UNIVERSITY COLLEGE STOCKHOLM

Eastern Christian Studies

Pre-Master PROJECT

Spring, 2024

The Hexaemeron of St. Basil the Great

Interpretive or Apologetic Work

Author: Muhannad (Addai) Maher

Supervisor: Dr Grant White, Ph.D.

University College Stockholm

I hereby confirm that the work submitted is my own, that appropriate credit has been given where the work of others has been used/referenced, and that this work has not been submitted for another degree in this or any other university.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Dr Grant White, the supervisor of my thesis, who advised me and recommended the topics I should include in it, and accompanied me through my readings and the results I found step by step; and to Dr Michael Hjälm who supported me and taught me, along with Dr. Grant, the most important things I should know about theory, method, and writing theology well before I started writing this paper. Thanks to Dr Fr Youhanon Habil and Johan Andersson who suggested the work of Saint Basil as a subject for my paper, and helped me by sending some resources.

Abstract

In this paper, the *Hexaemeron* is approached using a new perspective. This perspective has been used in other papers or books on the *Hexaemeron*, but only briefly and without any in-depth evidence or investigation. Many scholars have pointed out, in one way or another, that the *Hexaemeron* contains density of philosophy, doctrine, sciences of Basil's era, and density of literal interpretation, in addition to the interpretive and moral components; They stated that it is therefore better to consider this work as an apologetic work, instead of merely an interpretive work.

But on the other hand, Basil composed this work to be preached to laypeople. So, I had inquiries about this: Why did Basil use these components to preach in front of this audience? What are his motives? And what are his goals? In this paper, the historical-critical method is used to prove that this work is actually an apologetic work composed by Basil because he found that his people are surrounded by heretical thoughts, and it is necessary for them to understand their orthodox faith in order to guarantee a good afterlife. Therefore, before his death, he conveyed his orthodox thoughts briefly, using Genesis 1.

I first looked at the doctrinal and philosophical thoughts that he discussed in the *Hexaemeron*, and then after some investigation into his earlier works, it became clear to me that he had argued the same ideas before, so the *Hexaemeron* is actually a summary of his entire life. I then investigated his use of both literal and allegorical methods in dealing with Scriptures, and demonstrated that he intentionally used literal method in the *Hexaemeron*, rather than in the rest of his interpretational works, to extract dogma from Genesis 1. Finally, I investigated the situation of his audience to prove that his audience, regardless of their intellectual levels, need this discourse to support their faith.

This paper highlights the importance of using doctrines, philosophy, and contemporary science in sermons addressed to laypeople, and not just the spirituality, in order to protect them from false doctrines, and urges priests to become familiar with them.

Abbreviations

Hex: Hexaemeron of Saint Basil of Caesarea.

Table of Contents

Introduction 8

1.1 Research Question 12

1.2 Theory and Method 12

2 Textual Analysis 15

2.1 Homily Number 1 15

2.2 Homily Number 2 16

2.3 Homily Number 3 19

2.4 Homily Number 4 21

2.5 Homily Number 5 24

2.6 Homily Number 6 25

2.7 Homily Number 7 27

2.8 Homily Number 8 28

2.9 Homily Number 9 30

2.10 Conclusion 31

3 The Doctrinal Works of Basil 34

3.1 *On Faith* 34

3.2 *On the Holy Spirit* 35

3.3 *Against Eunomius* and *Against Eustathius* 37

3.4 *On Greek Literature* 38

3.5 *To Young Men, How They Would Profit from Greek Literature* 38

3.6 ***Epistle 9, To Maximus the Philosopher*** 39

3.7 **Conclusion** 39

4 Literal and Allegorical Methods in Interpretive Works of Basil 41

Conclusion 46

5 The Intended Audience and Surrounding Circumstances 48

Conclusion 51

Conclusion 52

Bibliography 55

Introduction

The *Hexaemeron* is, as defined by Carl O'Brien, "a series of nine Homilies explaining the six days of creation outlined in Genesis. It is the oldest surviving Christian work which was specifically devoted to an exegesis of the Mosaic account of creation."[1] Philo was the first person to use this term to refer to an exegetical work of Genesis 1.[2]

In fact, the plan was to write about and compare two commentaries of Genesis 1, the *Hexaemerons* of both Basil of Caesarea (+379) and Jacob of Edessa (+708); but I chose to write only about the *Hexaemeron* of Basil because Jacob based his work on Basil's *Hexaemeron*, which considered as the main source for it.[3] Therefore, it would suffice to focus on the *Hexaemeron* of Basil, especially for a bachelor thesis.

There are four works interpreting Genesis 1 written by the Cappadocian Fathers, enumerated by Alenka Arko as follows: *In Hexaemeron* (Lent 378) nine sermons composed by Basil; *De opificio hominis* (379) by Gregory of Nyssa; Gregory also wrote an *Apologia in Hexaemeron* (between 379 and 381);[4] Two sermons about the creation of man (*Sermones de creatione hominis*) whose author is arguable, "Until the 20th century," Arko says, "these texts were attributed to Gregory of Nyssa. Nevertheless, it is more likely that the author was Basil the Great, since stylistic and theological elements in some places significantly differ from Gregory's."[5] Before Cappadocian fathers another church fathers, Theophilus of Antioch and Origen are among them, have interpreted the six days of creation; These two influenced the *Hexaemeron* of Basil.[6]

St. Basil is known to have interpreted the first chapter of Genesis using "philosophy and the achievements of natural sciences of the 4th century."[7] David C DeMarco comments that the

---

[1] Carl O'Brien, "St Basil's Explanation of Creation." In Hällström Gunnar af. (2011), The Actuality of St. Basil the Great: Conference Lectures: Texts from the Conference the Actuality of St. Basil the Great in Turku 2010. Turku: Åbo Akademi. 1.
[2] Alenka Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis: The Cappadocian Fathers on Hexaemeron." (*Lateranum* 79, no. 2 2013 P. 485-502) 485.
[3] Aboud Ishac (Ephrem), "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron: A Preliminary Comparison With Basil Of Caesarea's Hexaemeron" (*Parole de l'Orient* 38 P. 1-31, 2013) 1.
[4] Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis," 486.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid, 485.
[7] Ibid, 502.

works of St. Basil are greater than those of Moses himself, because they are fuller of details, contain more words, and deal with philosophy and morality.[8] "The mustard seed," DeMarco says, "which stands for Moses' account, starts small and then it produces a tree that is much larger than itself, and that tree is Basil's account."[9] Aboud Ishac notices that the main philosophical and scientific source for Basil is the theory of Aristotle of the creation of the world,[10] O'Brien mentions that Basil was influenced by Origen and Plato when he regarded the world as a school for the knowledge of God,[11] and Arko adds that Basil was influenced by Origen when he stated that only visible creation was created in time, but angels were created in eternity,[12] and Plato's *Timaeus*, elements of Aristotelian philosophy, and the philosophy of the Stoics have also influenced the *Hexaemeron* of Basil.[13]

