

Chapter 6

The Significance of the Distinction between Essence and Energies of God according to St. Basil the Great

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Introduction

Concerning the important positions that Professor David Bradshaw has expressed regarding the formation and development of the distinction between essence and energies of God in the Orthodox tradition,¹ we think it would be useful, within the limited framework of an article, to offer from a historical and doctrinal view a special discussion of the ontological and epistemological significance of this distinction according to St. Basil the Great. This will clarify his decisive contribution to the development and formation of the above distinction within the Orthodox tradition. As was already emphasized in a related study of ours, it is indeed a noteworthy contribution because Basil was the first of the great Fathers of the Church to develop, not only ontologically, but also epistemologically, this distinction, constituting the basis for its further development, both by the other two Cappadocians, and by the subsequent great Fathers of the Church, especially St. Gregory Palamas.² The teaching of St. Basil the Great on the distinction between essence and energies of God is not the outcome of philosophical conjecture, but rather the continuation of the biblical and of the patristic tradition that came before him. Although this teaching was developed in the fourth century by St. Athanasius of Alexandria on an ontological basis and especially in the context of his struggle against the Arians,³ St. Basil further developed it from an ontological and epistemological perspective, in his confrontation with the Eunomians and Pneumatomachians of his age.

1. See David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West. Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 154 ff.

2. Cf. Georgios D. Martzelos, *Οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργειαι τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν Μέγαν Βασίλειον. Συμβολή εἰς τὴν ἱστοριοδογματικὴν διερεῦνησιν τῆς περὶ οὐσίας καὶ ἐνεργειῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ διδασκαλίας τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας* (Thessaloniki 2¹⁹⁹³), pp. 25 f; 193.

3. See for example St. Athanasius of Alexandria, *De incarnatione Verbi* 17, PG 25, 125AB; *Adversus Arianos* III, 61–4, PG 26, 452A – 460B.

1 The Challenge of the Eunomians and the Pneumatomachians

In their attempt to save, from the attack of the Church Fathers, the fundamental Arian teaching that the Son is of different essence than that of the Father, the Eunomians were forced to revise the Arian epistemology and ontology, severing the traditional bond existing between them.

Thus, while the Arians accepted, as did the Fathers of the Church, that created beings are unable to conceive of the uncreated essence of God,¹ the Eunomians defended the possibility of full knowledge of the divine essence on the part of created beings.² They believed that this knowledge was not the result of any special intellectual effort, but was the consequence of knowledge of the name ‘unbegotten’ (ἀγέννητος), which they accepted as ontologically defining and representing the divine essence.³ Consequently, since the essence of God consisted of his unbegottenness, it could not be ontologically identified with the essence of the Son, which they considered as begotten.⁴

1. According to the witness of St. Athanasius, Arius applied this principle to all created beings, included the Son, underlining this point emphatically with the following words: “Τῷ Υἱῷ ὁ Θεὸς ἄρρητος ὑπάρχει. Ἔστι γὰρ ἑαυτῷ ὃ ἐστι, τοῦτ’ ἐστὶν ἄλεκτος, ὥστε οὐδὲν τῶν λεγομένων κατὰ τε κατάληψιν συνίει ἐξειπεῖν ὁ Υἱὸς ἀδύνατα γὰρ αὐτῷ τὸν Πατέρα ἐξιχνιάσαι, ὅς ἐστιν ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῦ αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ Υἱὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ οὐσίαν οὐκ οἶδεν. Υἱὸς γὰρ ὧν θελήσει Πατρὸς ὑπῆρξεν ἀληθῶς. Τίς γοῦν λόγος συγχωρεῖ τὸν ἐκ Πατρὸς ὄντα αὐτὸν τὸν γεννήσαντα γνῶναι ἐν καταλήψει; Δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι τὸ ἀρχὴν ἔχον τὸν ἀναρχον ὅς ἐστιν ἐμπερινοῆσαι ἢ ἐμπεριδράσασθαι οὐχ οἷόν τε ἐστὶν” (*Epistola de Synodis Arimini in Italia et Seleucia in Isauria celebratis* 15, PG 26, 708BC). See also *Adversus Arianos* I, 6, PG 26, 24AB; 9, PG 26, 29B; *Ad episcopos Aegypti et Lybiae epistola encyclica* 12, PG 25, 565A. Cf. Alexander of Alexandria, *Charissimis honoratissimisque ubique ecclesiae catholicae comministris* 3, PG 18, 573B. About the above-mentioned idea of Arius see G. Zaphiris, ‘Reciprocal Trinitarian Revelation and man’s knowledge of God according to St. Athanasius’, in *Τόμος ἐόρτιος χιλιοστής ἐξακοισοστής ἐπετείου Μεγάλου Ἀθανασίου* (373–1973) (Thessaloniki, 1974), p. 300 f.

