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The Contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers to the Formulation of the Trinitarian Doctrine

Maximilian PAL

Maximilian PAL

“Franciscan Catholic Theological Institut” in Roman, Romania

Email: maximilianpal@yahoo.it

Abstract

The three great Church Fathers, originally from Cappadocia, who were active in the second half of the 4th century, St. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, are three gigantic figures in the history of Christian thought. It can be said that, on the dogmatic theological level, they had a common goal, which they pursued with insistence and tenacity: that is, to bring to a definitive solution the thorny Arian question, which had caused so many problems for the Church during the entire 4th century. They were personally different from each other: Basil was predominantly a man of action; Gregory of Nazianzus, a keen theologian and a brilliant orator; Gregory of Nyssa, a profound thinker and mystic, but all three made a decisive contribution to the Trinitarian doctrine against Arianism that spread throughout the Asia Minor region to continental Europe.

Keywords

Cappadocian Fathers: Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa; Arius, Arianism, Eunomia, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Logos, Trinitarian doctrine, ousia and hypostasis, homousios, substance, person

I. Introduction

We cannot understand the contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers to the defeat of Arianism, nor the contribution they made to the formulation of the Trinitarian doctrine, without dealing in the introduction of this article with the main doctrinal problems that animated Arian theology, which was subsequently opposed and condemned in the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople¹.

In the years before the Council of Nicaea, Arius was a priest of the Church of Alexandria. Born in 256 in Libya and educated in theology, Arius opposed Bishop Alexander on a theological issue of great importance because it was linked to Trinitarian theology². “Originally, Arianism was a discussion within the Church of Alexandria between two theological tendencies which were both part of its tradition (...)”³.

Arius starts from two false principles which allow him to construct his theological system in a coherent and logical way, namely: the only uncreated being is God the Father (*agenetos*) and the Father alone is the principle of all created things⁴. Although it seeks only to express the ontological superiority of the Father, considering Him as the sole principle of beings leads to the ontological devaluation of the Logos; the Logos “is not eternal, partaking to the Father’s eternity, uncreated as the Father is, for the Father is the One from whom he received life and being”⁵. Even if Arius does not clearly state that “there was a time when the Son did not exist”, precautions such as those contained in the statement that the Logos was born “before all time, before all ages” and in the specification that, though created, he is a perfect divine creature - such precautions are unnecessary.

¹ *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, Dehoniane, Bologna², 1991, *Concilium Nicaeum* I (325), pp. 5-19; *Concilium Constantinopolitanum* I (381), pp. 24-35.

² Augustin-Martin FLICHE, *Storia della Chiesa dalle origini ai nostri giorni*, vol. III/1, S.A.I.E., Torino, 1972, p. 90; Henri-Irénée MARROU, *Biserica in Antichitatea târzie 303 – 604*, coll. *Logos*, Teora, București, 1999, p. 40.

³ Henri-Irénée MARROU, *Biserica in Antichitatea târzie...*, p. 40.

⁴ Johannes QUASTEN, *Patrologia*, vol. II, *Dal Concilio di Nicea a quello di Calcedonia*, transl. Nello Beghin Marietti, Casale Monferrato, Torino, 1980, pp. 11-16; Augustin-Martin FLICHE, *Storia della Chiesa dalle origini ai nostri giorni...*, pp. 91-92.

⁵ “Lettera ad Alessandro”, in: ENZO BELLINI, *Alessandro e Ario. Un esempio di conflitto tra fede e ideologia*, Jaka Book, Milano, 1974, pp. 50-51.

The bishop of Alexandria, following a synod held between 320-321, together with other hierarchs, would speak out against the heresy of Arius, the latter and his supporters being excommunicated. In his *Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia*, the heretic complains that he is being persecuted for his ideas, according to which he maintains that the Son has a beginning, unlike the Father, and that the Son comes from nothing, because he is neither part of God nor something subordinate⁶. Taking refuge in Palestine with Eusebius of Caesarea, he then goes to Nicomedia where he will write *Thalia*, a work in prose and verse, which is also called *the Banquet*, in which he clearly explains the relationship between the Father and the Son: since God was not always Father, therefore the Son did not always exist, but He was created by the will of the Father, being a creature like the others⁷. The Son is God's first creature, His creation having as its purpose the creation of the world. Being absolutely pure, God can only create the material world through an intermediary, called the Son, the Logos or Wisdom, for matter is in itself evil and would defile the absolute God.

According to St. Athanasius, Arius states that the Logos is not true God by being, but only by participation in grace⁸. Therefore, He is called God *by participation* and is Son only *by adoption*. According to nature, the Father and the Son are completely distinct and infinitely unlike, and names such as spirit, wisdom, truth, logos etc. are deductions or mere designations.

The Son is called Logos by deduction and is Son by grace. As St. Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, summarizes in a letter preserved in the *Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen*, according to the doctrine of Arius, the Son "is abusively called Logos and Wisdom, since He also exists through God's own Logos and through the Wisdom of God, by which God made all things and Himself".

The convocation of the Council of Nicaea was necessary to clarify the theological issues concerning the nature of the Son. Nicaea did not invent a new content of faith, but it did prevent the Christian preaching about Jesus from losing its significance. The symbol of faith formulated at the

⁶ "Lettera ad Eusebio di Nicomedia", in: Enzo BELLINI, *Alessandro e Ario...*, p. 48.

⁷ "Talia", in: Enzo BELLINI, *Alessandro e Ario...*, p. 36.

⁸ *Against the Arians*, I, 6.

Council of Nicaea condemns Arius and clarifies the relationship between God the Father and the Son and the faith in the Holy Spirit. *We believe in the Holy Spirit*⁹.

The 4th century, then, through a series of councils, further shaped the Trinitarian doctrine. From 360 onwards, the theological question shifted from the Father and the Son to the Holy Spirit. Both in the question of the divinity of the Holy Spirit and in the formulation of the Trinity as having one essence and three hypostases, the contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers will be fundamental. Saint Basil the Great plays a very important role in the development of this theme, which he treats with great conceptual clarity.

