

Oration 31 (on the deity of the Holy Spirit)

Gregory of Nazianzus)

A Brief Outline from TGC Learn

By Ben Rogers

The main issue of Oracion 31: does the Scriptural data support the statement that the Holy Spirit is God (*theos*)?

The Argument:

1. The Logical Defense of the deity of the Spirit:
 - a. The Creator/creature distinction
 - i. Objection: if he is the Creator, then he must be either ingenerate or begotten
 - ii. Answer: No, he proceeds (can't think in earthly categories)
 - iii. Objection: If he proceeds, then he must be inferior to the Son (who was begotten)
 - iv. Answer: No, the language of proceeding and begotten refer to personal distinctions, not rank
 - v. Objection: there cannot be 2 different things from the same source
 - vi. Answer: Why not? Adam, Eve, and Seth
 - vii. Objection: Who has ever worshipped the Spirit?
 - viii. Answer: fuller answer later, but we worship *in* the Spirit. In fact, given the equal rank and equal deity inherent in all three, the worship of 1 is the worship of all 3
 - b. The Word
 - i. The Pneumatomachians cannot sustain the charge of tritheism without condemning themselves as ditheists
 - ii. Though there are 3 objects of belief, they derive from the single whole and have reference to it – “the Godhead exists undivided in divided beings”
 - iii. Objection: this makes you a polytheist, like the non-Christians
 - iv. Answer: No, there is no real/true unity among the pagan gods
 - v. Objection: consubstantial things are counted together, thus you are tritheists
 - vi. Answer: number indicates amount, not nature
 - vii. Objection: ok, 3 things of the same nature then
 - viii. Answer: consubstantial things are not always counted together and nonconsubstantial things are counted together. If in both cases nouns are used along with the numerals, what is left of your doctrinaire pronouncement?
2. The Scriptural Defense of the deity of the Spirit
 - a. The fact that the title “God” is never directly attributed to the Spirit is no obstacle to worshipping the Spirit as God

- i. Answer: Sometimes the Bible mentions things that are not factual (anthropomorphic language), and sometimes it does not mention that that are factual (ingenerate, unoriginate, etc.)
 - ii. Answer: the Pneumatomachians use terms are derived from passages that imply certain ideas without specifically naming those ideas (ingenerate, etc.)
 - iii. Answer: don't hide behind the *letters* of the Scripture to obscure the *meaning* of the Scripture

- b. The Historical Argument
 - i. Three remarkable transitions in redemptive history
 - 1. The OC: idols → Law
 - 2. The NC: Law → Gospel
 - 3. Pentecost: Gospel → Era of the Spirit
 - ii. Historical Progression of the Doctrine of God
 - 1. The OC: manifest the Father clearly, the Son dimly
 - 2. The NC: manifest the Son clearly, the Spirit dimly
 - 3. Pentecost: manifest the Spirit clearly
 - iii. Progressive Revelation
 - 1. The Savior had certain truths that could not yet be borne by his disciples (Jn. 16:12)
 - 2. The full deity of the Spirit is one of these truths
 - 3. The Godhead of the Spirit is being revealed now that the truth about the Son has been believed (Nicaea 325?)

- c. The Worship of the Church Argument
 - i. If the Spirit is not to be worshipped, how can he deify me through baptism?
 - ii. If the Spirit is to be worshipped, why not adored?
 - iii. If the Spirit is to be adored, how can he fail to be God?
 - iv. Golden chain of salvation: rebirth → new creating → recognition of the worth of him who effected it

- d. The Scriptural Argument (classical argument for deity)
 - i. Connection to Christ
 - ii. Divine works
 - iii. Divine titles
 - iv. Divine Attributes
 - v. Acts 5

- e. Illustrations of the Trinity in Unity
 - i. Source, Spring, River
 - ii. Sun, Beam, Light
 - iii. Goodbye to illustrations

3. Summary: "To the best of my powers I will persuade all men to worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the single Godhead and power, because to him belong all glory, honor, and might for ever and ever."