2. According to the Church historian Socrates, Eunomius maintained *verbatim* that man’s knowledge of the divine essence is identified with God’s self-knowledge with the following words: “Ὁ Θεὸς περὶ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ οὐσίας οὐδὲν πλέον ἡμῶν ἐπίσταται οὐδέ ἐστιν αὐτῆ μᾶλλον μὲν ἐκείνω, ἤττον δὲ ἡμῖν γινωσκομένη. Ἄλλ’ ὅπερ ἂν εἰδείμεν ἡμεῖς περὶ αὐτῆς, τοῦτο πάντως κάκεῖνος οἶδεν ὁ δ’ αὖ πάλιν ἐκεῖνος, τοῦτο εὐρήσεις ἀπαραλλάκτως ἐν ἡμῖν”. The same idea had expressed, according to Epiphanius of Salamis, the teacher of Eunomius, Aetius the Anomean: see *Panarium* 56 (76), 4, PG 42, 521C.

3. See Aetius the Anomean, *Syntagmaton*, in Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarium* 11, PG 42, 537C – 541C; Eunomius, *Apologia* 8, PG 30, 841D – 844B.

4. See Aetius the Anomean, *Syntagmaton*, PG 42, 533C – 545A; Eunomius, *Apologia* 9–12, PG 30, 844B – 848B; 20–22, PG 30, 856A – 857C. See also Martzelos, *Οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργειαι τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν Μέγαν Βασίλειον*, pp. 31 ff. and

Based on the distinction between essence and energies of God, the Eunomians revised the Arian ontology as well. In other words, while the Arians accepted two ontological categories of existence – that of the unbegotten or uncreated for the Father, and the begotten or created for all other beings¹ – the Eunomians distinguished ontologically the ‘begotten’ from the ‘created’ and accepted three such categories: the ‘unbegotten’ for the Father, the ‘begotten’ for the Son and the ‘created’ for all remaining creations, among which was included the Holy Spirit. The difference between ‘begotten’ and ‘created’, upon which they distinguished ontologically the Son from the Holy Spirit, resided in the fact that the ‘begotten’ came into being through the energy of the unbegotten Father, while the ‘created’ came into being through the energy of the begotten Son.² Considering the Persons of the Holy Trinity in this manner, as depicting the above-mentioned three ontological categories of being, they thus excluded their essential relationship.

On the basis of this ontology and epistemology, the Eunomians invented two theological methods with which they sought to prove that the Persons of the Holy Trinity were of unlike essence. The first was supported based on the difference between the names ‘unbegotten’ and ‘begotten’, which they attributed respectively to the Father and the Son,³ while the second was supported on the basis of the difference of their energies, which they accepted as appearing in their ontologically different creations: that of the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁴

It is characteristic that these theological methods were used in a different form by the Pneumatomachians, who did not accept the ontology and epistemology of the Eunomians. In other words, in order to prove the createdness of the Holy Spirit, they on the one hand attributed different prepositions for each Person of the Holy Trinity⁵ and on the other hand they maintained that the Holy Spirit did not have creative energy and as such differed in regards to energy from the Father and the Son.⁶

Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, p. 156.

1. See Athanasius of Alexandria, *Contra Arianos* I, 5, PG 26, 21A; 6, PG 26, 24A.

2. See Eunomius, *Apologia* 15, PG 30, 849C. Cf. Basil of Caesarea, *Homilia XXIV, Contra Sabellianos et Arium et Anomoeos* 6, PG 31, 612CD. See also Martzelos, *Οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργειαι τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν Μέγαν Βασιλείου*, pp. 85 ff.; Georgios D. Martzelos, ‘Der Verstand und seine Grenzen nach dem hl. Basilius dem Grossen’, in *Τόμος ἐόρτιος χιλιοστῆς ἐξακοσιοστῆς ἐπετείου Μεγάλου Βασιλείου*, pp. 230 f.