"Especially in the *Hexaemeron*," Stephen M Hildebrand states, "but also in his other sermons, Basil displays a vast knowledge of ancient natural science and of the behavior and character of all sorts of plants and animals. He is quite familiar with the positions of different natural philosophers, and current with the disputed questions of natural science, but above all uses his knowledge of natural science both to praise God and to put reason in its proper place."[14] By contrast, O'Brien believes that the *Hexaemeron* of Basil is engaged in the philosophical thoughts of the fifth and fourth century BCE, as well as in the Jewish and Christian exegesis, but it is not engaged in the advances of science or philosophy of the fourth century, which is the time of Basil,[15] O'Brien's opinion is that Basil was not "up-to-date" with the research of his time,[16] and was even unaware of the "sophisticated philosophical debates" of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE.[17] Arko says: "While reading *In Hexaemeron* one is surprised at Basil's learnedness, especially when he explains physics, astronomy, geography, botany and zoology. Nevertheless, Stanislas Giet notes that his interpretations are very general, sometimes inconsistent, and that it would be difficult to find direct sources for individual views. Keeping this in mind, he assumes that Basil must have used some of the available manuals of his time, the arguments of which did not always agree."[18] Following these views, we can consider two possibilities, the first one is that Basil was not actually

---

[8] David C DeMarco, "The Presentation and Reception of Basil's Homiliae in Hexaemeron in Gregory's In Hexaemeron." (*Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 17, no. 2 (2013): 332-352) 337.
[9] DeMarco, "The Presentation," 337.
[10] Ishac, "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron," 4.
[11] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 6.
[12] Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis," 493.
[13] Ibid, 488.
[14] Stephen M Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*. The Early Church Fathers (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018), 28.
[15] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 2.
[16] Ibid, 9.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis," 488.

up-to-date with research of his era and research of antiquity, which I think is unlikely, because, as Hildebrand mentions, Basil came from an elite-class family,[19] and this elite class used to be well educated in Basil's era.

The second possibility is that Basil actually was up-to-date but he had pretended that he was not. Compared to what Doru Costache mentions about Gregory, that he claimed to lack knowledge, the same theory can be applied to Basil: "Whilst analysing a passage from the Catechetical Oration, Bouteneff pointed out St Gregory's claim of lacking interest in a thorough study of the cosmos, and believed this to be the case with the Apology as well - given the Nyssen's refusal to "fathom those matters which appear contradictory." I do not dismiss that in his Catechetical Oration St Gregory manifested reticence toward examining natural phenomena, maybe in order to show his status as an inspector of orthodoxy."[20] Hildebrand quotes a passage from the first homily of Basil to show that Basil was well acquainted with the natural science of his day,[21] this passage was directly preached following some explanations of geocentrism:

> *So, if these remarks seem persuasive to you, attribute them in wonder to the wisdom of God, for he is their fashioner. The greatest works are not less than the astonishment which arises from them, when from the discovery of the handiwork of their forms praise for them is rendered to their creator. But if you wish to be persuaded, let faith be greater for you in its simplicity than all the demonstrations of words that are endless in their arguments.* (*Hex.* 1.10)

I believe that this passage proves that Basil, even after he had expounded the theory of geocentrism, he had no interest in being impressed by science, rather, the main issue for Basil is the simple faith itself.

One can reach the same conclusion in the following passages:

> *Let us then listen to the true things that were spoken to us, in which there are no arguments of human wisdom but [only] words of the teaching of the Spirit of truth. Their purpose is not the praise of their hearers, but the salvation of those who learn and fulfil them. So let us be raised up in our discourse to the beginning of creation.* (*Hex.* 1.1)

In the eleventh section of the first homily, Basil outlined the contradictory theories about the elements of the world: the theory of the four elements (fire, water, air, and earth), and the theory of the fifth element (the ether), and finally said:

---

[19] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*,2018, 4.
[20] Doru Costache, "Making Sense of the World: Theology and Science in St Gregory of Nyssa's An Apology for the Hexaemeron." (*Phronema* 28, no. 1 (2013): 1–28) 7.
[21] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*,2018, 28.

> *But let us leave them in their strife, so that they may refute and destroy each other's arguments. Let us curtail from our discourse investigations and labour concerning the natures of things. Let us believe Moses, who said: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth," and let us become praisers of the latter, marvelous in the craftsmanship of the wisdom of his creation.* (*Hex* 1.11)

Therefore, according to the argument of O'Brien and Costache, with these passages mentioned above (and there is more), it is more appropriate for Basil either to underestimate philosophy, or pretend he lacks knowledge, and use Scripture and faith instead. Hildebrand states that "Basil uses what he has learned from pagans to show his audience both the folly of human wisdom and the sagacity of the Scriptures," [22] and Arko states "These writings are directed against Neo-Arians as well as against the dualism of Gnostics and Manicheans and Stoic monism, i.e. pantheism."[23] In sum, as I aforementioned, Basil used philosophy either to underestimate it in order to give the Scripture a higher status, or to refute some philosophical theories and thoughts which contradict faith.

In addition, as also noticed by Hildebrand, Basil had used natural sciences to give examples of good or bad behavior of some animals as models to be followed or not to be followed by people.[24] Thus, the main use of natural science is to extract moral instructions from the creatures. One can, having read the *Hexaemeron* of Basil, easily notice that these nine homilies are a mixture of two main folds: discussions concerning dogma and philosophy, and moral teachings derived from natural sciences. For a shepherd, the mention of morals in a discourse intended to be delivered before laypeople, by using zoology in instance, as used by Jesus Christ "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." (Mathew 10:16), is so normal, and it can easily be considered as one of Basil's goals in composing the *Hexaemeron*. But what about the doctrinal and philosophical part?

Most of papers that analyses the *Hexaemeron* of Basil attempts to discover and reveal the source of this side, i.e. the sources of philosophical debates and doctrinal explanations. In addition to identifying the destination, who was Basil addressing his messages to? Besides, Arko, Ishac, and many other scholars notice that Basil used the literal method to interpret Genesis 1, the method that belongs to the Antiochene school.[25] This literal interpretation helped Basil to include philosophy and doctrine in his homilies (as we shall see in the first section of this paper).

