

# CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW: UNDERSTANDINGS FROM ST BASIL THE GREAT

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**Abstract:** This article explores a few aspects pertaining to St Basil's contributions to the Christian worldview. Less researched in recent times – at least from this viewpoint – Basilian thinking can surprise contemporary readers by its fresh and balanced approach. In fact, it offers solutions to current challenges, such as bridging scientific and theological worldviews, and depicting a universe full of divine presence and meaning. The analysis proceeds by discussing St Basil's contributions to science and theology, then his vision of the cosmos as a theological school, and finally his vision of the world as a synergetic framework where divine and cosmic energies creatively interact.

In recent times, when not simply pushed into a cone of shadow, St Basil the Great's legacy is reduced to his significant contributions to doctrine, ecclesiastical politics, asceticism, ethics and exegesis. Within the almost general indifference, three monographs by Philip Rousseau,<sup>1</sup> Anna Silvas<sup>2</sup> and Stephen Hildebrand<sup>3</sup> stand alone in their attempts to highlight – for the English speaking readership – the complexity of his personality and work, beyond the variety of their respective approaches.<sup>4</sup> Even so, and quite surprisingly within contemporary trends to bridge tradition and scientific culture, his contributions to the ecclesial or Christian worldview – here, *Weltanschauung*, representation of reality, or cosmology in a very broad sense – do not elicit much interest. For example, when his elaborations on this field come under the scholarly scope, they are readily abandoned for the sake of the ethical connotations that can be inferred from it.<sup>5</sup> Very recently, however, St Basil's contributions to the Christian worldview have been succinctly addressed by Peter Bouteneff in

relation with the famous *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*.<sup>6</sup> Much has yet to be discussed. In the following, I shall try to articulate the Basilian approach to worldview, which is of relevance to the ongoing conversations between theologians and scientists, and to the more general theme of the Christian experience in the world.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, this paper will address three main topics: St Basil's attitude towards science, the significance of the world as a theological school (teaching-ground) and the interactive nature of reality.

### **Bridging Scientific Knowledge and Christian Worldview**

It is perhaps a truism to affirm that, beyond its imperfections,<sup>7</sup> St Basil offered in his *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* (whose date of publication is still disputed)<sup>8</sup> a gem of Christian scholarship that remained normative throughout the medieval period.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in undertaking to sketch a complete cosmology,<sup>10</sup> the great Cappadocian displayed a breadth of worldly knowledge,<sup>11</sup> which he successfully interpreted within a genuine Christian framework, both biblical and liturgical. In so doing, he greatly contributed to a process that had been initiated by the apostolic efforts to disseminate the gospel in the Hellenistic world, a process that continued long after the fourth century.

Thus, following in the footsteps of the early Christian apologists, and more specifically the second century erudite bishop Theophilus of Antioch,<sup>12</sup> St Basil aimed to provide his congregation and readership with a comprehensive description of the created realm, heavenly and earthly, human and biological, astronomical and mineral. It should be noted that this laborious depiction stemmed from, and unfolded around, the creation narrative in the first chapter of Genesis. Nevertheless, in contrast with earlier approaches – which engaged ancient culture in a polemical manner – and although the argumentative notes of his discourse are far from remaining inaudible, what motivated this tremendous effort in St Basil's case were primarily pastoral and salvific concerns.<sup>13</sup> As a caring pastor, he

undertook to familiarise his congregation with a universe seen as pervaded by divine wisdom and presence. This vision was diametrically opposite to the pessimistic Manichaean worldview, which seemingly began to affect some Christian milieus – an aspect to which I shall return.

It should also be noted that, as impressive as it might have been for his first audience and up until the dawn of modernity, this descriptive approach could not be maintained as St Basil's major contribution to the Christian worldview. In fact, the ancient depiction of reality on which his *Hexaemeron* heavily depended has become in time outdated.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, this by no means deprives the work of its relevance for a Christian theology of creation, which builds upon the ecclesial mindset and does not depend on any given cultural context.<sup>15</sup> For instance, any Christian from the past, present or the future, can be inspired by the Cappadocian's sense of wonder before the fine-tuning of the universe's parameters,<sup>16</sup> his realistic assessment of the natural mortality of creation,<sup>17</sup> and the ethical paradigms inferred from various animal and plant behaviours.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, when considered in relation with the anthropic cosmological principle,<sup>19</sup> St Basil's insistence on the ontological and teleological interconnectivity of human and cosmic realms<sup>20</sup> remains very much valid, both scientifically and theologically.

There are, nevertheless, other important aspects in the Basilian *Hexaemeron* which should not be overlooked given their relevance to the ecclesial experience, and the current conversations in science and theology. An outstanding contribution is his proof that the Christian worldview can creatively intersect with the cultural patterns and cosmological paradigms of the time. Epitomised by the polygonal character of St Basil's education, Christian and classical, the lesson of the *Hexaemeron* may be summarised along these lines: the coexistence and positive interaction of the scientific and theological worldviews is only possible when the two parties acknowledge both their own epistemological limitations and each other's competencies. The *Hexaemeron* abundantly illustrates this principle. Indeed, the homilies display both an expert use of the available science in explaining natural phenomena and a masterful interpretation of the scientific data within the scriptural framework.<sup>21</sup> This remarkable

accomplishment points to the fact that St Basil was fully aware of the analytical and descriptive character of the scientific endeavour and, respectively, the hermeneutical and interpretive character of the theological approach. Thus, in stark contrast with the unswerving rejection of pagan culture by earlier authors such as Tertullian,<sup>22</sup> and apart from his own rhetorical turns,<sup>23</sup> he managed to accommodate both approaches – that is, theological and scientific – in his undertaking to map the contours of reality.

He displayed amazement and appreciation for the scientific picture of the world,<sup>24</sup> implicitly dismissing such facile generalisations as the modern perception of a patristic worldview that developed ‘wholly at odds with the cosmology and anthropology of the Greek ancients.’<sup>25</sup> He actually took the general scientific knowledge of late antiquity as a legitimate description of reality. He never objected, for instance, to the geocentric model or any other feature pertaining to the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmography.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, whilst repudiating – on theological grounds – the atheist convictions of some ancient savants, St Basil manifested no real intention to debate the validity of their scientific theories. To give just one example, in a famous passage in which he considered the ramifications of ancient atomism,<sup>27</sup> he advocated the idea of a purposeful universe without questioning the scientific weight of the atomistic theory.

There is, however, another very interesting aspect about St Basil’s attitude toward science. Without becoming oblivious of God’s ever-creative and all-pervading energy, he elaborated at length on the natural character (as presented by the various sciences) of human, biological and cosmic phenomena. This interest in, and acknowledgment of, nature, which he successfully handed on to future generations of Byzantine theologians,<sup>28</sup> emerges with clarity through the following examples:

- Moses received from nature itself his propensity towards justice (ὁ τὴν πρὸς τὸ δίκαιον φιλίαν ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς φύσεως κεκτημένος);<sup>29</sup>
- The Holy Spirit activates the natural capacity of the waters for the germination of life (πρὸς ζωογονίαν τὴν τοῦ ὕδατος φύσιν παρασκευάζοντος);<sup>30</sup>
- The heat produced by the sun pertains to its nature and is not

borrowed from another body (ἐκ φύσεως εἶναι θερμόν, ἢ ἐκ πάθους ἔχειν τὴν πύρωσιν).<sup>31</sup>

There are many illustrations of this approach throughout the *Hexaemeron*; I shall return to the topic of St Basil's understanding of nature in the last section of this article.

The appreciation of science is nevertheless but one virtue of the *Hexaemeron*. Taking on the previous example referring to the atomistic theory, it should be noted that whilst presenting theology and science as two complementary approaches to reality, the saint relentlessly attacked the ideological wraps in which scientific information was, and still is, promoted to the broad public. More precisely, he endeavoured to dismantle systematically the atheist presuppositions embedded in some of the philosophical schools of late antiquity. Also, and related, he aimed at counteracting the attempts to depict scientific enquiry – otherwise theologically neutral – as an argument against the Christian vision of reality. Thus, in order to affirm the place of theology, St Basil adopted an intelligent strategy in relation to the sciences and their associated ideologies, which evokes the efforts undertaken by the early Christian apologists to bridge theology and science/philosophy by criticising pagan religiosity.<sup>32</sup> To put it simply, he attempted to disentangle the scientific demarche from its fortuitous connection with atheism. This approach is typified by his comment referring to the harmful impact of atheistic ideologies upon scientific discourse. He was actually convinced that the inconsistencies he traced within and between the various scientific theories originated in the ideological and irreligious assumptions of many of their authors:

The sages among the Greeks have struggled [to elaborate] many [theories] about nature (περὶ φύσεως), but not one idea (λόγος) of theirs remained unmoved and unshaken, the latter overthrowing the previous one. [...] Ignoring God, they could not conceive that an intelligent cause (αἰτία ἔμφρονα) preceded the genesis of all (τῆς γενέσεως τῶν ὄλων), drawing their conclusions from their initial ignorance [concerning God].<sup>33</sup>