St Gregory of Nyssa made another important contribution and played an important role in the development of the theological-philosophical language. The vocabulary of Saint Gregory of Nyssa is impregnated by the classical authors. He makes it clear that there are differences between *ousia* and *hypostasis*. In this way he avoids attributing the same meaning to the two terms so as not to fall into the error of the Sabellians who considered that a single substance indicates a single person, nor into that of the Arians nor into that of the pneumatomachians who considered that three different persons indicate three different natures.

Proceeding along the same lines, a third Cappadocian, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, succeeds with his eloquence and culture in formulating with major clarity and finally resolving this problem by concluding that the Holy Spirit is God equal to the other two persons. He always uses sensitive images, which he takes either from philosophical authors or directly from nature, making it clear that he will never be able to say everything about the Holy Spirit, even if he gives these examples, thereby acknowledging the untouchable mystery of the Holy Trinity.

⁹ *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, p. 5; “Lettera sinodale del concilio di Nicea alle chiese d’Egitto”, in: *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, pp. 16-19: “First of all the impiety and perversity of Arius and his followers was examined in the presence of the most pious Emperor Constantine. We unanimously decided to condemn his impious doctrine and the blasphemous expressions with which he expressed himself concerning the Son of God: for he maintained that he came from nothing and that before birth he did not exist, that he was capable of good and evil, in short that the Son of God is a creature ...”.

Noting the impossibility of human intelligence to grasp the infinite, Gregory declares his desire to free himself from all images of the Holy Trinity and to live by faith alone, taking the Holy Spirit as his guide. It is appropriate to point out that Saint Gregory, following Saint Basil the Great, went further by overcoming the contrasting theories, succeeding in leaving his mark on the Council of Constantinople.

II. Saint Basil the Great

The first of the three Cappadocian Fathers to fight against Arianism is Saint Basil the Great¹⁰. Arianism was condemned at the Council of Nicaea in 325 but did not disappear for good, for in the years after the Council Arianism spread rapidly, the eastern part of the Roman Empire becoming majority Arian in just a few decades, being backed by the emperors who followed after Constantine the Great. Constantine himself, after initially accepting the decisions of the Council of Nicaea and exiling Arius, brought Arius back from exile and surrounded himself with Arian bishops. After his death, subsequent emperors gave great privileges to the Arians, consisting of land, churches and money. Non-Arian bishops and metropolitans were replaced by Arians, some bishops switched their churches to the Arian

¹⁰ Born in 330 in Caesarea Cappadocia, the capital of the province of Cappadocia, into a wealthy Christian family, he received a brilliant education at schools in Antioch (Syria), Constantinople and Athens. This was made possible by the cessation of persecution of Christians under Emperor Constantine (306-337). Basil studied philosophy, astronomy, geometry, medicine and rhetoric with renowned teachers of the time. His fellow student was Gregory of Nazianzus. During his years of study at the Academy of Athens, the two would form a lifelong friendship. Together, the two Cappadocians would face many hardships and dangers. At the age of 29 he received baptism and after many pilgrimages, he returned to Cappadocia to become a presbyter and in 370 was elected Metropolitan of Cappadocia and Bishop of Caesarea. Through his writings and sermons Basil fought against Arianism and tried to demonstrate the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. On 1 January 379 Basil died in Caesarea. After his death he received the appellation “the Great” in recognition of his merits for interpreting and defending Christian doctrine. Ioan G. COMAN, “Personalitatea Sfântului Vasile cel Mare”, in: Alexandru ELIAN (coord.), *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, închinare la 1600 de ani de la săvârșirea sa*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1980, pp. 25-31.

side to keep their positions. The Arians also tried to get Basil the Great to change his theological views and baited him with all sorts of promises to get him to change sides. None of this convinced Basil to renounce his faith, so the Arians turned to threats and tried to remove him as Metropolitan of Cappadocia.

Emperor Valens, who was an Arian, also tried to persuade Basil to become an Arian by promising him all sorts of privileges, but Basil remained adamant. Seeing that he failed to convince him, Valens decided to exile him and put a more obedient metropolitan in his place, but he never succeeded, because in August 378 he died in a battle against the Visigoths¹¹. After the death of Valens, Theodosius came to power, an emperor who supported the Niceans, and Basil enjoyed a period of relative peace. Through his writings and sermons, Basil fought against Arianism and tried to demonstrate the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. In addition to his theological work, he also carried out a rich charitable activity, founding a community centre in Caesarea called “Vasiliada”, which included a church, hospitals, homes for the poor, and craft workshops that provided jobs for the inhabitants of the province. His concern for the poor made him immensely popular, but he always remained humble and without arrogance¹².

II.1. Trinitarian doctrine

The teaching of St. Basil the Great is based on the defence of the doctrine of the Council of Nicaea against the various Arian groups. What is the first step that Basil takes in the vast field of Trinitarian theology? The first step is to distinguish the truth we believe from its expression. This is very difficult, though it seems so simple. It is not easy to understand that the act of our faith does not stop at terminology, but at the realities hidden beneath the bark of words. This is precisely what Basil did, uniting study and prayer so much that they became identified together. The spirit of truth and grace guided him not only to the living light that dwells in the words of Scripture, but also to the saving realities hidden in the language of the

¹¹ Augustin-Martin FLICHE, *Storia della Chiesa...*, pp. 313-333; Dumitru STĂNILOAE, “Învățătura despre Sfînta Treime în Scrierea Sfîntului Vasile, «Contra lui Eunomie»”, in: Alexandru ELIAN (coord.), *Sfîntul Vasile cel Mare...*, pp. 53-69.

¹² Augustin-Martin FLICHE, *Storia della Chiesa...*, pp. 333-349.

Nicene Creed. In those years, 361 and 362, Basil realized that terminology or the expression of truth can change over the ages, provided truth remains unchanged.

The term *consubstantial* had been established by the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, yet Basil did not hesitate to leave it aside for many who did not understand or want the term. Naturally, he proposed another expression, which of course expressed the same truth. The new expression which he condescendingly proposed to the Omiusians was: *altogether equal in substance*¹³. By the words *altogether*, the believer was protected from accepting the dangerous conception that the Son was less than the Father. Thus, this new term embodies the truth contained in the expression *consubstantial*, established at Nicaea.

It was therefore possible to express the same truth using different terms. This was the method also used by Saint Athanasius, who bridged the gap with the Omiusians by rendering the truth contained in *consubstantiality* using another term: *Son by essence or Son by nature*¹⁴.