---

[22] Stephen M Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2014) 38.
[23] Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis," 502.
[24] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*,2018, 28.
[25] Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis," 502, and Ishac, "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron," 1.

Speaking about literal interpretation, Hermann Sasse describes the conflicts between Christianity and science of the day as "One of the burning issues" in interpreting the story of the six days of creation; Philo allegorically explained it, and other Alexandrian thinkers later did. "It is not accidental," Sasse says, "that the conflict began just in Alexandria, the center of natural science, and the center of allegorical interpretation of texts with pagans, Jews and Christians. It is significant that all thinkers and Fathers who are connected with Neoplatonist Alexandria make use of the allegorical method, while the great theologians of the school of Antioch, following the Aristotelian tradition of this city, prefer the literal interpretation."[26] According to Sasse, it is normal to read a literal interpretation written by an Antiochene father, but is it normal to be addressed to and presented as a group of homilies before laypeople?

1.1 Research Question

In general, church fathers, theologians, bishops, etc. used to write doctrinal writings to address them to other theologians or heretics. My main question that this paper addresses is: Why did Basil employ literal interpretation and doctrinal debates in homilies delivered before laypeople in church? Even though Richard Lim finds that there is no need to know the answer, as he comments: "In some sense then there is no need to find external influence to explain why Basil resorts to the literal interpretation. The interest he shows with the Antiochenes in combatting heresies and a common insight into the origin of heresies as empty and wild speculations would fuse together with predictable results."[27] I think that there is another result needs to be discovered. Why did he not use simple spiritual homilies and allegorical interpretations that could be more suitable for a broader congregation? Did his people need this kind of speech according to the surrounding circumstances? And were they at a sufficient enough theological and intellectual level to understand it? What are the motivations behind using the literal method, doctrine, and philosophy? What are his goals?

1.2 Theory and Method

In this thesis, I am planning to prove that the *Hexaemeron* of Basil is not a merely interpretive work of Genesis 1. That is, Basil didn't compose it following the example of his ancestors, who

---

[26] Hermann Sasse, "Hexaemeron: Theology and Science with the Church Fathers." (*The Reformed Theological Review* 17, no. 3 (October 1958): 65–72) 66-67.
[27] Richard Lim, "The Politics of Interpretation in Basil of Caesarea's Hexaemeron." (*Vigiliae Christianae* 44, no. 4 (1990): 351-370) 360.

interpreted Genesis 1 during the Lent for catechumens in order to prepare them spiritually to receive baptism, and to understand some important truths about the creation.[28] Rather, I believe that it is best regarded as an apologetic and dogmatic work, along with its moral side and creation-related, interpretive side. Basil, in my view, tried to involve his congregation in theological and doctrinal debates instead of providing merely spiritual discourses. This work, as an apologetic one, is not addressed to the heretics, rather to laypeople against heretics, to show them the false thoughts of some heretics and philosophers.

I will also prove that Basil used literal interpretation because it is more suitable for him to extract theological thoughts and address some doctrinal debates in order to refute some heresies. For example:

> *But let not the great significance which is hidden in this account pass me by. For it says: "God said: Let there be a firmament." The statement did not remain simply: "The firmament was made," but: "God created the firmament." Furthermore, it said: "God divided." Let the deaf hear and the blind see. Who is the deaf one if not he who does not hear the Spirit of God as it loudly cries out? And the blind one is he who does not see all this brilliance of the demonstrations concerning the Son of God. "God said: Let there be a firmament." Behold the originating saying which is the cause of coming into being. Furthermore, it said: "God created the firmament." Behold it demonstrated again the creative activity of the Son creator, who is testimony to God's power.* (*Hex.* 3.4)

There is a doctrinal density in the *Hexaemeron* of Basil, Ishac notices, especially the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Trinity "in relation with the Nicene Creed."[29] This creed starts by "we believe," this faith one can get, according to Basil, by contemplating the visible creation.[30]

As Ishac states: "Surprisingly, Basil's homilies were preached late in his life, as Jacob's *Hexaemeron* was the last work in his life. One can conclude that these works were like the epitome of their lives."[31] And as Hildebrand states: "As a final triumph of his life, certainly from the perspective of later centuries, Basil delivered soon before his death in 379 his justly famous sermons on the six days of creation."[32] Basil composed this work intentionally before his death. I believe that this is the main goal of Basil: to make his congregation understand the Orthodox faith by making them meditate on the creation. Basil was forced to preach about the creation as a liturgical reading during the Lent, but he skillfully linked between the creation account and some doctrinal debates of his time, in addition to some philosophical arguments as well. Then, he

---

[28] Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis," 485.
[29] Ishac, "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron," 14.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid, 4.
[32] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*,2018, 19.

delivered his work to laypeople as a summary of his dogmatic and philosophical thoughts in order to make sure that their faith is completely Orthodox before he leaves. The statement that the *Hexaemeron* is a summary of Basil's works needs further investigation; If I can prove it, it will help me find one of the most important aims of St. Basil.

In this paper I will attempt to prove my theory by:

1- analyzing the content of the *Hexaemeron*, homily by homily, to extract the doctrinal and philosophical thoughts mentioned by Basil in this work, to prove that almost every homily contains doctrinal or philosophical discussions, along with morals and interpretive ideas on creation. So, the reader can imagine what I am talking about and why I have undertaken this inquiry.

2- I will explore the doctrinal debates in which he was involved before composing the *Hexaemeron*, using some studies on his works, to investigate whether or not the latter was a summary of his dogmatic works on which he worked during his entire life, and if it was his aim to summarize and deliver them before his congregation before his death.

3- I will then examine the literal and allegorical methods of Basil in his interpretive works on Psalms and *Hexaemeron*, to investigate his general tendency for each of these two methods, in order to discover whether Basil intentionally used the literal method only in the *Hexaemeron* as the literal addressing is better for mentioning the doctrine, or he used it in another works without mentioning doctrine.

4- Finally, I will investigate the general historical circumstances that surrounded the audience of Basil, to understand the main motives that led Basil to deliver before them such philosophical, doctrinal, and literal discourses, and whether or not his audience really needed to hear his *Hexaemeron* according to these circumstances.

2 Textual Analysis

In this chapter, having read in depth the *Hexaemeron* of St. Basil, I have extracted most of his doctrinal and philosophical discussions, whether in the form of an explicit mention or merely an allusion to it. I will present them in their textual order as they appear in his nine homilies.