At this point, he seems to have followed Theophilus,<sup>34</sup> either directly, which is not unlikely given the affinities between the above text (considered in its entirety)<sup>35</sup> and the discourse of the Antiochian bishop, or, alternatively, through the mediation of St Athanasius the Great.<sup>36</sup> One way or the other, it is very significant that in his approach to science St Basil was concerned neither with remediating the inconsistencies of the various pagan worldviews nor with producing a supposedly more reliable scientific cosmography.<sup>37</sup> This conclusion brings us back to the pastoral motivations behind the *Hexaemeron*. Indeed, St Basil's scholarly proficiency and scientific expertise did not take precedence in his position as a shepherd of the Church, no matter how passionate about knowledge he was.<sup>38</sup> His point against ignoring God's continuous activity within creation and the reduction of the cosmic algorithm to what we call today 'natural' factors ultimately remained theological. This consistent approach undoubtedly draws on his understanding of Genesis as a theological, not scientific, narrative.<sup>39</sup>

Before proceeding any further, one more aspect has to be addressed. Adjacent to his effort to disentangle the scientific endeavour from its association with atheistic ideologies, St Basil repeatedly denounced the illegitimate alliance between them as the main cause for the fading of values and meanings. He pointed out, for instance, the failure of some ancient cosmologies – like that of the Stoics, with its recurrent cycles of conflagration and rebirth<sup>40</sup> – to appreciate the beauty of creation as indicative of the divine wisdom that pervades reality together with the universe's vocation to permanence and fulfilment.<sup>41</sup> Or, beauty cannot be the outcome of random forces or an accident. For this reason, St Basil could not accept either the prospect of its disappearance or the idea of an eschatological dissolution of the universe. Against the weakness characterising ancient cosmologies, from the outset he noted with clarity – although without polemical overtones – that the notion of renewal and/or perfection as a final purpose of the cosmos is entrenched in the very first words of the creation narrative:

The anticipated statement of the dogmas concerning the world's consummation (*συντελείας*) and transformation (*μεταποιήσεως*) is now

handed on as an utterance through the elements of the inspired teaching:  
'In the beginning God made.'<sup>42</sup>

This declaration renders inaccurate Rousseau's interpretation of the eschatological fulfilment of creation as 'a return to a world that was invisible and eternal,' an 'ancient fatherland' which he construes as a heavenly, disembodied paradise.<sup>43</sup> Overstepping the Basilian dependence on the Platonic and Origenist traditions, an aspect that will be addressed shortly, Rousseau fails to notice the Cappadocian's prudent use of these sources. What matters at this stage, however, is that the phrase 'ancient fatherland' (in fact not employed in the *Hexaemeron*)<sup>44</sup> refers to the biblical paradise as depicted in Genesis 2 and not a heavenly realm. Moreover, the interpretation of the eschaton in terms of a disembodied and invisible condition would question the consistency of St Basil's critique of the Stoic worldview.<sup>45</sup>

To conclude this discussion, it is noteworthy that St Basil demonstrated throughout his *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* wisdom and discernment, abundantly (yet without pedantic references) integrating features of Hellenistic culture both in the interpretive approach to Genesis and in the articulation of the Christian worldview. More precisely, undertaking to retell the Genesis story for an audience conditioned by the Hellenistic paradigm, he placed the whole narrative within the current cultural setting and made skilful use of its powerful tools. In the process, he managed to reinterpret within a genuine Christian framework some aspects pertaining to the scientific dimension of the paradigm, making room for values, meaning and purpose, which became possible only after he dissociated science from its ideological entanglements. Correlatively, whilst validating some aspects of scientific cosmography as useful tools for the ecclesial view of reality, St Basil could distance himself from the questionable aspects of the cultural context and any emotional attachment to its fragile certainties.

Drawing on a coherent and efficient 'know-how,' such achievements can inspire the contemporary conversations between scientists and theologians. It is remarkable in fact how this approach has been fruitfully

reiterated in the last century by a series of Orthodox scholars in their attempts to engage the new scientific paradigm.<sup>46</sup>

### **The world as a theological school**

Another point of interest is St Basil's assessment of the world in terms of a theological school or, literally, a teaching-ground (*διδασκαλείον και παιδευτήριον*).<sup>47</sup> This seems to be a corollary of the anthropic principle, referred to above. The fact that the cosmos as a whole and the terrestrial ecosystem in particular have many things to 'teach' us<sup>48</sup> comes as no surprise, since the universe is created for humanity and shaped according to the parameters of its existence.<sup>49</sup> Recent scholars have not ignored the topic of the world as a school. Nevertheless, quoting the phrase 'teaching-ground,' both Rousseau<sup>50</sup> and Bouteneff<sup>51</sup> mainly retain its common ethical meaning whilst paying attention neither to its hermeneutical function within the *Hexaemeron* nor to its liturgical connotations. In the following, I will propose that the theme of the school is central to the Basilian work considered here and not merely a paideutic digression. As the underlying theme of the *Hexaemeron*, in fact it shapes the entire discourse of the homilies. This explains why the exploration of creation and the effort to picture a worldview ultimately became for St Basil a quest for the marks of the Creator's wisdom and the meaning of human life. At the end of this discussion, the richness of the Basilian concept of a theologically meaningful and purposeful creation will become evident.

The theme of the world as a teaching-ground seems to derive from St Basil's understanding of the Genesis accounts of creation and paradise as pedagogical parables.<sup>52</sup> In a text attributed to him, it is stated: 'the story of the fashioning of man is a lesson [*παιδευσις*] for our life'.<sup>53</sup> Although the value of this statement can be challenged on the grounds of its doubtful Basilian authorship,<sup>54</sup> it ostensibly reiterates the saint's elaborations on the symbolic architecture of the human being<sup>55</sup> which he offered as an interpretation for a passage in Genesis 1:24 (LXX). Given at least the concord between these two texts, we can surmise that the approach to the biblical narratives as educational paradigms was crucial for St Basil's

concept of the cosmos as a theological school. This assumption will lead us through the following analysis.

The Basilian approach to worldview via scriptural exegesis very likely drew on Origen the Alexandrian.<sup>56</sup> For Origen, theology mainly consisted in biblical exegesis,<sup>57</sup> an aspect that led to his articulation of *φυσική* – contemplation of the physical reality, a stage in the process of spiritual formation<sup>58</sup> – as mediated by the ethical and spiritual interpretations of the Bible.<sup>59</sup> For example, Origen's *First Homily on Genesis*<sup>60</sup> goes as far as to propound that the narrative of creation should be taken as a pretext to speak of the spiritual – or ascetical – remaking of the human being. Similarly, and in line with his pedagogical approach to the Genesis account, St Basil presented the world – which includes the terrestrial ecosystem and the far reaches of space alike – as a privileged place where people are offered indefinite possibilities to learn about God and themselves.<sup>61</sup> Between Origen and St Basil's respective approaches there is a range of continuities and discontinuities that cannot be addressed here in full.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of its emphatically cosmological approach, by contrast with the almost acosmistic Origenian view of the creation narrative,<sup>63</sup> St Basil's discourse is not altogether deprived of spiritual connotations.<sup>64</sup> The prologue of the *Hexaemeron*, for instance, seems to take as a starting point the traditional parameters of the spiritual approach,<sup>65</sup> to which I will now turn.

In an indirect manner, by way of rhetorical interrogations, the prologue of the *Hexaemeron*<sup>66</sup> exhorts the reader of Genesis to walk the ascetic path until his or her soul is purified (*καθαρευουσιν*). It furthermore implies that only the state of purification prompts one to be a proper recipient of the superior teachings suggested or, literally, signified (*τὰ σημαινόμενα*) by the unsophisticated phraseology (*τῶν μικρῶν φωνῶν*; literally 'small voices') of the narrative. Otherwise, it seems, the higher message of the narrative would remain elusive.<sup>67</sup> Surprisingly, however, the prologue does not promise, as one would expect after such important statements, either a spiritual interpretation of Genesis or a mystical contemplation of the world. In fact, along with their overall descriptive and scientific-like character, the sermons do not display more than doxological expressions

of wonder before the wise making of creation and indeed frequent ethical digressions<sup>68</sup> (touching on the formative intent of the work and converging towards the theme of the school). We find here, therefore, a discrepancy within the economy of the work, namely a tension between the spiritualising prologue and the descriptive content of the actual homilies. This provocative discrepancy – altogether ignored by recent scholars of the *Hexaemeron* – cannot be unintentional. The saint's silence with reference to the loftier contemplations alluded to by the prologue (and related texts like *Hexaemeron* 2.1, mentioned above),<sup>69</sup> together with his famous tirade against allegory<sup>70</sup> may have been required, as noted in scholarship,<sup>71</sup> by the effort to accommodate his less educated audiences and readership. It is not impossible, however, that the same approach was related to the traditional *disciplina arcani*.<sup>72</sup> If this were the case, by deliberately refraining from incursions into broader horizons St Basil would have built a barrier against indiscretions regarding the mystical teachings. Likewise, and in a positive reiteration of the *disciplina* within the practice of spiritual guidance, by not providing all the answers he would have intended to incite the reader towards further enquiry.<sup>73</sup> In fact, he believed that 'by this silence [concerning the formation of the elements], history enticed our mind to exercise our aptitude in order to reflect on the rest, having [just] a small starting point.'<sup>74</sup> The use of the *disciplina* reveals two less explored sides of St Basil's personality as both a genuine Christian apologist and a skilful spiritual father.

St Basil seems to have tentatively lured the reader towards a spiritual examination of the cosmos and the scriptural account. He may have also suggested a similar approach for the reader of his own hexaemeronic elaborations.<sup>75</sup> Within this context, the discrepancy between the spiritualising prologue and the descriptive character of the homilies would play the role of an implicit call to further ponder the interpretations propounded by the homilist.