3. See Eunomius, *Apologia* 12, PG 30, 848B; 18, PG 30, 853AB; Aetius the Anomean, *Syntagmation*, PG 42, 540A. See also Basil the Great, *De Spiritu Sancto* 4, PG 32, 73AB; Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarium* 11, PG 42, 525 A; Theodoret of Cyrus, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2, 23, PG 82, 1068A.

4. See Eunomius, *Apologia* 20, PG 30, 856ABC. See also Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* I, PG 45, 297ABC, 352CD.

5. See Basil the Great, *De Spiritu Sancto* 4, PG 32, 73A.

6. See Basil the Great, *In Psalmum XXXII*, 4, PG 29, 333ABC; *De Spiritu Sancto* 5–6,

2 The Ontological and Epistemological Significance of the Distinction between Essence and Energies of God according to St. Basil the Great

Against this novel ontology and epistemology as well as the related theological methods of the Eunomians and the Pneumatomachians, Basil puts forward the ontological and epistemological significance of the distinction between essence and energies of God, as well as its definitive importance for the origin and significance of the divine names.¹

According to Basil, the transcendence of God has not only an ontological dimension but also an epistemological one. In contrast to Eunomius, who considers the ontological transcendence of God as the presupposition for knowledge of the divine essence, Basil considers it as the presupposition for *not* knowing it. For this reason he does not accept the names ‘unbegotten’ and ‘begotten’ as declaring respectively the essence of the Father and the Son, but as declaring the particular manner of their existence, by which their hypostases are distinguished.² As with the uncreated essence of God, likewise the manner of existence of his hypostases remains unknown and indescribable. The knowledge of these is a characteristic property only of the uncreated Persons of the Holy Trinity.³ Thus, Basil considers ontology as the foundation of his epistemology, and he re-establishes their traditional bond, which had been broken by Eunomius.⁴

For Basil, the emphasis on the absolute transcendence of the divine essence does not run the risk of agnosticism. While God is in himself completely inaccessible and inconceivable according to his essence as well as to his inner-Trinitarian life and movement, he is revealed and made known by his energies, which appear in the creation of the world as well as in the saving economy which surrounds man. As he underlines emphatically, “We say that we know God from His energies; we do not maintain that we access His very essence. And this because His energies come down to us, while His essence remains inaccessible”.⁵

PG 32, 76A – 77C; 50– 51, PG 32, 160 C; *Epistola* CXXV, 3, PG 32, 549C. See also W.-D. Hauschild, *Die Pneumatomachen. Eine Untersuchung zur Dogmengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts* (Hamburg, 1967), pp. 46 ff.

1. Martzelos, *Οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργειαι τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν Μέγαν Βασίλειον*, pp. 76 ff., 121 ff., 149 ff.

2. See *Adversus Eunomium* II, 28–29, PG 29, 636C – 640AB. Cf. Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, p. 158 f.

3. See *Adversus Eunomium* I, 12–14, PG 29, 540A – 545A; II, 22, PG, 29, 621A; 24, PG 29, 628A; III, 6, PG 29, 668AB; *Homilia XXIV, Contra Sabellianos et Arium et Anomæos* 7, PG 31, 613C – 616A; *In sanctam Christi generationem* 1–2, PG 31, 1457 C – 1460 B; *Adversus eos qui per calumniam dicunt dici a nobis deos tres* 4, PG 31, 1496B.

4. For the break of the traditional bond between ontology and epistemology by Eunomius see Martzelos, *Οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργειαι τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν Μέγαν Βασίλειον*, pp. 29 f.

5. *Epistola* CCXXXIV, 1, PG 32, 869AB: “Ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐκ τῶν ἐνεργειῶν γνωρίζειν

In other words, God has not only an *inner-Trinitarian* life consisting of the essential relationship of the three hypostases among themselves, but also an *outer-Trinitarian* life consisting of the relationship of the divine Persons with the created world through their energies. In this sense, the distinction between essence and energies of God, because of its ontological character is, according to Basil, valid objectively in God and is not subjective or intellectual, coming from the finite nature of the human intellect, as (mistakenly) the Roman-Catholic theologian E. von Ivánka maintained.¹ This is also shown more clearly from the fact that Basil connected this distinction with the distinction between essence and hypostases in a similar manner, so as to present the absolute correspondence between the eternal and the economic Trinity. Thus, according to Basil, the existence of one essence and three hypostases of God is reflected in the manifestation of the energy and the three particular works of his hypostases.²