2.1 Homily Number 1

1- Basil begins his discourse on the creation of the world by mentioning the first verse of Genesis "in the beginning God created heaven and earth" (Gen 1:1):

> *It did not occur spontaneously, as some people have erroneously said, because the cause of its coming into being is God.* (*Hex* 1.1)

This passage opposes "*some people*" those who believe in the spontaneous formation of the world, precisely, as enumerated by Hildebrand, "the godless atomic cosmogony of Leucippus and Democritus and Plotinus's eternal world."[33] Indeed, most of the first homily deals with this idea. Basil rejects the notion that visual objects have no beginning, and are co-essential with God, the notion that stems from contemplating the circular motions of the stars (*Hex* 1.3).

> *Some of the wise men of the Greeks said this: that heaven is eternally co-essential with God. And some of them again posited heaven as God without beginning or end. And as for the causes of those things which took place and occur among us, their dispensation is derived from it according to their arguments.* (*Hex* 1.3)

And as aforementioned in the introduction, Basil urges his congregation to listen to the words of Scripture rather than the endless contradictory arguments of people who spoke of their own wisdom, and not inspired by God.

2- Before beginning his speech, Basil states that the words he is about to interpret were written by Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

> *Let us then listen to the true things that were spoken to us, in which there are no arguments of human wisdom but [only] words of the teaching of the Spirit of truth. Their purpose is not the praise of their hearers, but the salvation of those who learn and fulfil them. So let us be raised up in our discourse to the beginning of creation.* (*Hex.* 1.1)

[33] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, 2014, 39.

Basil did not say that Moses was inspired by God, as St. Paul did "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16), but he said the "Spirit of truth." This passage makes one think that Basil is referring or hinting that the "Spirit of truth," or the Holy Spirit according to the Bible written By Saint John, not only began His role in the New Testament, but played a role in the Old Testament as well. In fact, Hildebrand illustrates, using some passages from other works of Basil such as *Against Eunomius* and Basil's homilies on the Psalms, that Basil firmly insists that the prophets are moved and inspired by the Holy Spirit, and not by the Logos as Origen puts.[34] One can detect such intent, i.e., the role of the Holy Spirit in the Old testament, from the aforementioned passage, since Basil has such an argument before.

2.2 Homily Number 2

1- In this homily, Basil again deals with people who believe in the co-essential and co-eternity of matter with God, and goes on to refute their thoughts again:

> *So if matter is existent, then it is a copy of God and equal to his honour. Which God forbid and absit! For there is no worse impiety than this: to posit matter as an equal to God in essence, to compare that which is without quality and without likeness and without visibility and without form and without shape in its ugliness - for I use for a moment the very words of those who say these things, who thus made matter equal to God - [to compare this] with his wisdom and with his power and with the honour of his glory and with his creative activity which establishes everything.* (*Hex* 2.2)

Most of this homily talks about this issue. O'Brien comments that Basil, in this argument, attacks this idea that comes from *Timaeus* of Plato, and which is later developed into "the doctrine of two principles God and matter."[35] Along with dualists, Arko adds that Basil attacks "the pantheists, who do not distinguish between God and creation"[36] O'Brien states that Basil uses the Middle Platonic philosophy to identify the shape of matter according to their conviction, and then refutes the dualistic principle.[37]

---

[34] Ibid, 40-41.
[35] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 12-13.
[36] Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis," 493.
[37] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 12-13.

2- Against the allegorical interpretation, and the wrong fiction that yields it, Basil comments on the idea describing the darkness that was on the surface of the abyss as being derived from evil:

> *What rapacious wolves have not thence made a breach and mutilated the flock of Christ? For from this saying, that darkness was on the surface of the abyss, they took the origin of their error in order to overrun the souls of mankind, be they Marcionites, or Daisanites, or the reprobate teaching of the sect of Mani. If one were to call them putrefaction for the churches of God, he would not be wrong who rightly thus named them.* (*Hex* 2.4).

According to Basil, this interpretation of darkness leads to the conclusion that evil was with God and did not take his existence from Him. This time Basil in his argument openly attacks "*Marcionites, or Daisanites, or the reprobate teaching of the sect of Mani*," calling them "*putrefaction*" which is detrimental to the church of God. "It was further emphasised by Basil," Wynand de Beer writes, "that the terms 'darkness' and 'deep' in Genesis 1 do not signify evil deities, as asserted by the Gnostics and the Manichaeans, but rather the absence of light and the presence of an extreme depth of water."[38] Basil continues to literally explain that the darkness was just darkness, caused by the absence of light.

"The fact that God created absolutely everything that exists," Arko comments, "is related also to the question of evil."[39] By linking the two previous ideas, i.e., the matter as equal to God, and the origin of evil, O'Brien determines the philosophical reason that led for assuming matter as "a co-principle" which is removing "divine responsibility for the imperfection of the created world,"[40] and the imperfection of the world considered, in the eyes of philosophy, to be evil. Basil answers the question regarding evil and its origin as following:

> *So if, they say, evil was not existent nor was created by God, whence is its nature? No one disputes those who are akin to the world that evils do not exist, yet not as these say. But we say this, that evils exist in our own actions; not as they say, that evil lives and exists by nature and is known as a substance.* (*Hex* 2.4)

In the fifth section of this homily, Basil continues to explain that there is no substance of darkness either, it is merely the absence of the light. (*Hex* 2.5)

---

[38] Wynand de Beer, "The Patristic Understanding Of The Six Days (Hexaemeron)" (*Journal of Early Christian History* 5, no. 2 2015 P. 3-23) 11.
[39] Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis," 496.
[40] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 13.

3- In the sixth section, Basil begins actually to involve Christian doctrinal debates in his homilies. He begins with doctrines on the Holy Spirit:

> *Furthermore [scripture] said: "The Spirit of God hovered over the waters." So if scripture spoke about the breeze of air, accept that it also informed you about it; for this too is a part of the things which were created with heaven and earth, even if scripture did not name it with regard to its coming into being - that is, with the air and fire and water this also received its creation. But concerning the Spirit of God it is fitting that this saying be believed, that it is this which hovered over the water. For there was a question about this [posed] by those who preceded us, and they said it is the holy Spirit. And for that reason, they said, scripture preserved reference to it, and mentioned it alone, and in wonder introduced record of it, so that the completeness of the glorous Trinity might be thereby rendered and believed.* (*Hex* 2.6)

In this paragraph, as stated by Olga A Druzhinina, we find a direct attack by Basil against the heretics of his day, proving that the Holy Spirit actively played a great role in creation.[41] Basil continues to explain the role of the Holy Spirit, assisted by the interpretation of St. Ephrem the Syriac on the six day of creation, that it gives power to the waters and prepares them to give birth to living beings. O'Brien notices that Origen himself, who, as aforementioned, is considered one of the main sources for the *Hexaemeron* of Basil, does not attribute any role to the Holy Spirit in creation.[42]

> *From this it will be known truly that the Spirit of God is creative and does not lack at all a creative activity. (Hex* 2.6)

4- In the latter section, Basil begins his prelude to involving Christology in his interpretation of the creation narrative. After placing "day" in a higher and more honourable position than "night," and explaining the relationship between "day", the seven days, and eternity, Basil uses several verses from the Scripture to describe the hereafter such as: "Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light." (Amos 5:18); "It is the great day of God's shining." (Joel 2:11); "He promised and spoke concerning another day." (Heb 4:8); and comments that the Psalmist called it the eighth day, this day, according to Basil, is:

> *"Outside the numbering of the course of the week. And it does not exist in time, for it is one day in one age."* (*Hex* 2.8)

---

[41] Olga A Druzhinina, *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil the Great: A Trinitarian Approach to the Life of the Church*. (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016) Chapter 2, footnote 4.
[42] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 16.