All things considered, St Basil's indirect invitation<sup>76</sup> to take the three-stage path of perfection and thus to ascend through the practice of ascetic detachment and natural contemplation towards the mystical vision of God, only now makes sense. Such high spiritual exigencies, evocative

of the Origenian pathway to perfection,<sup>77</sup> would be utterly misplaced if the intent of the homilies were the literal reading of Genesis together with a scientific-like exploration of the world. Or, within the plot of the prologue, Moses' personal trajectory seems to have become – more than an inspirational paradigm – a hermeneutical key necessary to unlock the inner meanings of both the scriptural and cosmic narratives. We can actually surmise that, together with the tradition of spiritual exegesis of Genesis as a starting point for natural contemplation, what inspired the saint to refer to the world as a school was precisely Moses' experience in the wilderness. In his own words, after 'dedicating forty full years to the contemplation of the things that are (τῆ θεωρίᾳ τῶν ὄντων)' Moses eventually reached the climax of the mystical life and 'saw God.'<sup>78</sup> The prophet's example illustrates therefore the possibility of finding God in his creation. This lead seems to confirm my assertion concerning the mark of the *disciplina arcani* upon the *Hexaemeron*: the homilies are meant to stir in the reader the desire for a similar contemplative approach to the architecture of God's creation – through the lens of the scriptural account – as a manifestation of divine wisdom.

As epitomised by the contemplative experience of Moses, St Basil's commitment to a spiritual hermeneutic explains why both the world and the scriptural narrative on cosmogenesis are taken in the *Hexaemeron* as sources for a Christian pedagogy rooted in a holistic worldview. One step closer to our topic, a significant aspect emerges from the previous considerations, namely the fact that precisely by taking the spiritual approach St Basil was able to ascribe positive connotations to the theme of the world as a teaching-ground. Thus, he offered a new and balanced version of the concept, thoroughly extricated from any pessimistic – Neoplatonic and Origenist – appraisal of the cosmos as a transitory place of learning through the pain and misery so related to materiality.

Along with its biblical inspiration, this positive approach might once more indicate the saint's reliance on the canonical version of Alexandrian tradition, as represented by St Athanasius the Great.<sup>79</sup> For St Athanasius, in truth, creation embodies a divine syntax, each thing, living or not, representing a written character. Given their syntactic coherence,

the ensemble of all these letters conveys through the colossal tome of the universe – *in vasto mundi volumine*, to use the Cartesian coinage<sup>80</sup> – one theological message. In itself an ingenious version of the so-called cosmological proof of God’s existence, this understanding presents the contemplation of creation’s order in terms of a theologically significant structure of reality. In St Athanasius’ own words,

The knowledge of God (τὴν περὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ γνῶσιν) can be also reached from the visible things (ἀπὸ τῶν φαινόμενων), given that by its order and harmony (διὰ τῆς τάξεως καὶ ἁρμονίας) creation points to, and loudly declares, its Lord and Creator, as though through letters (ὡσπερ γράμμασι).<sup>81</sup>

Creation features here as itself an implicit Scripture,<sup>82</sup> a ‘book’ of the divine revelation or a complex web of theophanies which plays an analogous role to St Basil’s metaphor of the teaching-ground. The *Hexaemeron* commences on a similar note, by reiterating the possibility of knowing God through the order of the visible realm (τῆς τῶν ὁρωμένων διακοσμῆσεως).<sup>83</sup> It is apparent therefore that, possibly inspired by the metaphor of a meaningful cosmos in Psalm 18:1-4 (LXX)<sup>84</sup> and the revelatory world as sketched by Romans 1:19-20,<sup>85</sup> the fathers never reduced creation to either the state of a ‘nature’ deprived of divine presence or a hollow space marked by pointlessness. As *materia signata*, to paraphrase St Thomas Aquinas,<sup>86</sup> cosmic existence bears the imprint, or signature, of the creator Logos and is therefore theologically significant. This tenet has been defended by the Church fathers in utter contrast to the dualistic systems of late antiquity, like Gnosticism and Manichaeism – characterised by the opposition of spirit and matter – which usually construed the material world as an irrational and worthless domain.<sup>87</sup>

Before continuing our analysis of the topic of the world as a theological school, it is worth pointing to other factors that equally contributed to the arrangement of the hexaemeron homilies around this theme. Contrary to Rousseau’s opinion,<sup>88</sup> the importance of these factors – polemical in nature and thus outside the scope of the spiritual life – should not be overlooked. So far, we have determined that St Basil drew on Origen’s and St Athanasius’ reflections on the order of creation as a source for the knowledge of God; also, that natural contemplation is

consequently useful in the process of one's spiritual formation, as in the example of Moses. Nevertheless, the idea of the school likewise played a significant role in St Basil's refutation of the Manichean myth of creation, which presented the material world as brought into being by an evil deity and therefore void of positive qualities.<sup>89</sup> As a side note, this explicit reference to the Manichean system and other dualisms points to these religions as St Basil's main polemical target and not the Arian heresy, as superficially maintained by Bouteneff<sup>90</sup> and Rousseau.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, Arianism together with Judaism were questioned by the saint, but for their failure to interpret Genesis 1:26 as a Trinitarian reference<sup>92</sup> and not in relation to the underlying theme and focus of the homilies.

Another external factor is the popularity of astrological fairy tales, which imagined humanity as governed by the sky's configuration rather than defined by free choice. Such beliefs came to be uncompromisingly refuted by St Basil, who asserted – in accordance with Genesis 1:14 – that the celestial bodies serve people (the anthropic principle, again) instead of ruling their lives. Furthermore, he skillfully pointed out the inadvertences rooted in the pseudoscience of astrology.<sup>93</sup> Finally, the theme of the school seems to have aimed at counteracting, as has been shown in the previous section, the atheistic ideologies that hijacked ancient cosmology and denied the perspective of a purposeful universe. In the homilies, indeed, the theme of the school seems to be integrated into St Basil's efforts to demonstrate the purposefulness that pervades the entire creation. The following fragment endorses this understanding:

...the cosmos has not been conceived vainly and without reason<sup>94</sup> given that it is assembled for some beneficial purpose and the great use of all beings. Thus, since it truly is a teaching-ground for the conscious souls (*ψυχῶν λογικῶν διδασκαλεῖον*) and a school of divine knowledge (*θεογνωσίας παιδευτήριον*), through the guidance (*διὰ χειραγωγίαν*) of the visible and sensible things the mind is led to the contemplation of the invisible ones.<sup>95</sup>

Together with the Origenist and Platonic overtones of this phraseology, such as the perception of the visible realm as guiding the souls toward the invisible, the logic of the quoted fragment cannot escape us. Elaborating within the scriptural setting, St Basil rejected any possibility of interpreting

the world outside the perspective of God as the origin of all that is; we have seen more of this aspect in the previous section. Consequently, given the wisdom generally reflected in the interconnectedness of the realms, he reached the logical conclusion that the universe is teleologically conditioned and characterised by purpose. These two stances, however, are not readily digestible in our times. For instance, the first assertion is reluctantly addressed even by contemporary cosmologists, who, whilst acknowledging rationality as the infrastructure of reality, do not uplift their thought to the contemplation of its divine source, that is, the Logos of God. In turn, the second assertion outrages many contemporary minds, accustomed to take the world as an axiologically neutral space to be experimented with or a reservoir of natural resources to be greedily exploited for the sake of our comfort – or thirst for power, for that matter. Nevertheless, working from within the ecclesial tradition and having been exposed to the mystical teachings of the saints,<sup>96</sup> St Basil proposed a very different picture of the world, God's creation.

Guided by the scriptural narrative, the eyes of faith in God as creator explore the universe in manners that have nothing in common with scientific inquisitiveness, economic interests (which can suffocate souls, depriving them of the sense of awe for the meaningful beauty of things)<sup>97</sup> and leisurely pursuits, which are so widespread today. Indeed, St Basil's method denotes a profound sensitivity for the world's corolla of wonders, entailing a careful respect and apophatic reverence for both nature and its maker.<sup>98</sup> This deferential approach is illustrated for instance by the saint's consistent reference to God as supreme beauty and a skilful artisan, corresponding to the designation of the universe as a structured order, *κόσμος* (literally, ornament or beauty).<sup>99</sup> As an expression of divine wisdom, the world is not to be therefore treated with sang-froid, anatomically, without regard for its continuous and intrinsic relationship with the creator. Symptomatically, when facing the reductionisms of his time, St Basil exclaimed: 'let us cease talking about the essence (*περι τῆς οὐσίας*) [of things], since we have been convinced by Moses that God has created the sky and the earth.'<sup>100</sup> In doing so he in fact urged his audiences and readership to cease looking for abstract concepts – which can so

easily mislead by oversimplifying reality – and to rejoice at the sight of a complex world that speaks of its creator through the concrete beauty of its making. He urged:

I want you to imprint in yourself an utmost sense of wonder for what is made (τῆς κτίσεως), so that no matter where you are, the presence of some of those belonging to the genus of growing things (γένηι τῶν φυομένων; plants) clearly reminds you of the creator (τοῦ ποιήσαντος).<sup>101</sup>