Basil, through the expression *altogether equal in substance*, took a responsible position in the theological crisis of the time. He would only renounce it when his heart stopped beating. As St. Athanasius and the Council of Nicaea taught, the Son has *entirely* the same nature as the Father, because he is born *essentially* of the Father and not of the will of the Father, like all other creatures. The Son who is born of the Father is God before eternity. The world, on the contrary, was created from the will of God in time, being a creature absolutely different from the nature of God.

Secondly, although the Father and the Son have the same single nature, they are nevertheless two distinct persons or hypostases. St. Basil shows, against Eunomius, that not being born is not the nature of the Father, but his own way of being, showing his relation to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. The attributes of not being born, like the Father, and being begotten, like the Son, show how the Father and the Son exist. The Holy Spirit also has the same nature as the Father and the Son, existing as the one who was born and breathed by a single breath or principle, that of the Father and the Son. He is therefore also a person distinct from the Father and the Son.

¹³ Ioan G. COMAN, *Patrologie*, revised edition, Sfânta Mănăstire Dervent, 2000, p. 112.

¹⁴ Ioan G. COMAN, *Patrologie*, p. 113.

The Holy Spirit, therefore, has a person distinct from that of the Father and the Son¹⁵.

II.2. The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

This doctrine was clarified by St. Basil the Great. He made that distinction of very great theological importance between what is *common* and what is of *itself* or personal, or of each Person individually. St. Basil teaches, therefore, that the three divine Persons, though distinct, nevertheless have the same and unique nature or being, notwithstanding the difference in order and dignity. Eunomius, in his *Apology*, taught, “The Holy Spirit is third in order and dignity, and therefore we believe that he is third also in nature”¹⁶.

Against him¹⁷, St. Basil states that just as the Son is second in order to the Father, since he proceeds from him, and is second in dignity, the Father

¹⁵ Gaspare MURA, (ed.), *La Teologia dei Padri. Testi dei padri latini e greci orientali scelti e ordinati per temi*, vol. V, Città Nuova, Roma², 1987; Ciprian BĂLĂBAN, “Termenul homoousios între erezie și ortodoxie, (Evoluția termenului în gândirea teologică a sec. III-IV d. Hr.)”, in: *Pleroma*, X, no. 2 (2008), pp. 106-109.

¹⁶ *Apologia* is the term traditionally used by theological scholarship to designate this first and only fully preserved work of the heretic Eunomius, even though the manuscripts and St. Basil use the term Apologistikos. Briefly, we note that St. Basil from the outset challenges Eunomius choice to use the idea of apology to title his work, considering it unjust, abusive and manifestly misleading since the circumstances of its composition, style and content do not meet the criteria of this literary genre, Eunomius thus fraudulently presenting himself as the one accused and slandered and consequently determined to defend himself. Richard Paul VAGGIONE, *Introduction, Eunomius, The Extant Works*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1987, pp. 3-4; Claudio MORESCHINI - Enrico NORELLI, *History of Ancient Greek and Latin Christian Literature*, vol. II / 1, Polirom, Iași, 2004, pp. 139-141. The text of the *Apologia* can be found in the collection Sources Chretiennes (305) at the end of volume II of the edition BASILE DE CESAREE, *Contre Eunome*, Cerf, Paris, 1983, pp. 234-299, Greek text and French translation.

¹⁷ A critical edition accompanied by the French translation of the text of St. Basil the Great was published in the collection Sources Chretiennes in the volume BASILE DE CESAREE, *Contre Eunome*, traduction et notes de Bernard SESBOÛÈ, tome I, (299), Cerf, Paris, 1982, pp. 140-269 and tome II (305), Cerf, Paris 1983, pp. 10-175. It is generally accepted that only the first three of the five books preserved under the name of St. Basil the Great belong to the latter, the other two being attributed to Apollinaris of Laodicea. For further discussion see: Franz Xavier RISCH, *Pseudo-Basilus, Adversus Eunomium IV-V. Einleitung, Übersetzung und Kommentar*; Daniel JUGRIN, “Considerații cu privire la datarea și autenticitatea tratatului *Adversus Eunomium* al Sf. Vasile cel Mare”, in: Petre SEMEN și Liviu PETCU (coord.), *Părinții Capadocieni*, Axis, Iași, 2009, pp. 431-440.

being his principle and cause, either because he is his Father or because through the Son it is possible to reach God the Father, but in nature, the Son is not second, since divinity is unique in both; the same must be said of the Holy Spirit: from the fact that He is second to the Son in order and dignity - in order that we may understand ourselves also in this matter once and for all, - it does not rightly follow that He would be of a different nature from that of the Father. From this St. Basil also infers the deity of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is holy by nature, and not by participation, like the seraphim and cherubim; He is holiness itself; He is good by nature; it is not lawful for us to call Him our companion in service, because He by nature leads, we cannot count Him with the creatures, Who is counted in the blessed and divine Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the fountain of holiness. And as the Father is holy from nature and the Son is holy in like manner - naturally, - so is the Spirit of truth holy from nature. If, then, the Spirit has holiness from nature, as it is in the Father and in the Son, how can it be of a third and different nature? Besides, says Basil, the reason why even in Isaiah it is written that the Seraphim acclaim the Holy One three times, is because holiness by nature is contemplated in the three hypostases¹⁸, but according to St. Basil the Great there are not three original hypostases: the Father is the only origin and He alone possesses divinity in a special way (*principaliter*). The Son and the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, are God only in a derivative way, because they spring from the Father¹⁹.

In his *Apology*, Eunomius dares to assert that the Holy Spirit does not participate in divinity: "Being third in order and nature, (the Spirit) was made from the Father's command by the Son's work. He is honoured, thirdly, as the first creature of the Son, the greatest of all and the only one of its kind. He lacks deity and demiurgic power".

In combating this blasphemy of Eunomius, the Great Basil starts from our Christian being, from the divinity that dwells in us: "By this we know that God dwells in us: from the Spirit whom he has given us". The apostle

¹⁸ BASIL THE GREAT, *Against Eunomius*, (translation into Romanian by Lavrentie CARP), Crigarux, Piatra Neamț, 2007, p. 93.