Basil concludes his explanation of the "day," the week, the age, and the eighth day that is the eternity in this passage:

> *Whether you say day or if you say age, you are saying the same thing. But in order that he might make our mind eager for the age to come and instruct it through his psalms, he depicted for us from one day one age which abides - that day which is the beginning of all days, the equal of the God of light in which the light appeared - that is, the holy day of the first of the week and which honours the resurrection of our Lord in the life of men.* (*Hex* 2.8)

In sum, when the Scripture says "one day" instead of the first day, it refers to and reminds us of another day, the great day of the Lord, which is the day of the resurrection of our Lord.

2.3 Homily Number 3

1- After composing a good introduction to his third homily linking the second homily to this one, Basil proceeds directly to explain the verse "And God said: Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water" (Genesis 1:6), asking his congregation several questions that can be summed up in one question: Who does God speak with? To lead them for this conclusion:

> *It is right that we should think as follows about God: that the thought of his majesty, and the origin of his will, and the word of his knowledge, are the nod of the wisdom of his majesty. But scripture in the format of the expression of a saying undertook to say these things about him: that he was not only desirous to create the world, but also to declare concerning his true Son that he was a co-creator of created things, and [co-] bringer into existence of those things which did not exist and had not come into being... So God prepared a road and way for us towards his only-begotten Son through his saying.* (*Hex* 3.2)

Through this statement, and by the one about the Holy Spirit aforementioned in the second homily, Ishac notices that "Basil insists that the Logos was the Creator alongside with the Holy Spirit who was also active."[43] Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity in Creation had been fulfilled in the *Hexaemeron* of Basil, the Son and the Holy Spirit existed before the creation of the world, together with God (the Father), they are co-creators and they created with Him.

[43] Ishac, "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron," 2.

2- Back to use the literal interpretation, Basil interprets the creation of the “firmament” assuming that it is a second heaven, refuting and mocking some philosophical thoughts.

> *We must enquire furthermore whether there is another heaven in addition to the one that was created first, or whether it is the same that was called firmament, and whether there are two heavens.* (*Hex* 3.3)

Basil compares between some philosophers who believe that the heaven is one (according to its whole nature, unlike the words of scripture), and those who believe that God created countless heavens and worlds, mentioning their theory of cosmic music that results from seven stars and their seven circles, which is for Pythagoras, but Basil does not mention his name.

> *So our message to the wise men of the Greeks is this, that they not mock at us until they first persuade each other to desist from opposing each other... But let us treat with total ridicule their constructed artifices that consist in babbling; for there is no force of truth in them.* (*Hex* 3.3)

It is conceivable for Basil to believe in two heavens or even three according to St. Paul the Apostle “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows.” (2 Corinthians 12:2).

3- Regarding the physical nature of the “firmament,” and the command of God to let it divide the waters, Basil uses natural sciences to explain this process, and rejects the ideas of some people who deny the existence of waters on the dome of heaven. But once again, Basil seizes the opportunity and uses the command of God “Let” to refer to the existence of someone else with whom God speaks, i.e., the Only Begotten Son.

> *But let not the great significance which is hidden in this account pass me by. For it says: "God said: Let there be a firmament." The statement did not remain simply: "The firmament was made," but: "God created the firmament." Furthermore it said: "God divided." Let the deaf hear and the blind see… Behold it demonstrated again the creative activity of the Son creator, who is testimony to God's power.* (*Hex* 3.4)

Basil continues to reject some of the arguments about the waters and the nature of the sun, as some Greeks say that it is not red or warm but white; using some natural and geographical sciences, proving that the vast quantity of water which God has created is necessary and proportionate to the total amount of fire in the world. In addition to some explanations for natural issues about the air, dew, and rain. (*Hex* 3.6-8)

> *Let us then not be troubled with the labour of investigation concerning heaven, in which effort philosophers have worn themselves out. But let us adhere to the*

> *simple truth, in which there is nothing compounded because its teaching is from the Spirit of God. And let us not trust in the allurements of error instead of in the truth.* (*Hex* 3.8)

Opposing to the allegorism of "someone," O'Brien and Lim comment, Basil rejects the assumption that the waters below the heaven are "wicked spiritual beings who have fallen from grace,"[44] which is a Neoplatonic idea, especially since Basil has pointed out the idea of demons in the sea.[45] Basil also rejects the suggestion that the upper waters are spiritual beings consist of superior power and they are praising the Lord:

> *These words resemble stories of dreams, and they are like the babbling of old age that is senseless and has lost the savour of truth. But we say the waters are waters, and as such we recognize them. As they were divided to remain above or below, thus let us understand them. Not because it was said of the upper ones that they are praisers of the Lord of all and of the creator of everything, should we place them in the nature of rational beings; nor, because it is written: "The heavens declare the glory of God," do we therefore say they are spiritual; nor, because: "The firmament indicates the work of his hands," should we suppose that it possesses a life of knowledge.* (Hex 3.9)

In general, Basil followed an intensive literal method in his work, and considered the allegorism as the main cause of heresy. "His incessant polemics against people whom he regarded as heretics and outsiders," Lim comments, "were aided by the stock argument that their errors came from vain speculations, from an alien wisdom. This reflects a standard Christian suspicion that philosophical speculation and "free-thinking" leads to heresy. Certainly, such an analysis of the origin of heretical ideas appears in the *Hexaemeron*."[46]

2.4 Homily Number 4

Here, in the fourth homily, is where Basil begins his moral teachings. In this homily, Basil begins by teaching against spectacles, music, and the acts of lasciviousness they contain. In addition to horse-racing and the madness of some people have towards it. Instead of these, Basil exhorts his followers to watch and meditate on creation. (*Hex* 4.1)