But the epistemological significance of God's revelation in the world through his energies is not understood, according to Basil, independently of man's relationship and communion with God and participation in His being³. Familiarization with the revelation of God, which He grants through His energies, demands the ethical and spiritual purity of the human mind and its illumination by God.⁴ Only under these presuppositions can man on the one hand know of the existence of God, and of the variety of His energies from Creation⁵, and on the other hand know of the unity of essence and the peculiarity of His hypostases from His saving economy.⁶

λέγομεν τόν Θεόν ἡμῶν, τῇ δέ οὐσία αὐτῇ προσεγγίζειν οὐκ ὑπσχοῦμεθα. Αἱ μὲν γάρ ἐνέργειαι αὐτοῦ πρὸς ἡμᾶς καταβαίνουσιν, ἡ δέ οὐσία αὐτοῦ μένει ἀπρόσιτος”.

1. See E. von Ivánka, 'Palamismus und Vätertradition', in *L'Église et les églises. Études et travaux offerts à Dom Lambert Beaudouin* (Chevetogne 1955), vol. 2, pp. 33 ff.; E. von Ivánka, *Plato Christianus. Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter* (Einsiedeln, 1964), pp. 429 ff.; E. von Ivánka, 'Hellenisches im Hesychasmus. Das antinomische der Energienlehre', in *Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou* (Paris, 1972), p. 495.

2. See St. Basil the Great, *De Spiritu Sancto* 38, PG 32, 136ABC; see also Martzelos, *Οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργειαι τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τόν Μέγαν Βασίλειον*, pp. 110 ff.

3. As David Bradshaw characteristically notes, "the divine *energeiai* are not merely operations, but God Himself as manifested within creation. It follows that the sort of participation Basil describes is not merely cooperation with God, but an actual participation in the divine being" (Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, p. 174).

4. See St. Basil the Great, *In Psalmum XXIX*, 5, PG 29, 317B; *In Psalmum XXXIII*, 3, PG 29, 357BC; *In martyrem Julittam* 7, PG 31, 256A; *Epistola CCXXXIII*, 1-2, PG 32, 865A – 868B; *Adversus Eunomium* II, 16, PG 29, 604 AB; *De Spiritu Sancto* 23 PG 32, 109 AB; 61, PG 32 180 C; see also G. D. Martzelos, *Οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργειαι τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τόν Μέγαν Βασίλειον*, pp. 123 ff.

5. See St. Basil the Great, *Adversus Eunomium* I, 14, PG 29, 544B; *Homilia XII, In principium Proverbiorum* 3, PG 31, 392B.

6. See *Adversus Eunomium* III, 4 PG 29, 661B – 665A; *De Spiritu Sancto* 19, PG

It is in the frame of this epistemological significance of God's revelation through His energies and of these spiritual presuppositions that Basil gave a very interesting and original answer to the problem of the relationship between faith and knowledge. This problem apparently arose from the discussions between the Eunomians and the Orthodox. The Eunomians, as it is known, in considering the knowledge of the divine essence as the basis of their whole theology¹ undervalued the significance of faith for the knowledge of God as set forth by the Orthodox. It appears that for them the knowledge of the divine essence precedes faith in God. And indeed, in their setting forth the primacy of knowledge as over against faith often they would put the question to the Orthodox: "Which came first, knowledge or faith?"²

To this clearly epistemological question Basil responds by taking in view both its theological and its philosophical dimension. Now the answer he gives is not the same for philosophical and theological epistemology.³ For philosophical epistemology faith precedes knowledge. In the first place, one must, for example, believe that element *a* is called *alpha* and, having learned the character and its pronunciation, one can subsequently achieve a precise knowledge as respecting its use.⁴ But in Orthodox theological epistemology the question of the primacy between faith and knowledge is not important, because both the aim and the content of faith is identified with the aim and content of knowledge. In this sense, both the view that faith precedes knowledge and the view that knowledge precedes faith can be regarded as correct. "For if you say of one believing and knowing", Basil observes characteristically, "of what he believes, of these same things he also knows; or also conversely, of what he knows, these things too he believes".⁵ Yet, between these two views Basil inclines most evidently towards the second. From this perspective it appears that he agrees with the Eunomians that knowledge precedes faith. This knowledge, however, has according to him a completely different meaning. It is symmetrical to man's ability of comprehension and as such it cannot consist of the knowledge of the

32, 101C – 104A; 23, PG 32, 109 AB; 37, PG 32, 133CD; 47, PG 32, 153ABC; 64, PG 32, 185 BC. Cf. *Epistola* CLXXXIX, 6–7, PG 32, 692D – 693C. Especially on this point see Martzelos, *Οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργειαι τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν Μέγαν Βασίλειον*, pp. 140 ff.