¹⁹ Damian PĂTRAȘCU, "Contribuția sf. Vasile cel Mare la clarificarea profesiei de credință de la Niceea", in: Simona Ștefana ZETEA, sr. Veridiana-Victoria BOLFĂ and Alin TAT, (coord.), *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, Teologie și monahism*, Galaxia Gutenberg, Târgu Lăpuș, 2009, pp. 28-37.

also says: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” In the same way he speaks elsewhere: “In him the whole building, as a harmonious whole, is raised up as a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built, that you may become a dwelling place of God through the Spirit”. So if God is said to dwell in us through the Spirit, it is a shocking blasphemy to say that the Spirit does not participate in deity. How is it possible that he who deifies others is devoid of deity? It comes to him by nature, because the Holy Spirit is by nature divine²⁰.

Then, Eunomius’ statement is in clear contradiction with the command given by Jesus: *Go, baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*, since baptism is the seal of faith, while faith is, in turn, consent given to deity. In fact, you must first believe and then allow the seal of Baptism to be impressed upon you. But our baptism, according to the Lord’s command, is performed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, without any creature or servant being placed on the plane of the Father and of the Son, considering that deity finds its perfect fulfilment in the Trinity. All that is outside of them, of the three divine Persons, is part of the plan of the servants, even if it sometimes happens that some are superior to others because of the eminence of their own dignity. Therefore, according to the Scriptures, we must confess that the Holy Spirit is above the creatures, because it is impossible for the One who sanctifies and that which is sanctified, the One who teaches and the One who receives the teaching, the One who reveals and the One who needs to be revealed, the One who ennobles and the ennobled, to have the same nature. It is therefore blasphemy to assert the existence of another unborn besides the God of the Universe, or of another Son, for only One is the only begotten. What, then, shall we call him? The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth, who is sent by the Father and given by

²⁰ BASIL THE GREAT, *Against Eunomius...*, 182. In one of his Epistles (134), speaking of the divine nature, St. Basil the Great states that *it is a reality beyond my power of comprehension*. God manifests Himself through His works or energies, and if we claim to know God in His energies, we are not at all promising that we are approaching Him in His very being. For if His energies come down to us, His being remains inaccessible. St. Basil makes a distinction, however, not a separation, between the transcendent and inaccessible divine being and the accessible revealed energies or things.

the Son: not a servant, but holy, good, generous, the Spirit giver of life, the Spirit of adoption, who knows all the depths of God. In this way, we will surely preserve the unity of the Trinity if we confess one Father, one Son and one Holy Spirit. This is St. Basil's thought about God: one in being, yet three Persons, according to the book *Contra Eunomium*²¹.

III. Saint Gregory of Nazianzus

Together with St. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus²², in his theological writings, fights Arianism in order to defend the doctrine of the Church established at the Council of Nicaea.

III.1. Trinitarian doctrine

The defence of the Trinitarian doctrine is one of the themes which he addresses in almost all his Orations or Discourses. Of particular significance are the *Five Theological Orations*, which the author himself calls *Theological Orations*, delivered at Constantinople in 380 in the Chapel of the Resurrection against the Arians, in which he makes a

²¹ Ștefan C. ALEXE, "Dumnezeirea Sfântului Duh la Sfântul Vasile cel Mare", in: Alexandru ELIAN (coord.), *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare...*, pp. 131-157.

²² He was born at Arianz, near Nazianzus, around 329-330. After his elementary education in his family, Gregory attends the school of Caesarea Cappadocia where he meets his future friend St. Basil, then the Caesarea of Palestine rich in Origen's library and memories, Alexandria and finally Athens. His life as a student, the lasting friendship he forged here with St. Basil the Great, his success in his studies and the fame of himself and his friend are recounted in detail in his autobiographical works *On His Life* and *Necrology on the Death of St. Basil the Great*. Returning to his homeland, he received baptism and then collaborated with his friend Basil on the first *Philokalia*. He is noted in Constantinople for his exemplary life and oratorical style. In 380 he was elected Bishop of Constantinople and installed by Emperor Theodosius himself, and in 381 the Second Ecumenical Council confirmed his election. Here he stands out as a good fighter against the Arian-Adamites. St. Gregory of Nazianzus is one of the greatest jewels of patristic literature and thought, possessing a keen sense of theological issues, a high nobility of soul and exceptional oratorical and literary talent. Jean BERNARDI, *Grigorie din Nazianz. Teologul și epoca sa (330-390)*, transl. Cristian Pop, Deisis, Sibiu, 2002, pp. 79-95.

decisive contribution to the foundation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity²³. In these words, the Cappadocian Father argues with great philosophical finesse in the sense of a unique and equally Trinitarian Holy Trinity, which manifests itself unitary, concomitant and effective, although in different but complementary senses and registers. For Saint Gregory, the theology of the Trinity is one of “Light”, for Christians must understand “the Son-light from the Father-light in the Spirit-light”. The concept of *homousios* thus designates absolute substantial identity, of a principal perfection. Everything starts from God the Father, but His qualities are distributed without being divided. Meditating on and deepening the nature and connection between the three divine persons, Gregory reinforces the decision of the Council of Nicaea concerning the relationship between the Father and the Son and clarifies that the Father is *not born*, the Son is *begotten*, and the Holy Spirit is *the one proceeding*²⁴.

To Saint Gregory of Nazianzus thus belongs the immortal glory of having definitively established the terms of the greatest mystery at the foundation of the Christian faith: the Holy Trinity. It is the most perfect creation, with the collaboration of divine inspiration, of the genius of the faith and philosophy of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus. And this creation concerns not some unimportant problem or detail, but the core, the very heart of Christian theology: the nature of the Godhead and the links of substance and action of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. God was, no doubt, defined in countless splendid ways by the great and small spiritualist religions and philosophies. Saint Gregory had the ultimate role of coordinating, systematizing, defining the realities that have remained to this day at the foundation of theological faith and science. This is why the five theological discourses of Gregory of Nazianzus are the golden treasure of his work.

²³ SAINT GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Cuvântări Teologice. Cinci cuvântări despre Dumnezeu*, transl. Gheorghe Tilea, Herald, București, 2013.