1- Basil used the literal interpretation, natural sciences regarding the nature of the water, and geography, to prove that the earth was hidden by the waters, it is not invisible in terms of its nature. The nature of water dictates that the waters flow and move to low places, but the waters did not

---

[44] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 6.
[45] Ibid, and Lim, "The Politics," 356.
[46] Lim, "The Politics," 358-59.

move to their places before the permission from God, or in other words, the command of God changed their nature to become so (*Hex* 4.2-4). In the fifth paragraph, we notice a clear literal interpretation and textual criticism to the Scripture, by comparing the two terms “Land” and “Earth” to prove the previous theory:

> *"And God said: Let the waters be gathered to one place, and let dry land appear." He did not say: "Let the earth appear," lest it be supposed again that the description was of [an earth] unformed.* (*Hex* 4.5)

By showing that it was a dry land before the sun was created, thus, it was the command of God that made it dry, not the sun:

> *But the earth was, as it were, mud from the waters upon it, because many waters were found on it. It had not yet reached the stage of giving an appearance of fitting likeness and of soft potentiality. But lest it be supposed that the cause of its drying up was the sun, its dryness is prior to the sun by the providence of the command that was imposed on it. Let our mind examine the things which have been written, and let us see that not only were the many waters removed from the surface of the earth, but also all the humidity that was mingled in it deep down was reduced to dryness immediately at the command of his majesty. "And it was so." This command that was imposed on it sufficed for it to be known that it obeyed the voice of God to become thus.* (*Hex* 4.5)

And finally, we find the most important point, by the comparison that Basil made of some copies of the Scripture:

> *But in other copies [of scripture] it is [written] differently: "Let the waters, it says, that are under heaven be gathered to their gatherings; and let the dry land appear." None of the scribes or of the interpreters handed it down to us in this fashion. For not even in the copies of the Hebrews does it appear to be thus. But in the authentic copies these [words] are proscribed and condemned.* (*Hex* 4.5)

Basil probably comments on these additions: ‘*that are under heaven*’ and ‘*their gatherings.*’ The damage these additions cause to the text is not clear, and the reason why Basil rejects these explanatory phrases is not understandable, since Basil continues to talk about another topic (the difference between ‘land’ and ‘earth’). But one thing we can glean from this passage is that Basil adheres firmly to the Scripture using a literal method, at least in the account of creation, and does not accept any changes in its letters.

In the sixth and seventh sections, Basil continues to explain some natural phenomena using philosophy, geography, and natural sciences, without clarifying his main goal, or without showing any spirituality in his teachings as a Christian shepherd, for instance, Basil illustrated that each element possessed a name from one of its properties:

> *Now this does not only concern the earth, but also each one of the elements. From its individuality it bears its name with regard to its hypostasis; and from the power that it possesses in its essence it has its name; and every one of them is known from what it consists of. Water exists from the property found in it - by coldness; and air by moisture; and fire by warmth.* (*Hex* 4.5)

And after a lengthy explanation about the elements, Basil states:

> *I have introduced all these matters into my discourse in order to show for what reason God called the dry land "earth." Therefore, from that which is the cause of the existence of part of the bodies, it was named as prior to them in honour, and later a surname was fittingly imposed on those which exist and are prior, so that from the name their hypostases might be known and explained.* (*Hex* 4.5)

Does Basil, by mentioning that the hypostasis of each body could be known by its own name, try to refer to the hypostasis of Jesus? As His name is the Son of God, so he is the God? In fact, after a lengthy explanation about the sea using the same previous method, Basil states:

> *The reason for this description in my discourse is as follows. All the earth is hollowed out by the waters of the abysses from the place below, and this makes them break through and burst out from all sides; and they move in it and circulate within it.* (*Hex* 4.6)

Besides the reason Basil mentioned, I am not sure whether or not he had any purpose in using philosophy, natural sciences, and literal interpretation here only to reach this scientific result! This is what made me suppose that he attempted to say that the hypostasis of Jesus is derived from his name "the Son of God." The second reason is that Basil at the end of this homily, which mentioned down, touches on the issue of heresies and their war against the Church, which is something that has nothing to do with his final scientific result mentioned above:

> *May a deep and invisible peace preserve his church from the blowing of evil winds, that is, buffeting persecution. From evils too may he spare his flock, that it may be preserved from them without corruption. May he allow you to become worthy to receive the teaching from the Spirit of God, in which are found life and salvation which is their mediti*tation[47]*. And let us raise praise and honour to the Father and the Son and the holy Spirit, now and always, and for ever and ever. Amen.* (*Hex* 4.7)

Two issues evidently had occupied Basil's mind: the persecution; and false teaching of evils which opposes the teaching of the Spirit of God and causes corruption to His flock, this is what makes the reader of this work believe that all his words and explanations most likely lead to talking about one of these two conclusions.

---

[47] *Sic.*

It is difficult to guess what exactly Basil's purpose was in composing this sermon; but after the very long scientific explanation of the nature using the account of creation word by word, and after the last conclusion mentioned above, one can suggest the main goal of Basil as follows: Even science and philosophy are in harmony with the Scripture, which is God-breathed; Therefore listen to his words, and forget the words of wicked (heretics), who want to destroy the church of God with their teachings.

2.5 Homily Number 5

In this homily one can find an extensive use of the agricultural science, along with the rare moral instruction drawn from certain kinds of trees. However, as usual, heretics and doctrine should be mentioned.

1- Tracing literally the sequence of the acts of God in the process of creating the world, Basil refutes the supposition of some people that the sun is the cause of the growth of herbs and trees from the earth by its warmth that germinated seeds inside the earth:

> *Therefore the decor of the earth with its fruits is prior to the creation of the sun. For the worshippers of the sun from its supervision over all men became subject to it, as their argument claims. But let those in error be silent, because before the creation of the sun the prosperity of the earth with its seeds and trees included the totality of their adornment. And because its worshippers were impious and promulgated this [theory] that from it derives supervision of everything, so awe at its majesty was provided by them towards it. Let us say to them now "shame;" because the herb ... is prior to it in existence, and it is younger than them in creation.* (*Hex* 5.1)

And as de Beer comments, Basil rejects two main ideas, the first is the aforementioned above, and the second is the wastefulness of nature.[48] Basil, after the previous passage and in the eighth paragraph, continues to explain the necessity of every type of herbs God created:

> *So God prepared and established for us within the earth the wealth of provisions necessary for us and those who serve us.* (*Hex* 5.1)
>
> *There is nothing of the things created whose creation does not have a good reason; and there is nothing of the things that were established that exists of itself. But all the things that were created bear in their appearance the ineffable wisdom of their creator, and through their power they proclaim the praise of their establisher.* (*Hex* 5.8)

[48] Beer, “The Patristic Understanding Of The Six Days (Hexaemeron),” 15-16.

2- After using agricultural science to explain the system in which many kinds of herbs, seeds, and fruits were created (*Hex* 5.2-3), and after mentioning the good plants and enumerating some harmful ones that kill and the man should avoid them (*Hex* 5.4), Basil uses the allegorism to describe the wicked as being like tares among the wheat. This allegorical example is not his own, rather it is the one used by Jesus Christ:

> *But tares and the seeds of many grasses are intermingled in the earth among the seeds of our nourishment. Scripture mentions tares among the wheat in order to introduce them as an appropriate example for the likeness of those who teach falsehood in the tracks of the truth. But it is clear that the tares did not derive from wheat; rather, from the origin of their creation they were generated with their own seed on earth. Those who corrupt the teaching of God and do not instruct in healthy fashion those whom they meet, have been compared to the likenesses of tares. As if [inspired] by evil, they teach pernicious doctrine; and they mingle themselves with the healthy body of God's church so that, as their harm is hidden in them and not manifest, they may impart it to the simple.* (*Hex* 5.5)

This is the idea that Basil wants to reach and present before his listeners, the tares which will be punished and burned are the heretics who teach against and in the same tracks of the right teaching of God. These people do not have the same origin or root of good people, they are inspired by evil to teach a heterodox doctrine. "He strongly believes," Druzhinina concludes, "that people who "alter the doctrine of the Lord, not being rightly instructed in the word" do not belong to the community but they "mix themselves with the sound body of the Church" in order "to spread their pernicious errors secretly among purer souls." (*Hex* 5.5) They are not the members of the Body but they only pretend to be such. In reality these people, actually, destroy the unity of the Church because they were "corrupted by the teaching of the evil one." (Hex. 5.5) Often the separations happened when these kinds of teachers got power in the communities. According to St Basil, the consequences of the doctrinal divisions are damaging."[49]

2.6 Homily Number 6

1- After a long introduction about the beauty of this universe and the importance of contemplating it in order to explore the greatness of the invisibles that are beyond it, and the greatness of its creator, Basil concludes his introduction:

---

[49] Druzhinina, *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil*, 144-145.

> *If for a blind man it is a great loss to be deprived of the light of this transitory sun, how much greater will be the loss for the sinner who is deprived of the light of truth!* (*Hex* 6.1)

This portion sounds like a direct message addressed to the philosophers who, by their teachings, oppose the light of truth and rely on their own wisdom in their understanding of the world regarding the creation. Indeed, we can consider this letter to be addressed to philosophers and heretics as well; The first reason is that Basil calls them sinners, and the second reason is that in the next paragraph Basil mentions a Christological doctrine. One can make this hypothesis because Basil states that a good comprehension of this world, of its visible and invisible parts, is derived from the wisdom of God revealed to Moses who spoke to Him face to face, not from the wisdom of mankind. This wisdom, as Ishac comments, played an important role in elevating the mind beyond the limits of the visible world:[50]

> *So the purpose of this discourse of mine concerns the constitution of the world, and our enquiry concerns the contemplation of its formation. Not from the wisdom of the world did we learn about the origin of creation, but from the servant of God with whom he spoke face to face! And not in the form of a vision or as a symbol of the world.* (*Hex* 6.1)

2- Basil uses again the command of God "Let there be luminaries in the firmament of heaven." (Genesis 1:14) as evidence that there is another person with whom God is speaking, who is of course the Only-begotten Son:

> *"Let there be luminaries in the firmament of heaven." When you hear of the one who spoke, bring into your mind immediately the one who heard: "And God said: Let there be luminaries; and God made luminaries." So who spoke and who created? Understand from this saying the form of two persons; since everywhere God shows us his truth, which is sealed in his scriptures in a glorious mystery.* (*Hex* 6.2)

3- Basil again refutes the thought of people considering the sun to be a maker or a reason of the vegetation, this time using another verse from Genesis 1:

> *"And God said: Let there be luminaries in the firmament of heaven to separate day from night." So heaven and earth came into being first; and light was created after them to be over them… But the sun and moon had not yet received the command to be created, lest supremacy and superintendance*[51] *be ascribed to the*

[50] Ishac, "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron," footnote No. 13.
[51] *Sic*.

> *sun by those who call it the cause of everything… That first light, scattered in its nature, was given to illuminate the earth; while the body of that sun he fashioned to be a vessel of that first light. (Hex 6.2)*

In the following paragraphs, Basil extensively explains the nature of the sun and moon, and elaborates on the other planets, their movements and system, and their relationship to astronomy and astrology. But the most important message, as one can grasp after reading these paragraphs, is that these two great celestial bodies are nothing more than created bodies, their function is being vessels, or as de Beer puts it "vehicles for the immaterial light."[52]

2.7 Homily Number 7

In the introduction to this homily, which is the shortest, Basil summarizes the process of creation before and after the stage of luminaries:

> *After the creation of the luminaries occurred, the waters also now received authority that living creatures should crawl among the animals, that these too might be embellished by those that were created and multiplied among them. So the earth received adornment in itself through the plants which it produced. And heaven also received [the ability] to shine, as if with flowers, through the stars that [were suspended] from it, with the two twin eyes of the majesty of the sun and of the moon, which are linked to each other by the great adornment of their light.* (*Hex* 7.1)

Basil displays an extensive knowledge of zoology; De Beer points out that although he incorrectly classified warm-blooded aquatic mammals with cold-blooded reptiles, amphibians and fish, this does not disprove his extensive zoological knowledge.[53] In his speech about the process of creating the universe that "came into being in time and has a linear, teleological structure, a beginning and an end,"[54] Basil, notices Arko, refutes the teachings of dualists who believe in the coeternity of matter and the Creator, and pantheists who do not distinguish between them.[55] Alongside opposing dualists, O'Brien finds in the above-mentioned passage that Basil makes use of Neoplatonic philosophy: "As in the Neoplatonic account," O'Brien expounds, "each level of reality results from being emanated by the preceding one and turning back towards that higher level, attempts to order itself in response to it."[56]

---

[52] Beer, "The Patristic Understanding Of The Six Days (Hexaemeron)," 16.
[53] Ibid, 17.
[54] Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis," 493.
[55] Ibid.
[56] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 14.