1. On this point see G. D. Martzelos, *Οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργειαι τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν Μέγαν Βασίλειον*, pp. 27 ff.

2. See Basil of Caesarea, *Epistola* CCXXXV, 1, PG 32, 872A.

3. See C. Bonis, 'The problem concerning Faith and Knowledge, or Reason and Revelation, as expounded in the letters of St. Basil the Great to Amphilochius of Iconium', in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 5/1 (1959): p. 41 f.

4. See *Epistola* CCXXXV, 1, PG 32, 872AB.

5. St. Basil the Great, *Epistola* CCXXXIV, 3, PG 32, 869D – 872A.

essence of God but in the knowledge of His existence. And we are led to this knowledge from the energies of God, which are manifested in the creatures that came to be, that were created, by Him.¹ As a consequence, when Basil prefers the view that knowledge precedes faith, he means the fundamental knowledge concerning the existence of God. The existence of this elementary knowledge he considers necessary for the development of faith in God. Thus, religious faith is not, according to him, irrational and arbitrary; it is supported upon a rational foundation, which consists of the knowledge of the existence of God derived from the knowledge of creation.²

From another perspective, however, faith, according to Basil, precedes knowledge of God. The knowledge of God cannot be achieved by means of the organs of sense, but by means of the intellect, which is equipped through faith.³ Only through faith is it possible for the necessary pre-requisites of spiritual purity and divine illumination to be realized, for the achievement of the knowledge of God to be rendered possible. Besides, for Basil, faith constitutes the fundamental prerequisite of baptism.⁴ Through this, sharing in the salvific tradition of the Church, we achieve not only adoption by grace but also knowledge of God.⁵ And in this sense faith does not constitute simply the pre-requisite of knowledge, just as it is for philosophical epistemology, but is the pre-requisite of the ethical and spiritual life, and only within this framework is true knowledge of God possible.

According to these considerations faith and knowledge are closely connected with each other in a functional unity and constitute two forms of approaching the same thing, insofar as both are supported wholly by and in the energies of God, which are manifested in the world.⁶ On account of this, no dialectic antithesis subsists between them, something that occurred later during the Middle Ages and the more modern years in the West, when these were considered to be gnostic (cognitive) powers of the human mind functioning

1. *Epistola* CCXXXIV, 1, PG 32, 869 AB; *Epistola* CCXXXV, 1, PG 32, 872AB.

2. See *ibid.*, PG 32, 872 B; *Epistola* CCXXXIV, 3, PG 32, 872A.

3. See St. Basil the Great, *Homilia in illud 'Attende tibi ipsi'* 7, PG 31, 216A.

4. See St Basil the Great, *Adversus Eunomium* 3, PG 29, 665 C; *De Spiritu Sancto* 28, PG 32, 117BC.

5. See *De Spiritu Sancto* 26, PG 32, 113AB; cf. *ibid.*, 75, PG 32, 209. See also H. Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto. Der Beitrag des Basilius zum Abschluß des trinitarischen Dogmas* (Göttingen, 1956), pp. 133 f.; 'Basilius und das Dogma vom Heiligen Geist', in *Lutherische Rundschau*, 6 (1956–57): pp. 255 f.

6. On the relationship between faith and knowledge according to the Orthodox Theology in general see N. Matsoukas, *Γένεσις και ούσια του Όρθοδόξου δόγματος* (Thessaloniki, 1969), pp. 159 ff.; see also N. Matsoukas, *Κόσμος, άνθρωπος, κοινωνία κατά τον Μάξιμο Όμολογητή* (Athens, 1980), pp. 200, 305 f.

independently of the energies of God. If for Basil faith and knowledge are inseparably connected with each other, this is due to the fact that these are not understood independently of man's relationship with God. And it is precisely for this reason that these are not limited simply to a theoretical conception of the idea of God, but look to a deep existential relationship with Him, which Basil characterizes by the term 'proskynesis', veneration or worship. Knowledge, faith and worship constitute for him three stages of the relationship with God which are connected causally between them through the divine energies. Thus knowledge of God does not have as its aim simply and only the basing of faith but also guidance towards His worship.¹ Only in worship do faith and knowledge find their theological aim and their deeper meaning and significance.