²⁴ Johannes QUASTEN, *Patrologia*, vol. II: *Dal Concilio di Nicea a quello di Calcedonia...*, p. 253: *The proper name of him who is without beginning is the Father; the proper name of him who is begotten from eternity is the Son; the name of him who proceeds without being born is the Holy Spirit.* (Oration 30,19); Enzo BELLINI, “Il mistero trinitario nei primi discorsi di san Gregorio Nazianzeno”, in: *Augustinianum*, 13 (1973), pp. 525-534.

“I give you this profession of faith as a guide and protector to keep for all your life: One Godhead and one power, which is found to be entire in unity, and which embraces all three separately, not unequal in substance or nature, neither strengthened nor diminished by addition or subtraction, equal in all respects, in every respect one and the same being as the beauty and grandeur of the heavens are one; the infinite union of infinite beings, for each is God: as is the Father, so is the Son, as is the Son, so is the Holy Spirit, each distinct according to personal properties, all three persons in one God when considered together; each one being God according to consubstantiality, one God according to monarchy” (Oration 40, 41).

With this profession, Gregory of Nazianzus wishes to avoid the heresy of Arian and Sabellius, as he states in Oration 39, 11.

“Triune according to the properties or hypostases, if anyone likes to call them so, or persons, that we need not quarrel with one another on account of the names, since the syllables lead to one and the same meaning, and one according to the essence, that is, according to the Godhead. For they are separated in inseparability, to say so, and are united in separation, because the Godhead is one in three and the three are one. Those that are part in these, this is the Godhead, or, to speak more clearly, these are the Godhead. But let us leave aside the prisons and the gaps, without making the union a mixture and the separation an alienation. Far be it from us both the jumble made by Sabellius, and the separation of Arius, these evil things are diametrically opposed and equally ungodly. For what use is it, either to restrict God with wickedness, or to divide Him into parts that are unequal between them?” (Oration 39,11).

If we compare the doctrine of St. Gregory of Nazianzus with the doctrine of St. Basil the Great, we see that much emphasis is placed, on the one hand, on the unity and monarchy of God, and, on the other, on the clearest possible definition of the relations between the three persons of

the Holy Trinity. There was no time when God became Father or Son. The names “Father” and “Son” define a relationship²⁵.

Gregory of Nazianzus has the merit of providing for the first time a clear definition of the three divine persons. But Gregory of Nazianzus surpasses St. Basil in another respect. Although St. Basil the Great in his work *Against Eunomius* (2, 28) clarifies the position of the first two persons of the Holy Trinity, he manifests a certain inability to clarify the position of the Holy Spirit within the Holy Trinity (*Against Eunomius*, 3, 6-7). St. Gregory of Nazianzus overcomes this difficulty and declares that the unity of the Holy Trinity resides in the unity of the divine being. St. Gregory therefore defends this truth by saying that God is one God because one is the Godhead. And those who are of it remain in it, although we believe that they are three. For one is not more God than another. Nor one earlier than another. Neither is it divided in will, nor divided in power. Nothing that is in the divided is here (in the One Being).

Distinguishing, however, between the undivided being and the distinction of hypostases, he continues:

“The godhead is undivided into those who are distinguished, if we must speak briefly. It is like a single light in three suns that penetrate each other without merging. When we look at the Godhead, the first cause and the one principle (the monarchy), its unity appears in our contemplation. And when we look at the ones in whom the Godhead is, at the ones who emerge from the first cause in a timeless way, being from it and from the same glory, the worshipped are Three. The unity of the divine being ensures the unity of the triune persons, even though they have their own hypostatic properties. Therefore, when we speak of one of them, we cannot separate it from the others: the Son, who is always in the Father, as Saint Basil says, cannot be separated from the Father. By His power you receive at the same time both the Son and the Spirit, for it is not possible in any way to conceive of an interruption or a division in such a way that the Son is conceived

²⁵ Jean BERNARDI, *Grigorie din Nazianz...*, pp. 234-235.

without the Father or that the Holy Spirit is separated from the Son, but you conceive at the same time in them a community and an unbroken and somehow incomprehensible distinction, without the distinction of hypostases breaking the continuity of being, without this continuity of substance eliminating the particularity of the distinctive signs”²⁶.

“As far as we are concerned, there is one God the Father, of whom are all, and one Jesus Christ, through whom are all, and one Holy Spirit, in whom are all, the words ‘of whom’, ‘through whom’ and ‘in whom’ separating not natures, for they could not change the propositions or the order of the names, but characterizing the propositions of a single and unchanging nature. And it is clear from the fact that they are again gathered together in one and the same Apostle, if one does not carelessly read the phrase ‘from Him and through Him and in Him are all things; to Him be glory forever. Amen.’ The Father is the Father, and he is without beginning, because he is not of another. The Son is the Son and is without beginning, for he is from the Father. But if you take the beginning from time, then he is also without beginning, for the maker of time cannot be under time. The Holy Spirit truly is the Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, but not as the Son, for he does not proceed by way of begetting, but by way of procession, if we need to invent anything when it comes to words, for the sake of clarification, obviously, neither does the Father abandon his property of not being born, because he has begotten, nor the Son that of begetting, because he is of the one who was not born, for how could it be otherwise, nor the Holy Spirit unchanging either in the Father or in the Son, because he proceeds and because he is God, even if those who do not believe in the existence of God do not agree” (Oration 39, 12).

²⁶ Enzo BELLINI, “Il mistero trinitario nei primi discorsi di san Gregorio Nazianzeno”, in: *Augustinianum*, 13 (1973), pp. 525-534.

“There was, and there was, and there was: but there was only one. Light and light and light: but one light. This is what David imagined when he said, ‘In your light we shall see the light’ (Ps. 35:10). And now we have contemplated it and we proclaim it, from the light which is the Father understanding the light which is the Son in the light of the Spirit: this is the short and concise theology of the Holy Trinity [...] God, if we may speak succinctly, is inseparable in beings that are distinct from one another” (Oration 31, 3. 14).