Thus, as well as being our maternal abode, to the contemplative eyes the universe unfolds as an artistic structure (τεχνικὸν κατασκευάσμα), symphonic and harmonious,<sup>102</sup> an epiphany of God's wisdom and beauty. Evoking the experience of God's people, St Basil designated the world as creation's liturgical (literally, 'common,' 'communal' or 'general') choir (τὴν κοινὴν τῆς κτίσεως χοροστασίαν) that continually intones the hymn to its maker.<sup>103</sup> Better than any theological school, by doxologically referring to God in an unceasing manner creation teaches us, in wordless ways, to acknowledge him and to interpret everything in the light of his presence and intention. The revelation of this truth can inspire us, bringing back joy and hope to a society that, functioning like a 'common and public school of indecency' (κοινὸν καὶ δημόσιον διδασκαλεῖον ἀσελγείας),<sup>104</sup> which considers life and the world as pointless, has fallen into a deep state of depression. Or, by learning the wisdom of creation, the inner desert of faithless souls can be transfigured through the acknowledgment of life as a gift, which has to be embraced with eucharistic gratitude. In this vein, at the end of his first homily on the days of creation, St Basil broke out in doxology, whilst illustrating how the cosmic school works by way of vertical analogies:

Let us glorify the noble artist (τὸν ἀριστοτέχνην) for all that wisely and artistically (σοφῶς καὶ ἐντέχνως) has been accomplished. From the beauty of the visible things (τοῦ κάλλους τῶν ὄρωμένων) let us form an idea of the one that is supremely beautiful (τὸν ὑπέρεκαλον), and from the majesty of these delimited bodies that are accessible through senses (τῶν αἰσθητῶν τούτων καὶ περιγραφτῶν σωμάτων) let us make an analogy for him who is boundless, supremely magnificent (τὸν ἄπειρον καὶ ὑπερμεγέθη)<sup>105</sup> and who surpasses all understanding by the fullness of his power.

St Basil's exposition of the world as a school has various ramifications for current Christian experience, among which the best represented in

the *Hexaemeron* are the ethical paradigms and the numerous invitations to a doxological acknowledgment of God's gifts. One further aspect I shall mention here. Given that the school of creation is open to all, the Cappadocian strongly believed – together with St Paul (cf. Romans 1:19-20; 2:14) – that virtue could be achieved both in the lives of the unbelievers and the people separated from the Church.<sup>106</sup> Drawing on the early Christian approaches to pagan philosophy, this conviction (already illustrated by his *Address to the Youth*) confirms the efficacy of creation as a teaching-ground, in its potential to prepare all nations and cultures for the encounter with Christ, the Logos of everything. His elaborations on the world as a theological school witness therefore to an all-embracing, pan-Christian humanism that transcends religious and cultural boundaries.

### **The interactive aspect of reality**

From the many themes pertaining to the ecclesial worldview, as addressed by St Basil, we turn now to a topic largely ignored by contemporary researchers, namely the interactive or synergetic aspect of nature. For St Basil, rather than representing a self-sufficient object, created reality, or 'this great and varied workshop of the divine fashioning action' (τὸ μέγα τοῦτο καὶ ποικίλον τῆς θείας δημιουργίας ἐργαστήριον),<sup>107</sup> constitutes a vast and open field in which both divine and cosmic rays creatively converge. To a great extent, its own parameters aside, the concept of synergy can be construed as related to that of the world as a theological school. Precisely on the level of this interaction the universe manifests its character as an epiphany of God. This point is addressed by Lossky (without reference to the topic of the school)<sup>108</sup> when commenting on the Basilian presentation of the divine energies as belonging to the realm of 'economy' and therefore as mediating God's accessibility to us. Although this detail is of great significance for the understanding of the world as a teaching-ground of divine knowledge, this paper will not explore this connection any further.

I have already reviewed, along with other interesting worldview-related themes, St Basil's realistic assessment of created nature in terms of an inconsistent, bounded and perishable reality. Being ontologically

contingent and perishable by nature,<sup>109</sup> the universe can neither survive nor evolve of itself without being constantly pervaded and supported by the vivifying waves of divine energy, that is, ‘the creator’s power’ (τῆ δυνάμει τοῦ κτίσαντος).<sup>110</sup> Again, St Basil seems to refer to St Athanasius’ exposition of the world’s dependence on the permanent and immanent activity of God. For St Athanasius, creation, in order to maintain its existence necessarily relies upon the ‘lordship, providence and organising work of the Logos’ (τῆ τοῦ Λόγου ἡγεμονίᾳ καὶ προνοίᾳ καὶ διακοσμήσει), since it is fundamentally ‘fluid, weak and mortal.’<sup>111</sup>

Notwithstanding his agreement with the great Alexandrian, St Basil managed to go beyond the classical concept of a divine power unilaterally exerted upon, and within, the universe, by strongly pointing to the interactive character of reality. He repeatedly noted,<sup>112</sup> it is true, that the physical limitations of the cosmos are obvious on the level of its generative capacities, which would remain latent if not activated by the divine will and power. Nevertheless, even though still struggling with the ancient concept of inert matter he was deeply convinced that the natural energies have a definite role to play within the unfolding history of the universe and life.<sup>113</sup> As a side remark, this conviction represents an alternative superior to current reductionist trends which oppose creation, as a supernatural event, and evolution, as a natural phenomenon. Commenting on a selection of fragments from *Hexaemeron* 5,<sup>114</sup> Meyendorff pertinently observed that, following in the footsteps of St Athanasius, St Basil believed in the natural generative capacity of created reality:

...affirming creation in time, Basil maintains the reality of a created movement and dynamism in creatures. The creatures do not simply receive their form and diversity from God; they possess an energy, certainly also God-given, but authentically their own.<sup>115</sup>

Meyendorff continued this line of thought by adding that, as earlier in St Athanasius and later in St Maximus, the Cappadocian believed in a continuous exertion of divine providence that both brings into being and maintains the universe in existence, ‘but not at the expense of the world’s own created dynamism, which is part of the creative plan itself.’<sup>116</sup> Within the same context, he reached an important conclusion, that this

natural dynamism makes possible an autonomously scientific exploration of the universe and, from a different angle, legitimises the theological interpretation of reality, given that this natural dynamism points to God. These crucial notes indirectly endorse the points I made in the previous two sections of the paper.

Now, returning to the generative capacities latent within the world and their divine activation, the best illustration of this principle is perhaps St Basil's note on the phrase 'the earth was invisible and unorganised' from Genesis 1:2 (LXX):

[The earth] was in painful labours (ὠδίνουσα) with the generation of all things through the power stored in it (ἐναποτεθεισάν ... δύναμιν)<sup>117</sup> by the demiurge, waiting for the auspicious times (καθήκοντας χρόνους) when, by a divine call, it would bring out into the open (προαγάγη ... εἰς φανερόν) the things engendered (τὰ κηήματα) within it.<sup>118</sup>

This powerful metaphor both evokes and transfigures the ancient mythical imagery of the wedding of sky and earth,<sup>119</sup> in fact still bearing its powerful erotic connotations. In St Basil's plastic depiction, God, somehow represented as a masculine principle, lovingly impregnates created matter,<sup>120</sup> thus activating its maternal or generative capacity.<sup>121</sup> As a result of this unfathomable interaction – which cannot be properly addressed without recourse to such poetical devices – matter's metaphorical pregnancy becomes the origin of the terrestrial ecosystem and the entire cosmos as well.<sup>122</sup> With or without metaphors, it is obvious that the 'pregnant' matter has been endowed by the Creator with a generative potential which would remain inert if deprived of God's discrete energy. We encounter the same idea, clearly articulated, in the very beginning of the chapter, within a new refutation of what the author held to be Manichaeism. There, St Basil suggested the 'efficacious power of God' (ἡ δραστική τοῦ Θεοῦ δύναμις) in conjunction with the 'receptive character of matter' (ἡ παθητική φύσις τῆς ὕλης)<sup>123</sup> as the two necessary factors contributing to the establishment of the whole order of creation. As already pointed out, these are not isolated notes. Presented by way of a different metaphor, the dynamic interaction between divine and cosmic energies recurs in the ninth homily,<sup>124</sup> to which I shall soon turn, with an emphasis on the continuous

character of this unfolding event. Nevertheless, before advancing to this different setting – referring the sixth hexaemeron day – a further remark is in order, to strengthen the position of the principle of synergy within tradition. The pretext for this note is offered by the fact that it deals with the same context in the narrative of creation.