The above-mentioned ontological and epistemological significance, which Basil attributes to the distinction between essence and energies of God, is clearly apparent in his teaching on the origin and significance of the divine names. He maintains that the names attributed to God come from human conception (ἐπίνοια), which is the unique source of the names of all beings in general. These names, while real, cannot declare the essence of beings but only their various properties.² Consequently, the names attributed to God cannot declare the divine essence, as Eunomius maintained, but only the various characteristics of the essence, hypostases and energies of God.³ Thus, ontology, epistemology and teaching on the divine names are, according to Basil, interconnected and causally tied together. Ontology is the foundation of his epistemology, and this in turn is the foundation of his teaching on the divine names. It is exactly for this reason that he was able to confront the theological methods of the Eunomians and the Pneumatomachians with two contrary but logically unshakable theological methods of his own, with which he proved the identity of the essence of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, invoking either the identity of their names⁴ or the identity of their energies.⁵

1. See St. Basil the Great, *Epistola* CCXXXIV, 3, PG 32, 869 C – 872 A; *Epistola* CCXXXV, 1, PG 32, 872B. See also P. Chrestou, *Ὁ Μέγας Βασίλειος. Βίος καὶ πολιτεία, συγγράμματα, θεολογικὴ σκέψις* (Thessaloniki, 1978), p. 243.

2. See *Adversus Eunomium* I, 6–7, PG 29, 521C – 525C; II, 4, PG 29, 577C – 580B.

3. See St Basil the Great, *Adversus Eunomium* I, 8, PG 29, 528A – 529 C; II, 5, PG 29, 580C. See also Martzelos, *Οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργειαι τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὸν Μέγαν Βασίλειον*, pp.158 ff.

4. See St. Basil the Great, *Adversus Eunomium* II, 24, PG 29, 628C; III, 3–4, PG 29, 661AB; *De Spiritu Sancto* 11, PG 32, 85A; 48, PG 32, 156C; 53, PG 32, 165D.

5. See St. Basil the Great, *Adversus Eunomium* III, 4, PG 29, 661 B – 665 A; *De Spiritu Sancto* 19, PG 32, 101C – 104A ; 53, PG 32, 165D. Cf. *Epistola* CLXXXIX, 6, PG 32, 692D – 693A.

Conclusion

In order to fully appreciate the significance of Saint Basil's teaching on essence and energies of God for the entire Orthodox tradition, we must stress that, with this teaching, he not only responded to the danger which Orthodoxy underwent from the Eunomians and Pneumatomachians, but also contributed decisively to the development and formulation of the Trinitarian doctrine, and especially that of the Holy Spirit. He thus prepared the ground for the theological work of the Second Ecumenical Council, which was called just two years after his death.

Chiefly, however, Basil, with his teaching on essence and energies of God, provided the framework for the correct relationship between the uncreated God and the created world, which is the fundamental presupposition for Orthodox Trinitarian doctrine as well as Orthodox Cosmology, Christology and Soteriology. In this way, he provided the necessary presuppositions for the proper manner of confronting not only the Christological question, which had already begun to preoccupy the theological thought of the Church from his own period, but also the question of man's real participation in the life of God, which occupied the theological thought of the Church in the fourteenth century. From this point of view, the contribution of St. Basil to the future development of Orthodox dogma was particularly important.

In particular, Basil put forward the ontological and epistemological significance of the distinction between God's essence and energies as well as its definitive importance for the origin and significance of the divine names, offering in this way the basis for subsequent development of the teaching on essence and energies of God within the Orthodox tradition. With the above-mentioned distinction, he indeed provided all the essential theological presuppositions for the connection made later by Palamas, between teaching on God's essence and energies and Orthodox spiritual experience and life, consisting in man's real communion with God and his divinization. Thus, St. Basil was one of the chief contributors to the development of this teaching as the criterion of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality.