the name "God" were indicative of the Person (*πρόσωπον*), then we would, saying three Persons, necessarily also say three gods. But if the name "God" is indicative of the *οὐσία*, then, confessing one *οὐσία* of the holy Trinity, we consequently say one God since "God" is the one name of the one *οὐσία*. This is the heart of the matter. To say that God is one *οὐσία* in three *πρόσωπα* does not necessarily become tritheism. Yet, we immediately face a difficulty when applying human analogy (Peter, Paul, Barnabas) to clarify the Trinity. Gregory denies the possibility of saying that Peter, Paul, Barnabas are three *ἄνθρωποι* (*Ad Gr.* 23.13f.). Why is it wrong to say so? Gregory uses the term "accidents" (*συμβεβηκότες*, *Ad Gr.* 31.20) in reference to *πρόσωπον*. And he identifies the individual (*ἄτομον*) as a bundle of accidental qualities, without their substratum or this man to which "such and such" can be added. Therefore, while "*ἄνθρωπος*" indicates its *οὐσία*, proper name such as Peter indicates its *πρόσωπον* or *ὑπόστασις*.

In *Ad Ablabium*, Gregory uses an account of God's unitary power (*δύναμις*) and activity (*ἐνέργεια*) to resolve the paradox of the divine diversity and unity. He insists that the action of the three divine persons is shown to be one action, not three actions, and that the power that originates them must also be one. The divine nature and power are thus shown to be undivided and not to be individuated as is human nature. We find that God's one power works always by a unitary causal sequenced activity of three persons. The divine action is the will of the Father which proceeds through the Son to the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is inappropriate to speak of three gods, because we do not see three distinct actions in the divine activity.