Beyond the famous opposition between the supernatural and the natural, which ultimately led to the western clash of science and religion,<sup>125</sup> the interactive or synergetic principle remains fundamental for the ecclesial worldview. A generation after St Basil, St John Chrysostom displayed a similar comprehension of Genesis 1:2 yet with reference to the metaphor of the Spirit hovering over the waters. For him, the ‘moving’ (κινούμενον) primordial water, vibrating and full of a ‘living power of some sort’ (ζωτικήν τινα δύναμιν) could not beget life of itself, being in need of the ‘vivifying energy’ (ἐνεργεῖα τις ζωτική) of the Spirit.<sup>126</sup> The consensus between the two fathers is obvious. In fact, when addressing the same metaphor, St Basil applied an identical interpretation, only supported by his preference for a Syriac version that pictured the Spirit as an ecosystemic agent who

...thoroughly warmed up (συνέθαλπε) and vivified the nature of the waters (ἐζωογονεῖ τὴν τῶν ὑδάτων φύσιν), like in the image of a bird hatching the eggs, endowing them with some sort of living power (ζωτικήν τινα δύναμιν).<sup>127</sup>

Along with following St Basil’s line of thought, Chrysostom clearly incorporated Basilian terminology (e.g., ζωτικήν τινα δύναμιν) in his own interpretation of the biblical text. In the light of and beyond these metaphors, the message conveyed by St Basil and St John is that the entire formation of the world unfolds as a continuous synergetic act, a dynamic convergence of created and uncreated factors.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, there is indication that St Basil seems to have taken both depictions – of the earth’s pregnancy and the Spirit hovering over the waters – as applicable to any stage within the universe’s complex unfolding between the Alpha and the Omega. If this is the case, then Genesis does not only depict past events. Instead, it points to a universe still in the making, still journeying towards its eschatological horizon, the eighth day of creation.<sup>129</sup> St Basil endorsed this interpretation in the ninth homily:

Think of the word of God running through creation (διὰ τῆς κτίσεως τρέχον), still active (ἐνεργούν) now as it has been from the beginning (ἀρξάμενον), and efficient until the end in order to bring the world to fulfilment (ἕως ἂν ὁ κόσμος συμπληρωθῆ).<sup>130</sup>

The fragment leaves no room for doubt: St Basil represented the divine word or energy as an uninterrupted wave that pervades, like the ocean of neutrinos in contemporary cosmology, the entire space-time continuum, playing a vital yet discrete role in the universe's evolution. We can infer that for him the metaphors in Genesis 1:2 referred to a chaotic state of the cosmos on its way to higher organisation, implying the existence of a reservoir of potentialities whose content is actualised or realised gradually – throughout the history of creation from beginning to end. All things considered, we are led so far to a double conclusion: that St Basil believed in a humble or kenotic God who condescends to work through the natural possibilities of the universe, with which he endows it, and at the same time, that the cosmos exists and thrives only by being sustained by God's creative power.

The content of this ongoing process, interpreted as an interactive experience, came to be more thoroughly explored by St Basil in his treatise *On the Holy Spirit*, his last major published text (in 376)<sup>131</sup> and a tremendously significant work on the meaning of tradition. According to St Basil (and given the pneumatological focus of the work), the entire divine *oikonomia* concerning the world reaches fulfilment by means of the Holy Spirit, presented as a source of both life and holiness. There is no space within the confines of creation that is deprived of the Spirit's presence; there is no creature that does not have its origin in the work of the Spirit; there is no perfection of creation outside the life-giving and enlightening energy of the Spirit. Co-worker with the Logos in the making of the universe, the Spirit immediately answers creation's thirst for the fullness of being, for life and holiness.<sup>132</sup> This, in turn, indicates that nothing can attain natural perfection without the divine gift of the Spirit; the interactive or synergetic principle that pervades the Basilian works is thus confirmed. Indeed, for St Basil, the organisation of the universe, of our earth and the life on it, is possible only in the active presence of the Logos and the Holy Spirit. Representing in itself a succinct treatise on the

identity and economy of the Spirit, the ninth chapter of the work depicts the multitude of graces he bestows upon creation:

[All things are] watered by his breath and helped on to reach their proper and natural purpose (τὸ οἰκείον καὶ κατὰ φύσιν τέλος). Perfecting all other things, [...] he is the giver of life (ζωῆς χορηγόν) [...] and omnipresent. [...] By nature unapproachable, he is apprehended through goodness (χωρητὸν δι' ἀγαθότητα), filling all things with his power (πάντα πληροῦν τῇ δυνάμει), [...] in essence simple, in powers various, wholly present in each and wholly everywhere...<sup>133</sup>

The immense variety of the Spirit's manifestations, energies (ἐνέργειαι) or graces (χάριτες)<sup>134</sup> through which his presence in creation comes to be manifested, is reiterated in chapter 19.48-49.<sup>135</sup> Again, St Basil adopted here the apophatic approach, pointing to the inexhaustibility of the Holy Spirit's gifts. More precisely, he maintained that if we cannot know the multitude of blessings currently bestowed by the Spirit, we could even less anticipate the power (δύναμις) through which he will operate in the ages to come.<sup>136</sup> Although the treatise's emphasis falls mainly on the eschatological dimensions of renewal and fulfilment,<sup>137</sup> it is obvious that for St Basil the universe depends on the Holy Spirit's support throughout its entire duration.<sup>138</sup>

The theme of the synergetic character of reality opens up interesting avenues. For instance, it leads to a necessary reassessment of the popular representation of divine activity in the world, the meaning of the philosophical construct of 'nature' and the origin of the pointless conflict of creationism vs. evolutionism. By way of concluding, let us briefly address these points, one by one.

Some Christian cosmologies imagine God as an omnipotent entity situated 'outside' creation, absolutely transcendent and wholly detached from both the universe and us. Furthermore, they accept as the only signs of this entity the world's creation and a series of arbitrary manifestations *ex machina*, that is, miracles, taken as events through which the laws of nature are abrogated. The complications entailed by this understanding cannot be treated here. What we learn from St Basil, however, is that the mode of God's activity in the world is not episodic but continuous; it does

not suspend the laws of nature but is an essential part of them; it is not an ostentatious manifestation of power but a humble (or kenotic) expression of a God that adapts himself to the weaknesses of his creation. From this reinterpretation emerges a different understanding of nature. Usually represented as an autonomous reality existing outside God, nature is for St Basil a created entity, indeed, but by no means separated from its creator. It is true, the waves of divine energy that pervade creation to a great extent elude our measuring devices, but so are many of the subatomic ingredients of reality as theorised by contemporary cosmologists. It should be noted however that St Basil's depiction of the transformative experiences of the saints<sup>139</sup> allows for an understanding of their bodies as accurate 'measurement tools' of the divine presence. The first two points lead at last to a reconsideration of the premises of the painful warfare of creationism and evolutionism. At the origin of the conflict lie two basic concepts: the idea of *Deus ex machina* that sporadically suspends the order of a nature (defended by creationists), and the idea of a nature completely autonomous and self-sufficient (defended by evolutionists). St Basil's understanding of the Christian worldview points to a different aspect of reality. The humble God of St Basil is permanently at work within and through the natural possibilities of a universe that ultimately remains open to, and dependent on, him. Both ideologies, therefore, namely creationism and evolutionism, build on premises that do not draw on ecclesial worldview.

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Mostly ignored and forgotten by contemporary scholars, St Basil's contributions to Christian cosmology remain a source of inspiration. The purpose of this article was to make obvious the perennial and challenging character of his elaborations, which can encourage a fresh approach in the quest for meaning and purpose within a culture suffocated by nihilism and atheism. Indeed, his passionate approach to life, the world and reality – not to mention the powerful topic of the world as a school – might serve as an implicit exhortation for our culture to acknowledge creation as God's gift and to adopt a corresponding lifestyle. Finally, it can only be hoped that his contributions concerning the interactive aspect of reality will be further and seriously considered in the unfolding conversations between scientists and theologians.

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*I dedicate this article to the memory of my late mentor, Revd Professor Dumitru Popescu (1929-2010; University of Bucharest and Romanian Academy), a passionate researcher of St Basil's thought and the inspiration for my interest in Christian cosmology.*



## NOTES:

- <sup>1</sup> Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley - Los Angeles - London: University of California Press, 1998).
- <sup>2</sup> Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon of St Basil the Great*, The Oxford Early Christian Studies Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- <sup>3</sup> Stephen M. Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea: A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007).
- <sup>4</sup> It is worth mentioning here a series of collective volumes published in Romanian in 2009, which I could consult only partially and whose focus – with one exception, the article by Adrian Marinescu, quoted below – was not on St Basil's contributions to worldview.
- <sup>5</sup> See e.g. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 320-37.
- <sup>6</sup> Peter C. Bouteneff, *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 133-6.
- <sup>7</sup> See e.g. the famous passage in *Hexaemeron* 8.2, PG 29, 168BC, where St Basil had to interrupt his discourse in order to return to a previously overlooked topic.

- <sup>8</sup> Cf. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 363; Paul J. Fedwick, 'A Chronology of the Life and Works of Basil of Caesarea,' in P.J. Fedwick (ed.), *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, Part One (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981), 3-21; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3 (Westminster: Christian Classics Inc, 1986), 216.
- <sup>9</sup> John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 133.
- <sup>10</sup> Cf. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 320; Emmanuel Clapsis, 'St Basil's Cosmology' *Diakonia* 17:3 (1982): 216. See also John Anthony McGuckin, 'Patterns of Biblical Exegesis in the Cappadocian Fathers: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and Gregory of Nyssa,' in S.T. Kimbrough, Jr. (ed.), *Orthodox and Wesleyan Scriptural Understanding and Practice* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), 46.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*, 114-7, 121-2; Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3, 217; Andrew Louth, 'The Cappadocians,' in F. Young, L. Ayres, A. Louth (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 294.
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. Constantin Voicu, 'Invatatura despre Crearea Lumii la Sf. Vasile cel Mare,' in E. Popescu & A. Marinescu (eds.), *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare: Închinare la 1630 de ani*, second edition, Studia Basiliana Series (București: Basilica, 2009), 182, 184-5. For details on Theophilus' approach to Genesis and cosmology, see Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 68-72.
- <sup>13</sup> This aspect is indicated at the end of the prologue; cf. *Hexaemeron* 1.1, PG 29, 5C. See also *Hexaemeron* 2.1, PG 29, 29A, which speaks of the edification of the Church by the outcomes of the interpretive effort. In *Hexaemeron* 3.10, PG 29, 77AB, St Basil invited the audience to ponder what was said by the preacher for the benefit of their lives. Cf. Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 133.
- <sup>14</sup> Cf. Colin Gunton, 'Between Allegory and Myth: The Legacy of the Spiritualising of Genesis,' in *The Doctrine of Creation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997): 58-9; Clapsis, 'St Basil's Cosmology,' 215.
- <sup>15</sup> Without mentioning the name of St Basil, this understanding was reiterated by Vladimir Lossky in his classic essay, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, reprinted 2002), 104-6.
- <sup>16</sup> He explains this state of coherence of the visible realm in light of the divine source of order, ἀρχὴν τῆς τῶν ὀραμένων διακοσμήσεως (literally 'the origin of the order of visible things'); *Hexaemeron* 1.1, PG 29, 4A.
- <sup>17</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 1.3, PG 29, 9C. See an analysis of this theme in Clapsis, 'St Basil's Cosmology,' 217-8.

- <sup>18</sup> See for example *Hexaemeron* 5.6, PG 29, 108BC; 9.3, PG 29, 192B-196B. Cf. the comments by Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 136; Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea* 117; Voicu, 'Invatatura despre Crearea Lumii la Sf. Vasile cel Mare,' 186.
- <sup>19</sup> Cf. John D. Barrow & Frank J. Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (Oxford & New York: Clarendon Press & Oxford University Press, 1986), 16-20; Trinh Xuan Thuan, *La mélodie secrète: Et L'Homme créa l'Univers* (France: Fayard, 1988), 287-8, 292-6; John D. Barrow, *The Constants of Nature: From Alpha to Omega – the Numbers that Encode the Deepest Secrets of the Universe* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), 141-76.
- <sup>20</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 1.4, PG 29, 12BC.
- <sup>21</sup> Cf. David C. Lindberg, 'Early Christian Attitudes toward Nature,' in G.B. Ferngren (ed.), *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 51.
- <sup>22</sup> Cf. Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 2, 247, 320-1; Lindberg, 'Early Christian Attitudes toward Nature,' 49-50.
- <sup>23</sup> Cf. Lindberg, 'Early Christian Attitudes toward Nature,' 50.
- <sup>24</sup> On the Basilian appreciation for science and particularly astronomy, see Daniel F. Stramara, 'Surveying the Heavens: Early Christian Writers on Astronomy' *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 46:2-3 (2002): 147, 152); Louth, 'The Cappadocians,' 294; Archbishop Chrysostomos & Hieromonk Patapios, 'Science and Knowledge in the Patristic and Monastic Traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Church' *Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion* 2 (2007): 190; Emmanuel Danezis, Efstratios Theodossiou & Milan Dimitrijevic, 'The Hexaemeron of St Basil the Great and the Cosmological Views of His Time,' in B. Nicolescu & M. Stavinschi (eds.), *Science and Orthodoxy, a Necessary Dialogue* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2006), 104-5; Adrian Marinescu, 'Invatatura despre lumina (φῶς/φῶσις) si functia ei liturgica in lume la Sf. Vasile cel Mare: De la Sfanta Scriptura la Sf. Grigorie Palama si Parintele Dumitru Staniloae,' in P. Semen & L. Petcu (eds.), *Parinti Capadocieni* (Iasi: Publishing House of A.I.I. Cuza University, 2009), 223-295, and especially 238-42.
- <sup>25</sup> Cf. Gregory Telepneff & Bishop Chrysostomos, 'The Transformation of Hellenistic Thought on the Cosmos and Man in the Greek Fathers' *The Patristic and Byzantine Review* 9:2-3 (1990): 123.
- <sup>26</sup> See e.g. *Hexaemeron* 1.3-4, PG 29, 9A-12C; 3.3, PG 29, 56C-60A etc. In modern times, Lossky, *The Mystical Theology*, 105, intelligently reiterated the geocentric paradigm in terms of the geocentric condition of divine revelation.

More precisely, and stating the obvious, he maintained that our vision of the universe is geocentrically and anthropocentrically conditioned, given that humankind is the centre of perspective and the source of any representation of reality.

<sup>27</sup> *Hexaameron* 1.2, PG 29, 5C-9A; cf. *Hexaameron* 11.1, PG 29, 25A-28B.

<sup>28</sup> For instance, a similar approach to nature was reiterated in the fourteenth century by St Gregory Palamas, who explicitly borrowed from St Basil. Cf. Doru Costache, 'Queen of the Sciences? Theology and Natural Knowledge in St Gregory Palamas' One Hundred and Fifty Chapters' *Transdisciplinarity in Science and Religion* 3 (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2008), 32-3, 38-9 etc. See more examples in Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 132-4.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Hexaameron* 1.1, PG 29, 5B.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Hexaameron* 2.6, PG 29, 44B.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *Hexaameron* 3.7, PG 29, 69C.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Richard A. Norris, 'The Apologists' in F. Young, L. Ayres, A. Louth (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 36-7, 39, 42-3. On the complexity of St Basil's approach to science, see Lindberg, 'Early Christian Attitudes toward Nature,' 50.

<sup>33</sup> *Hexaameron* 1.2, PG 29, 8A. See a similar criticism in *Hexaameron* 3.3, PG 29, 57AB.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Theophilus, *To Autolytus* 3.3, PG 6, 1124B: 'yearning for vain and empty glory, all [the Greek sages] neither have themselves known the truth nor have they guided others to the truth. Precisely the things they said demonstrate their utter inconsistencies (ἀσύμφωνα) and many among them demolished their own opinions (τὰ ἴδια δόγματα). For not only did they refute one another, but some even made null their own opinions. Thus, their reputation resulted in embarrassment and folly, being despised by those who understand. For either they spoke of the gods and then taught atheism (ἀθεότητα), or whilst speaking of the making of the world (περὶ κόσμου γενέσεως) they said in the end that all things emerge spontaneously (αὐτοματισμὸν ... εἶναι τῶν πάντων). And whilst speaking of providence (περὶ προνοίας), again it seemed to them that the cosmos is without providence (ἀπρονοήτον εἶναι κόσμον ἐδογματίσαν).'

<sup>35</sup> See particularly the sentence: 'The creation (ποίησις) of the sky and earth must be conveyed not as having happened spontaneously (αὐτομάτως), as some have imagined, but as having its cause (αἰτίαν) from God' (*Hexaameron* 1.1, PG 29, 6A).

- <sup>36</sup> In *On the Incarnation* 2, PG 25, 97C-100A, St Athanasius noted: 'some say that all things are self-originated (αὐτομάτως τὰ πάντα γεγενῆσθαι), so to speak. The Epicureans are among these; they deny that there is any providence (πρόνοιαν) behind the evident and visible things. [...] Others take the view expressed by Plato [...]. He said that God had made all things out of pre-existent and uncreated matter (ἐκ προῦποκειμένης καὶ ἀγενήτου ὕλης).'
- <sup>37</sup> See e.g. *Hexaemeron* 3.8, PG 29, 73C; 9.1, PG 29, 188C-189A.
- <sup>38</sup> In his analysis of the Basilian *Hexaemeron*, Clapsis ('St Basil's Cosmology' 215-6) has excellently pointed out the author's care not to impose to the congregation as dogma concepts borrowed from the 'outer wisdom.'
- <sup>39</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 1.2, PG 29, 8B; 1.11, PG 29, 28B; 6.2, PG 29, 120D; 9.1, PG 29, 188D; *On the Origin of Humanity* 1.4, PG 30, 13CD. A similar attitude emerged a generation later in St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 2.2, PG 53, 28. See also the notes by Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 132, 135; Stramara, 'Surveying the Heavens,' 153.
- <sup>40</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 3.8, PG 29, 73C.
- <sup>41</sup> See e.g. *Hexaemeron* 3.10, PG 29, 73CD.
- <sup>42</sup> *Hexaemeron* 1.3, PG 29, 9B. St Basil's faithfulness to the topic of creation leaves no room for speculations like those of Danezis, Theodosiou and Dimitrijevic ('The Hexaemeron of St Basil the Great,' 105-6), which suggest that he entertained the idea of an eternal matter. Their interpretation is contradicted by the Basilian refutation of the concept of the uncreated matter in *Hexaemeron* 2.2, PG 29, 29CD-32B. For St Basil's idea, see Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 133; Gunton, 'Between Allegory and Myth,' 59; Voicu, 'Invatatura despre Crearea Lumii la Sf. Vasile cel Mare,' 189.
- <sup>43</sup> Cf. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 320.
- <sup>44</sup> Cf. *On the Holy Spirit* 27.66, PG 32, 192A. The only parallel in the homilies is the reference to the 'Jerusalem above' as true fatherland (ἀληθινή σου πατρὶς ἢ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ; an image evoking Revelation 21-22), in *Hexaemeron* 9.2, PG 29, 192B. Nevertheless, this ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ cannot be taken as a heavenly or disembodied reality.
- <sup>45</sup> For a refutation of such possibility, see Johannes Zachhuber, 'Stoic Substance, Non-Existing Matter? Some Passages in Basil of Caesarea Reconsidered' *Studia Patristica* vol. 41 (Leuven-Paris-Dudley: Peeters, 2006): 425-30.
- <sup>46</sup> Cf. Clapsis, 'St Basil's Cosmology,' 216-7; Lossky, *The Mystical Theology*, 106; Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 134. See also Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human*

*Person* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 97-9, 102-3; Christos Yannaras, *Elements of Faith: An Introduction to Orthodox Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 46.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 1.5, PG 29, 13B.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 9.3, PG 29, 196B, speaks of the 'untaught law of nature' (τῷ ἀδιδάκτῳ τῆς φύσεως νόμῳ) that teaches us what to do.

<sup>49</sup> See e.g. *Hexaemeron* 4.1, PG 29, 80C. For the scientific understanding of this aspect of the anthropic principle, see Barrow, *The Constants of Nature*, 160-5; Thuan, *La mélodie secrète*, 294; Basarab Nicolescu, *Nous, la particule et le monde*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 2002), 101-5.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 334.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 133, 136.

<sup>52</sup> See the argument in Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 135.

<sup>53</sup> *On the Origin of Humanity* 1.17, PG 30, 33A. For the meaning of *historia* or *to historikon* in St Basil and other early Christian authors, see Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*, 107-9. Without reference to St Basil, see the topic of *historia* as presented by Frances Young, 'Alexandrian and Antiochene Exegesis' in A.J. Hauser & D.F. Watson (eds.), *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, volume 1: *The Ancient Period* (Grand Rapids & Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003): 341-7.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3, 217. For a little more than a sentence concerning the authenticity of the homilies *On the Origin of Humanity*, see Nonna Verna Harrison, 'Introduction' in St Basil the Great, *On the Human Condition*, trans. and intro. by N.V. Harrison (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), 14-5. Rousseau (*Basil of Caesarea*, 318 etc) speaks of the 'eleven great sermons on the creation of the world,' that is, the *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*, thus tacitly adding the two supposedly spurious homilies to the nine authentic ones.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 9.2, PG 29, 192AB.

<sup>56</sup> For St Basil's hermeneutical affiliation with Origen, see Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 124-5; Gunton, 'Between Allegory and Myth,' 58; Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2006), 740; Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 2-6, 60-1; McGuckin, 'Patterns of Biblical Exegesis in the Cappadocian Fathers,' 44-5; Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 320; Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 206-7.

- <sup>57</sup> Cf. Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 96; John Behr, *The Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 1: *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 169; Fearghus Ó Fearghail, 'Philo and the Fathers' in T. Finan & V. Twomey (eds.), *Scriptural Interpretation in the Fathers: Letter and Spirit* (Dublin & Portland: Four Courts Press, 1995), 56; Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 54.
- <sup>58</sup> Cf. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 59-61.
- <sup>59</sup> Much later, yet in the same vein, St Maximus the Confessor added that the mediation of Scripture toward an accurate natural contemplation is possible given that the λόγοι, divine principles, of Scripture and creation coincide; see e.g. *Book of Difficulties* 10.17, PG 91, 1128CD.
- <sup>60</sup> Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, The Fathers of the Church Series, trans. R.E. Heine (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 47-71. See also Origen, *Omilii, Comentarii și Adnotări la Geneză*, bilingual edition, intro., trans. and notes by A. Muraru (Iași: Polirom, 2006), 120-67. For relevant notes to the origins of St Basil's idea of the school, see Allan E. Johnson, 'Constructing a Narrative Universe: Origen's Homily 1 on Genesis' *Studia Patristica* vol. 41 (Leuven-Paris-Dudley: Peeters, 2006): 175-9.
- <sup>61</sup> See e.g. *Hexaemeron* 3.10, PG 29, 77B. Cf. Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 136.
- <sup>62</sup> For details, see Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 121, 124-131.
- <sup>63</sup> As discretely suggested, without mentioning Origen, in *Hexaemeron* 3.9, PG 29, 73CD.
- <sup>64</sup> See e.g. *Hexaemeron* 2.1, PG 29, 28C, as a complement to the prologue, discussed below.
- <sup>65</sup> The ingenious Basilian reiteration of Origen's hermeneutical method within the canonical framework of mainstream fourth century Orthodoxy seems to have inaugurated a process of critical yet positive reception that – despite the sixth century anathemas against Origen – reached completion with St Maximus the Confessor in the seventh century. Cf. Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), 24-5.
- <sup>66</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 1.1, PG 29, 4A-5A.
- <sup>67</sup> On the compatibility between reader and the spiritual meaning of the text, see Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*, 111.
- <sup>68</sup> These digressions match Origen's second 'higher sense' of the biblical narratives, namely the ethical one. See Elizabeth A. Dively Lauro,

'Reconsidering Origen's Two Higher Senses of Scriptural Meaning: Identifying the Psychic and Pneumatic Senses' *Studia Patristica* vol. XXXIV (Leuven: Peeters, 2001): 306-17. Discussing the ethical dimension of St Basil's thinking, Hildebrand (*The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*, 117-21) makes no reference to the *Hexaemeron*.

<sup>69</sup> See also the comments by Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*, 110-1.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 9.1, PG 29, 188BC. On St Basil's complex attitude towards allegory, see Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*, 133-9.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 130; Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*, 139-41.

<sup>72</sup> See Juliette Day, 'Adherence to the *Disciplina Arcani* in the Fourth Century' *Studia Patristica* vol. XXXV (Leuven: Peeters, 2001): 269, with a clear reference St Basil's use of the discipline of secrecy in *On the Holy Spirit* 27.66. See also my article 'The Inner Side of the Visible: Apostolic Criteria and Spirit in the Orthodox Tradition' in T. Petrescu (ed.), *Omagiu Profesorului Nicolae V. Dura la 60 de ani* (Constanta: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului, 2006): 387-8. This aspect is likewise ignored by recent researchers of the *Hexaemeron*, maybe deceived by the strong expressions of its author's commitment to the literal interpretation.

<sup>73</sup> A point made by Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*, 112, without reference to the *disciplina arcani*.

<sup>74</sup> *Hexaemeron* 2.3, PG 29, 33C.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 3.10, PG 29, 77AB.

<sup>76</sup> As suggested by the sketched picture of Moses' spiritual journey, in *Hexaemeron* 1.1, PG 29, 5ABC. This passage, and not only the homonymous work by Philo, might have inspired St Gregory of Nyssa to write his *Life of Moses*, where he expands on similar ideas. See *The Life of Moses* 2.22-6, 2.157, in *The Classics of Western Spirituality Series*, trans., intro. and notes by A.J. Malherbe & E. Ferguson (New York - Ramsey - Toronto: Paulist Press, 1978), 59-60, 93.

<sup>77</sup> See a description in Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, 54-5.

<sup>78</sup> *Hexaemeron* 1.1, PG 29, 5B.

- <sup>79</sup> On the Athanasian influence upon St Basil's thought, see Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 741; Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, 207, 208.
- <sup>80</sup> Cf. René Descartes, *Expunere despre Metodă 1*, trilingual edition, trans. D. Negrescu (Bucharest: Paideia, 1995).
- <sup>81</sup> *Against the Pagans* 34, PG 25, 69A; see also *Against the Pagans* 35, PG 25, 69B. St Athanasius himself seems to have depended on the identical elaborations of Origen in his *Commentary on Genesis* 1.1-9 and 3.20. See Origen, *Omilii, Comentarii și Adnotări la Geneză*, 464-9, 506-9.
- <sup>82</sup> The symmetry between the world as a scripture and Scripture as a world have been more intensely pondered by St Maximus the Confessor; cf. *Book of Difficulties* 10.17-8, PG 91, 1125D-1133A. The phrase 'implicit Scripture' is coined by Dumitru Stăniloae; see his *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 1, third edition (Bucharest: Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 2003), 26. The textual nature of creation is variously addressed by contemporary Romanian thinkers; see Andrei Pleșu, *Limba păsărilor* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994), 55; André Scrima, *Timpul Rugului Aprins: Maestrul spiritual în tradiția răsăriteană*, second edition (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2000), 75. Cf. also my articles: 'Colocviul fără sfârșit: Rațiunea de a fi a creației în cugetarea părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae' in T. Bakosky & B. Tătaru-Cazaban (eds.), *Dumitru Stăniloae sau paradoxul teologiei* (Bucharest: Anastasia, 2003), 183-241; 'Varii aspecte de teologia creației: Lumea, revelație a Cuvântului' *Almanah bisericesc 2008* (Slobozia: Episcopia Sloboziei și Călărașilor, 2008), 26-34.
- <sup>83</sup> *Hexaemeron* 1.1, PG 29, 4A. In rejecting from the outset the idea of a spontaneous generation, St Basil employed similar terms to those used by St Athanasius in the above quoted *On the Incarnation* 2, PG 25, 97C-100A. See also Marinescu, 'Invatatura despre lumina (φῶς/φᾶς) si functia ei liturgica in lume la Sf. Vasile cel Mare,' 251.
- <sup>84</sup> Quoted in *Hexaemeron* 3.9, PG 29, 76B.
- <sup>85</sup> Quoted in *Hexaemeron* 1.6, PG 29, 16C.
- <sup>86</sup> Cf. *De Ente et Essentia* 2. Whereas for St Thomas the phrase refers to matter 'as considered under determined dimensions' (*dico materiam signatam, quae sub determinatis dimensionibus consideratur*) or individualised as a concrete being, for me (taking as a pretext the metaphor in John 8:6,8) it designates the aspect of matter as imprinted and shaped by the Logos.
- <sup>87</sup> On Gnostic dualism and its dilemmas, see the unfortunately forgotten Ioan P. Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis: Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity*

to *Modern Nihilism*, trans. into English by H.S. Wiesner and the author (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 135-7.

<sup>88</sup> He argued that the *Hexaemeron* ‘had little to do with circumstance’ and that St Basil was in fact interested in expounding the human journey from origins to fulfilment (cf. *Basil of Caesarea*, 319). Although this assessment has some merit to it, it is nevertheless obvious that as a concerned shepherd St Basil was not insensible to context.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 2.4, PG 29, 36BCD; cf. the note by Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3, 217. On Manichaeism, see Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis*, 161-88.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *Beginnings*, 131.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. *Basil of Caesarea*, 321.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 9.6, PG 29, 204C-208C.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 6.5, PG 29, 128B-129B; see also 6.6-6.7, PG 29, 129C-133C. On St Basil’s attitude towards astrology, see Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 333; Stramara, ‘Surveying the Heavens,’ 152; Gunton, ‘Between Allegory and Myth,’ 60.