III.2. The Holy Spirit

With regard to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Gregory of Nazianzus does not hesitate, as did St. Basil the Great, to express clearly and formally the divinity of the Holy Spirit, whom, in an *Oration* from 372, he calls the *Holy Spirit and God*, when he asks: “how long shall we hide the candle under the bushel and deny to others the full knowledge of the divinity of the Holy Spirit? It would be better to place the candle on the candlestick so that it may illuminate with its light all the Churches, all souls, the whole universe, renouncing metaphors, and let us confess this truth clearly” (*Oration* 12, 6). Thus, Gregory of Nazianzus reserves the right to speak freely. In the Fifth Theological Oration, devoted entirely to the Holy Spirit, he deduces the consubstantiality of the Spirit from the fact that he is God: “Is the Holy Spirit God? - Surely! - Then is he consubstantial? - Yes. Because he is God” (*Oration* 31, 10)²⁷.

III.3. Christology

The Christology of St. Gregory of Nazianzus, which received the approval of the Councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), is even more advanced than the Trinitarian doctrine. His famous letters to Cledonius were destined to be the Church’s guide for the following century, as he vigorously defended the essential doctrine of Christ’s humanity against

²⁷ Gerardo DI NOLA, *Lo Spirito Santo nella Testimonianza dei Padri e degli scrittori cristiani*, Città Nuova, Rome, 1999, pp. 498-500.

Apollinarius of Laodicea²⁸ who claimed that in Jesus Christ there is only one nature, without one having assimilated the other, or vice versa. And in this nature, the Logos (the Word), which has one nature, has merged with the body, because the body is not itself a nature. The union of the soul with the body is best explained in the union of the Word and the body. Hence it follows not only that there is but one term of our adoration, but that there is but one principle of free action and activity. Gregory of Nazianzus states that the humanity of Christ is a nature to which corresponds a body and a soul. He explicitly rejects Logos-Sarx Christology in order to adopt Logos-Human Christology (Epistle 102). In Christ there are two natures, God and man, since in him there is a soul and a body (Epistle 101)²⁹.

“And, if we must speak briefly, those of which the Savior is something and something else - since the unseen is not the same as the seen, nor the timeless as that which is under time - and not someone and someone else, God forbid! For the two [are] one by their mingling, God becoming man, and man being deified, or whatever we want to call it. But I say ‘something’ and ‘something else’, because it is the other way around than in the case of the Trinity. Indeed, there [we say] ‘someone’ and ‘another’, so as not to merge hypostases. But we do not say ‘something’ and ‘something else’, because the three are one and the same in their deity”³⁰.

²⁸ Apollinarius “the Younger” (died 390) was bishop of Laodicea in Syria, a theologian condemned as a heretic by the Church, but at the same time he made important contributions in the field of Christology. His teaching about Jesus Christ at one time took the name of Apollinarism and was condemned as heresy by the Church at the Councils of Alexandria (362) and Constantinople (381). The most important general studies on Apollinarism and Apollinarianism are those of Voisin GUILLAUME, *L’Apollinarisme. Étude historique, littéraire et dogmatique sur le début des controverses christologiques au IV^{ème} siècle*, Louvain-Paris, 1901.

²⁹ *Epistle 101* was written in the summer of 382, about a year after his departure from Constantinople. The place is probably Arianz, the birthplace of Saint Gregory. For this dating, see Paul GALLAY, *Introduction*, Grégoire de Nazianze, *Lettres théologiques*, Sources Chrétiennes 208, Paris, 1974, pp. 25-27 and Jean-Robert POUCHET, “Les Lettres christologiques de Grégoire de Nazianze à Clédonios. De la Lettre 102 à la Lettre 101”, in: *Augustinianum*, 40/2000, pp. 46-47.

³⁰ SAINT GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Epistola 101*, 20-21, transl. Ovidiu Sferlea, after the

This comparison between Trinitarian and Christological dogma would lead in the following century to the adoption of the formula of hypostatic union to define Christ, although neither Gregory of Nazianzus nor the other two Cappadocian Fathers possessed such language. Gregory is an undeniable witness to the unity of the person of Christ. He was one in two natures, two natures that meet in the one Son and not in two sons. Christ is one because there is one subject in Him, the eternal Word, God. Without specifying on a technical level in what way Christ is one, this unity is clear for Saint Gregory from the fact that to the same Christ are attributed in the Scriptures both human affections and the attributes of his own divinity³¹.

IV. Saint Gregory of Nyssa

Saint Gregory of Nyssa³² is “the most erudite theologian of his age; this is because, among the great Christian writers of the 4th century, he assimilated to the highest degree the profane culture of antiquity, which he fully used in arguing and substantiating Christian teaching”. All his writings are permeated by a strong ascetic and spiritual atmosphere.

critical text published by Paul Gallay in *Sources Chrétienne*, Paris 1974, in: *Orizonturi Teologice*, 1, Ed. Universităţii din Oradea, Oradea 2013, p. 90.

³¹ Gerardo DI NOLA, *Lo Spirito Santo nella Testimonianza dei Padri e degli scrittori cristiani*, pp. 512-513.

³² Saint Gregory of Nyssa, the younger brother of Saint Basil the Great, was born in Caesarea in Cappadocia. He is more of an autodidact, studying under his sister Macrina and his brother Basil, whom he called father and master. On the advice of his brother and St. Gregory of Nazianzus, after the death of his wife, he entered the clergy, devoting much of his time to the study of dogma and Christian rhetoric. In 371 he became bishop of Nyssa, a small town near Caesarea in the diocese of his brother Basil. St. Gregory's important role at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381) earned him the title ‘Father of Fathers’. He wrote extensively and was involved in the struggles against heresies of his time. As a Father and Doctor of the Church, we discover in him more and more clearly his intellectual stature and decisive importance in the development of Christian thought. He is one of the most powerful and original thinkers known to the history of the Church and the founder of a new mystical and ecstatic religiosity. Lorenzo DATTRINO, *Padri e maestri della fede. Lineamenti di Patrologia*, Messaggero Padova, Padova, 1994, pp. 155-156; Gerardo DI NOLA, *Lo Spirito Santo nella Testimonianza dei Padri...*, pp. 517-518.

IV.1. Trinitarian doctrine

St Gregory of Nyssa, in elaborating the Trinitarian doctrine, makes use of Plato's philosophy and anticipates the extreme realism of medieval theology in order to reconcile the Trinity and the unity of the divine persons³³. Analysing the elementary distinction between hypostasis and ousia in both the human and divine spheres, we see how the simple logic of identity and difference works within the triune God³⁴.

The fact that divine persons share the same common being means that they have a communion of nature. The term *communion* (*koinonia*) does not refer to loving relationships between divine persons, but indicates the common possession of the same simple divine being. In scriptural terms, St. Gregory of Nyssa emphasizes the only-begotten's continuity in being with his Father, their perfect union rejecting the idea of any intermediate space. The hypostasis of the Son is the *form* and *image* in which the Father is known by men. For this reason, Saint Gregory speaks only of the mutual indwelling of the Father in the Son and of the Son in the Father; however, he very often insists on the close bond between the Son and the Holy Spirit, using Scripture and the same patterns used in describing the relationship between the Father and the Son³⁵.

Gregory of Nyssa often speaks of causal relationships and the Trinitarian *order*, in which God the Father is the cause of the other two persons (the doctrine of *monarchy*), in order to emphasize the particular characteristic of each divine person.

Another effective argument by which Gregory rejects the variety in being of the divine persons and supports the unity and co-eternity of the

³³ Johannes QUASTEN, *Patrologia*, vol II, pp. 289; Gerardo DI NOLA, *Lo Spirito Santo nella Testimonianza dei Padri...*, pp. 517-518.

³⁴ S. P. N. GREGORII, EPISCOPI NYSSENI, "Ad Petrum fratrem suum, episcopum Sebastenum", *PG* 45, 237-240; GREGORY OF NYSSA, Epistola: "De differentia essentiae et hypostaseos ad Petrum fratrem" ("To Peter, on the difference between ousia and hypostasis"), in: Yves COURTONN, *Saint Basil, Lettres*, vol. 1, Collection des Universités de France, Paris 1957 (Epistola 38), pp. 81-92, transl. Anna M. Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters*, Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2007, pp. 247-259.

³⁵ S. P. N. GREGORII, EPISCOPI NYSSENI, "Quod non sint tres dii. Ad Abalabium", *PG* 45, 117 C.

divine persons is based on the doctrine of divine infinity. St. Gregory insisted on the lack of any temporal interval between the three persons of the Holy Trinity in order to defend the co-eternity and co-infinity of the Son and the Spirit with the Father. If the Son is divine, then He is infinite and does not possess limited goodness, being equal to His Father. But if the Son comes into existence later than the Father, as Eunomius asserts, and the Father has not only a logical but also a temporal priority, then an interval occurs between the Son and the Father which shows that the Father's life is also subject to temporalization, nullifying His own unborn character. The Son and the Holy Spirit begin to exist from the Father, as does the created cosmos, but their beginning is beyond time, not in time; the Son and the Holy Spirit come from the Father without any interval of space or time:

“While we confess the unchangeableness of the divine nature, we do not deny the distinction relating to the cause and the caused, in which we understand only that one is distinguished from the other, by the belief that one is the cause, and the other is out of the cause; and again, in that which is out of the cause we recognize another distinction: For one is directly from the former, and the other through that which is directly from the former cause, so that the character of the only-begotten remains without doubt in the Son not doubting that the Spirit is from the Father, since the intercession of the Son preserves for Himself the character of the only-begotten and does not exclude the Spirit from the natural relation to the Father”³⁶.

Finally, the central argument of Saint Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian polemic is based on a philosophical understanding of the kind of unity that exists between *nature* and *power*. Power is that capacity to act which belongs distinctively to a particular existent, for example, as heat is to fire. Like Hippocratic medicine, St. Gregory also holds that powers exist only in opposition to other contrary powers. The argument that a common power indicates a common nature is typical of pro-Nicene theologians,

³⁶ S. P. N. GREGORII, EPISCOPI NYSSENI, “Quod non sint tres dii...”, PG 45, 134 C.

but St. Gregory of Nyssa uses it as a central argument in his polemic with Eunomius, showing that if the Father and the Son manifest the same power, then they surely have the same nature. For Eunomius, the ability to produce or generate is not a natural capacity for the divine, *unborn* being, but for Gregory of Nyssa the power to produce is intrinsic to God's nature.

Eunomius asserted the *non-generative* or *non-productive* status of the divine being in order to deny that the Son shares or is akin to God's being; He is the Creator of the universe only because God delegated or entrusted to Him the power to create. But for Saint Gregory, if the power to create is a power in the technical-medical or philosophical sense, then it belongs to the nature of God and cannot be delegated to another being, just as the eye cannot delegate to another organ the power to see. If the Son is not the one true God, then He is not the Creator of the world.

A related argument uses the term power as a Christological designation: *Christ is the Power of God* (1 Cor 1, 24). Using this type of argument, St. Gregory demonstrates the natural unity of the Son with the Father from the unity that exists between an existent and his own power: The Father was never without the Son, because He was never without His Power. Based on the authority of Scripture, this argument is even more effective if power is understood in its technical-philosophical sense.

Being linked in the exegetical tradition to the Person of Christ, the term *power* has not been used with special reference to the Holy Spirit. The term work (*energeia*) was a more appropriate choice, given the theological context of the late fourth century. Using the term 'work', St. Gregory develops an argument related to the above, by which he demonstrates the full divinity of the Spirit and the unity of the Holy Trinity: the three divine persons not only work together, for they do not have distinct works, but together they form one work, because they are one power. The inseparable work of the divine persons indicates that God's nature is not individualized as is human nature. If the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have the same work, they have the same power and therefore the same divine nature³⁷. Therefore, St. Gregory starts deductively from the unity of the divinity, God the Father, the first cause, which is not devoid of cogitation, because

³⁷ Gerardo DI NOLA, *Lo Spirito Santo nella Testimonianza dei Padri*.

the spirit, by its nature, is a thinking being and is spirit only by the fact that it produces cogitation, that is: *the logos*. This fact pertains to its being, and yet there is a relative difference between the one who contemplates and his own contemplation³⁸.

IV.2. Christology

In elaborating his Christology, St. Gregory uses the principle of dual exegesis to highlight the two natures of Christ, divine and human. St. Gregory shows that those biblical texts in which Eunomius sees the Son's ontologically inferior status must be understood as referring to the economy of the body: the Son of God does not have a created nature, but assumed a created nature while remaining true God. The purpose of the Holy Scripture is to present the intercession of the Incarnate Son, being fully God and becoming fully man. Grounded in this dual ontological perspective, St. Gregory of Nyssa's doctrine of mediation is different from that of Eusebius of Caesarea and Eunomius, who affirmed the necessary intermediary status of the Son of God³⁹.

For Gregory, the Son is not subordinate to the Father, but is in absolute union with Him, only thus truly mediating between God and men, by uniting human nature with His own divinity. The incarnation of the Son of God also has an epistemological function, as does Holy Scripture, in which the Spirit of God reveals to us the mysteries of faith. In the theology of Saint Gregory of Nyssa, man's capacity for rational understanding is not denied or underestimated, although true knowledge of God means much more than the rational grasp of notions about God. St. Gregory used methodical research based on the logical chaining of premises and conclusions to give logical support to his biblical exegesis. The theological discourse therefore has a rational structure, but aims to open a path to knowledge for the soul that goes beyond reason⁴⁰.

³⁸ Constantin VOICU, *Studii de Teologie patristică*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Bucharest, 2004, p. 156.

³⁹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Împotriva lui Eunomie*, transl. Ovidiu Sferlea, bilingual edition by Adrian Muraru, coll. *Tradiția creștină*, Polirom, Bucharest, 2010, p. 179.

⁴⁰ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Împotriva lui Eunomie*, pp. 363-365.

Stressing the human origin of language, Gregory of Nyssa rejects Eunomius' claim that the term *agennetos* (unborn) expresses the absolute being of God. Given the ambiguity of human language, St. Gregory insists that no word or concept can fully explain the divine being. However, theological language can mediate a real knowledge of God, if it uses the right terms: through careful research, the human mind can discover what does and does not fit the divine nature⁴¹.

A proper terminology induces a partial knowledge of God which lifts the soul to the true knowledge of God, and this has nothing in common with epistemology in the strict sense; by faith, beyond any concept, the human soul reaches a mysterious intuition of God which cannot be adequately expressed by human concepts. This is why St. Gregory makes use of many theological concepts that correct each other; in this way their material connotations are overcome and the divine being is expressed apophatically. In Jesus Christ, therefore, there are two natures, and not two persons, but one person. *This is our doctrine which preaches not more Christs, as Eunomius accuses us, but the union of man with the divinity. In this way there is but one person (en prosopon)*⁴².

V. Conclusions

The main contribution of the Cappadocian Fathers in formulating the Trinitarian dogma is that through their writings they succeeded in setting out with great clarity the distinction between the two concepts: *ousia* and *hypostasis*, substance and person, thus creating the permanent conceptual basis through which faith in the Most Holy Trinity is expressed.

This is one of the greatest innovations that Christian theology has introduced into human thought. From it, it has been possible to develop the modern concept of the person as relationship. The weakness of their Trinitarian theology, felt by themselves, was the danger of conceiving the relationship between the one divine substance and the three hypostases of Father, Son and Holy Spirit according to the relationship that exists in

⁴¹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Împotriva lui Eunomie*, p. 443.

⁴² Johannes QUASTEN, *Patrologia*, vol II, p. 292.

nature between species and individuals, thus exposing themselves to the charge of tritheism⁴³.

The dispute between Eunomius and St. Basil the Great, continued by the other Cappadocians, was essentially a conflict between two completely different views of the fundamental facts of the Christian faith. Eunomius did not begin his work as an enemy of the truth, but his sincere intention was to seek, deepen and fully understand this truth. The circumstances, elements and paths that led him in the wrong direction were often determined by historical factors. However, what the documents do not explicitly record is the general spiritual foundation on which his search was based and on which his concepts were built. He did not understand that true theology springs from genuine religious experience and that this experience is a prerequisite and *sine qua non*. If, in the search for and expression of theological Truth, we do not existentially experience the contents of Christian faith, then we are on the wrong path and our whole endeavour is compromised, regardless of the intellectual resources we have at our disposal and invest in it. A basic and common-sense principle tells us that only by contemplating divine truths can we genuinely pass them on to others. In other words, between *lex orandi* and *lex credendi* there must be an indisputable and flawless correspondence. This axiom was not fully understood by Eunomius, and the results were obvious. Instead, the Cappadocian Fathers oriented and built their destiny around this principle. Their literary-doctrinal works were rooted in and nourished by the soil of mystical contemplation and the liturgical rhythm of the Church.

The conceptual breadth of Christian faith and experience that permeated their souls is a clear testimony to the naturalness with which they approached this issue. Only in this way were they able to impose themselves and succeed in conceptually “normalising” the Unknown. In this sense, the lesson that Saint Basil the Great offers us in his confrontation with Eunomius is that theology should not be conceived and programmed as an intellectualistic endeavour, with a pronounced excessive and exclusivist rationalistic character, but as the result of reflection on the world and society with the problems and needs that it has at the time. The

⁴³ SAINT BASIL THE GREAT, *Epistle* 236, 6.

soteriological dimension of the theology of the Cappadocian Fathers is thus extremely relevant. Theology must not be a mental, rationalistic and gratuitous enterprise, but an endeavour that we sustain and carry out before God and for God, an opening towards the knowledge of God as the way to gain salvation. Theology must not be considered an abstract science, in the pure sense of the word, but must be directly related to life, nourished by life and determining life. Faithful to the doctrine of the Church established at the Council of Nicaea, the Cappadocian Fathers, together with the contributions of the Fathers of Western Europe, contributed fully to the formulation of the dogma of the Holy Trinity established at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta, Concilium Constantinopolitanum I* - 381, p. 24; can. 1: "The faith of the three hundred and eighteen holy fathers, who were gathered together at Nicaea of Bithynia, must not be abrogated, but must remain firm; every heresy, especially... of the Arians, of the semi-Arians... must be anathematized"; ID., *Lettera dei vescovi radunati a Constantinopoli a papa Damaso e ai vescovi occidentali*, 25-30: "This is the faith which must be approved by you, by us and by those who do not alternate the word of the true faith, since it is very ancient and in conformity with baptism. It teaches us to believe in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, that is, in one divinity, power, substance of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in one equal dignity and co-eternal power, in three perfect hypostases, that is, in three perfect persons; so that neither the folly of Sabellius... nor the blasphemy of the Eunomians, the Arians... may have any place. Who divide substance or nature and divinity and add to the uncreated, consubstantial and co-eternal Trinity a posterior nature, created or of different substance".