<sup>94</sup> He endorses this statement in *Hexaemeron* 5.8, PG 29, 113A: ‘nothing is without a cause, nothing is there spontaneously. There is an ineffable wisdom in all’ (οὐδὲν ἀναίτιον, οὐδὲν ἀπὸ ταυτομάτου πάντα ἔχει τινα σοφίαν ἀπόρρητον).

<sup>95</sup> *Hexaemeron* 1.6, PG 29, 16BC. Without reference to St Basil, similar ideas emerge in Nicolescu’s undertaking to bridge scientific worldview and tradition, *Nous, la particule et le monde*, 185-90.

<sup>96</sup> See *On the Holy Spirit* 27.66, quoted above.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Yannaras, *Elements of Faith*, 50-2.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Gunton, ‘Between Allegory and Myth,’ 59-60; Lossky, *The Mystical Theology*, 33, 50; idem, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978), 51; Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* 323.

<sup>99</sup> For instance, in *Hexaemeron* 1.2, PG 29, 9A, he designated God as the ‘much yearned for beauty’ (τὸ πολυπόθητον κάλλος), whereas in *Hexaemeron* 1.11, PG 29, 28A, he mentioned the ‘beauty of the visible things’ (τοῦ κάλλους τῶν ὀρωμένων). The use of such categories was made legitimate by the repeated use of *ὅτι καλόν* in the Septuagint (cf. Genesis 1:4, 8, 10, 13, 18, 21, 25, 31). On the function of beauty in St Basil, see my article ‘Apologetic, Moral ἰη Mystic: Trei Moduri ale Viziunii Ecclesiale asupra Creației’ *Noua Reprezentare a Lumii: Studii Interdisciplinare* 1 (Bucharest: XXI Eonul Dogmatic, 2002),

- mainly 42-3. Cf. Marinescu, 'Invatatura despre lumina (φῶς/φάως) si functia ei liturgica in lume la Sf. Vasile cel Mare,' 230-2.
- <sup>100</sup> *Hexaemeron* 1.11, PG 29, 28A. See further notes on this topic in Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 33, and Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 322.
- <sup>101</sup> *Hexaemeron* 5.2, PG 29, 97C.
- <sup>102</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 1.7, PG 29, 17B, 20A; *Hexaemeron* 4.1, PG 29, 80B. Without referring to the theme of the school, Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 321, 324-6, and Clapsis, 'St Basil's Cosmology,' 218-9, came to similar conclusions.
- <sup>103</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 3.9, PG 29, 76C.
- <sup>104</sup> *Hexaemeron* 4.1, PG 29, 80A. See further comments in Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 234.
- <sup>105</sup> *Hexaemeron* 1.11, PG 29, 28AB. Concerning the 'attitude of wonder' leading to worship in St Basil's *Hexaemeron*, see Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* 329; cf. Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 136.
- <sup>106</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 5.7, PG 29, 112BC.
- <sup>107</sup> *Hexaemeron* 4.1, PG 29, 80B.
- <sup>108</sup> Cf. *The Mystical Theology*, 82.
- <sup>109</sup> See above n. 17.
- <sup>110</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 1.9, PG 29, 24B (in fact, the whole chapter is of interest here). He often returned to this aspect of dependence, mostly when referring to creation's generative capacity, also construed as a gift; cf. *Hexaemeron* 8.1, PG 29, 164C. See more examples and a thorough analysis in Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* 338-9. Likewise, see Clapsis, 'St Basil's Cosmology,' 217.
- <sup>111</sup> Cf. *Against the Heathen* 41, PG 25, 84AB. See comments on his idea of creation, providence and the fragility of the universe, in Alwyn Pettersen, *Athanasius* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), 24-6.
- <sup>112</sup> See e.g. *Hexaemeron* 5.2, PG 29, 97B, which speaks of a soil that is cold and in continuous labours, and whose fertility is activated only by the word of God. In *Hexaemeron* 8.1, PG 29, 164CD, the earth appears as sterile and only God's words make it active for the generation of living beings.
- <sup>113</sup> See e.g. *Hexameron* 5.1, PG 29, 96A, where the earth has germinative powers which function without the assistance of external factors. Similarly, *Hexaemeron* 7.1, PG 29, 148B, presents the waters as not being idle and in fact playing their part in the origination of life.

- <sup>114</sup> Erroneously rendered as PG 29, 1160D. In fact, it is a reference to 97B and some other section of the text which I could not identify.
- <sup>115</sup> Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 133.
- <sup>116</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, 134.
- <sup>117</sup> The term *δύναμιν* may be also, and perhaps preferable, rendered as ‘latent potentiality,’ as previously suggested. See its various meanings in H.G. Liddell & R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, with a revised supplement, revised by H.S. Jones & R. McKenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press & Clarendon Press, 1996), 452.
- <sup>118</sup> *Hexaemeron* 2.3, PG 29, 36B. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 339 does not see the significant note on synergy introduced by this metaphor, when highlighting the character of the generative capacity of the earth as a divine gift.
- <sup>119</sup> Or the imagery of the intercourse of the elements (earth, water and air), as explicitly referred to in *Hexaemeron* 4.5, PG 29, 89C.
- <sup>120</sup> Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 214, refers to a work whose title he does not indicate (he mentions though PG 31, 908CD), where St Basil speaks of a ‘loving potential/power’ (*ἀγαπητική δύναμις*) or a natural propensity of creation to be loved by God.
- <sup>121</sup> This imagery is possibly suggested by the words of St Paul in Romans 8: 22.
- <sup>122</sup> For a more in depth analysis of this text, see Costache, ‘Apologetic, Moral și Mystic,’ 44.
- <sup>123</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 2.3, PG 29, 33B. The term *παθητική* can be also rendered by ‘passive’ yet in this context ‘receptive’ seems more appropriate, given St Basil’s idea of a world open to God.
- <sup>124</sup> Cf. *Hexaemeron* 9.2, PG 29, 189BCD. The concept of permanence has been already suggested by *Hexaemeron* 5.1, PG 29, 96A, with the ‘initial’ words of God continuing to function as an inherent law of nature for the earth.
- <sup>125</sup> Cf. my article ‘Irelevanța controversei creaționism vs. evoluționism pentru tradiția Bisericii ortodoxe: Deconstrucție logică și teologică a unui mit modern’ *Nova Reprezentare a Lumii: Studii Interdisciplinare* 3 (Bucharest: XXI Eonul Dogmatic, 2004), 51-67.
- <sup>126</sup> See his *Homilies on Genesis* 3.1, PG 53, 33C.

- <sup>127</sup> *Hexaemeron* 2.6, PG 29, 44B. For further notes on this imagery, see Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*, 113; Costache, 'Apologetic, Moral și Mystic,' 45.
- <sup>128</sup> Later, St Maximus endorsed this perception when speaking of the participation of creation in God by its very natural movement: μένοντα καὶ κινούμενα [τὰ πάντα] μετέχει θεοῦ; *Book of Difficulties*, PG 91, 1080B.
- <sup>129</sup> Of which he speaks more in *On the Holy Spirit* 27.66, PG 32, 192AB (the topic is analysed in detail elsewhere in this volume). For a patristic development of the eschatological interpretation of Genesis, see St Symeon the New Theologian, *First Ethical Discourse*, in *On the Mystical Life: The Ethical Discourses*, vol. 1: *The Church and the Last Things*, trans. from the Greek and introduced by A. Golitzin (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 21-80.
- <sup>130</sup> *Hexaemeron* 9.2, PG 29, 189B.
- <sup>131</sup> Cf. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 318. Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3, 210, gives 'about 375' as a probable date of publication. See also Fedwick, 'A Chronology of the Life and Works of Basil of Caesarea,' 3-21.
- <sup>132</sup> Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 337, 343, links the work of the Spirit mostly to the soteriological and specifically sacramental teachings of St Basil, ignoring its ecosystemic function. For a more nuanced and comprehensive approach, see Lossky, *The Mystical Theology*, 100-1 (referring to *On the Holy Spirit* 16.38), 157 (referring to *On the Holy Spirit* 19.49), 163 (referring to *On the Holy Spirit* 16.37), 166 (referring to *On the Holy Spirit* 9.22). See also Marinescu, 'Invatatura despre lumina (φῶς/φῶσις) si functia ei liturgica in lume la Sf. Vasile cel Mare,' 251-3.
- <sup>133</sup> *On the Holy Spirit* 9.22, PG 32, 108BC. See a brief note on this fragment in Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, 209.
- <sup>134</sup> Cf. PG 32, 156D.
- <sup>135</sup> Mostly the paragraphs in PG 32, 156D-157C.
- <sup>136</sup> Cf. PG 32, 156D.
- <sup>137</sup> See PG 32, 157BC.
- <sup>138</sup> For a more detailed presentation of the treatise's teaching on worldview and related topics, see my article 'Experiența Duhului Sfânt în Viziunea Sfinților Vasile cel Mare și Grigorie Palamas' in E. Popescu & A. Marinescu (eds.), *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare: Închinare la 1630 de ani*, revised second edition (Bucharest: Basilica, 2009), mostly 146-53.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. *On the Holy Spirit* 9.23, PG 32, 109ABC.

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