2.8 Homily Number 8

1- the first philosophical idea Basil tackles is "*is the earth breathing?*" (Hex 8.1). Basil mentions the Manichaeans and opposes them, calling them "*the deviser of falsehood,*" as they say that the earth has a soul, and it brought forth beings that previously existed in it:

> *Not that he said: "Let the earth put forth," as if it brought forth something that was in it; but the giver of the command gave it the power to give forth what it did not possess.* (*Hex* 8.1)

"Everything is created thanks to God's will." O'Brien summarizes the first section of the eighth homily, "When God says 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature after its kind' (Genesis 1:24) or 'Let the waters produce moving things', it is not that earth or water contributes to creation, but that God grants them the grace to bring forth its adornment (Hex. 8.1, 70B-C), a criticism of the position adopted by the Manicheans in their assertion that the earth has a soul."[57]

2- The second philosophical thought that Basil strongly refutes is the reincarnation of the human soul in the body of animals:

> *"Let the earth bring forth living breath." Why does the earth bring forth living breath? In order that you might learn about the superiority that the soul of a man possesses over the soul of animals… As scripture indicates to us, the soul of all animals is its blood. Now when the blood of an animal congeals in being shed or at its death, it becomes flesh and undergoes a transformation. And when its flesh has become corrupted, it turns into dust. For the soul of animals is from earth, as will be seen in due course… For you should not suppose that the soul of animals is prior to the formation of their limbs, nor did it come into being later in the body that was fashioned. Nor again should you think that after the dissolution of animals their soul remains as an entity, or that it moves from the body in which it was. So let us flee from the importunity of the philosophers and from the puffery of their great impiety, who are not ashamed to say that their souls are like in form to the souls of dogs. They say about their souls that sometimes they are souls of women, and sometimes they even enter roots, and sometimes they are found in fishes. Now if they possessed the souls of fishes and dogs, I many [of the opinions] that are supposed to be wise even their authors would be unable to understand through their animal souls. They would be without reason and without true sense, like the dogs and fishes, if they possessed their souls. Far be it from me to say about them that their souls are so constituted. But I do testify about them: that since they so thought they are even more humble than those animals.* (*Hex* 8.2)

There is a great difference between the immortal human soul that came out of the breath of God, and the soul of other creatures that came out of earth, and returns to earth.

---

[57] Ibid.

Besides the clear rejection of metempsychosis in the second section, and the hierarchy of species in the first, which are the two ideas found in *Timaeus* of Plato as O'Brien states,[58] Ishac analyzes this section considering it anthropological, because it elevates the soul of man over the souls of other creatures.[59] Basil mentions the same idea in the second section of the ninth homily.

> *"Let the earth bring forth living breath according to its kind," that is, terrestrial animals which bend down to earth and touch the ground. But man is a heavenly plant. Just as he is constituted I in the form of his fashioning by the Creator, so also his soul is honoured and superior.* (*Hex* 9.2)

3- After a lengthy explanation about the diverse species of birds mixed with ethical teachings, Basil uses a concept that existed in his time, which says that there are many kinds of birds can give birth without union with a mate:

> *Furthermore, there are many kinds of bird which do not need union with a mate for conception and birth. There is another kind of bird that gives birth from a breeze of wind, since it does not have offspring from eggs. The majority of vultures, as they say, give birth without coupling. And these vultures are long-lived I and their lives stretch out, as they say, about one hundred years.* (Hex 8.6)

Basil uses this concept as a testimony on the mystery of Jesus, and the possibility of the Virgin Mary becoming pregnant without coupling with a man; if vultures can do it, how much more can God!

> *Let us consider specifically the account of this tale about the bird which gives birth without coupling. For whenever we see people mocking at our true mystery, as being something difficult to have occurred from God, because it is outside nature that a virgin give birth without a man, her virginity being preserved spotless - when we hear this from the unbelievers, let us bear in mind what the apostle said of God: "By the foolishness of his gospel he wished to save those who believe." So we have many things by nature which have been established by God that are close to the wonders of our faith.* (*Hex* 8.6)

"It is," Ishac comments, "a way of meditating within the nature using metaphoric examples in order to understand the mystery of the Incarnation."[60] Knowing that, as Ishac also says, in the era of Basil, the Christological debates about the conception of Jesus Christ had not yet emerged.[61] Indeed, there is no need for Christological controverses to make Basil preach the conception of Jesus, this message can be addressed to unbelievers who are both gentiles or Jewish.

---

[58] Ibid, 15.
[59] Ishac, "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron," 2.
[60] Ibid, 19.
[61] Ibid, 21.

4- “The basic tenet which Basil adopts towards creation,” O’Brien comments on the seventh section of this homily, “is that our God has created nothing unnecessarily and has omitted nothing that is necessary.”[62] Perhaps O'Brien came to this idea because of the repetition of this statement in the discourse of Basil, since he mentioned it twice in the fifth homily (*Hex* 5.1 & 5.8) and in the eighth homily (*Hex* 8.7), and in other places. De Beer comments that Basil uses the Aristotelian final causality (teleology) in his interpretation.[63]

5- In the same way and against those who do not believe in the resurrection of man, Basil uses the lifecycle of the silkworm to draw in their imagination an example of the changes that will occur on the last day:

> *What then will the unbelievers say to Paul the apostle, who preached about the resurrection and the transformation from death to life which will happen to mankind - when they see the transformation that will occur in what moves in the air and goes through the process of change into other forms, yet is the same as [it was] from the first day in its life. Now concerning the Indian [silk-]worm, those who describe it say that it has horns on its head. At its origin, they say, it appears in the form of a worm in its smallness. Then later it becomes something else that is called caterpillar… Then, they say, it acquires broad and drooping wings… Through this creature and the transformations that take place in them, let us take a notable demonstration regarding the resurrection with true understanding. And let us not be disbelieving towards the transformation that occurs to mankind, of which the apostle Paul preaches, with God and his promises.* (*Hex* 8.8)

2.9 Homily Number 9

1- Once again, Basil opposes the idea that the soul of animals previously existed on the earth:

> *Not because the soul of animals existed on earth was it commanded to come forth and appear. But at that very command it was created, and everything in which the substance of animals exists it produced at once immediately.* (*Hex* 9.3)

“Basil at times,” de Beer comments, “reads the command, ‘Let the earth bring forth,' too literally, as when he asserts that eels are born from mud.”[64]

---

[62] O’Brien, “The Actuality of St Basil the Great,” 13.
[63] Beer, “The Patristic Understanding Of The Six Days (Hexaemeron),” 6.
[64] Ibid, 18.

2- Basil this time address a clear and explicit Christological message to the Jews regarding the presence of the Son with the Father during creation:

> *"And God said: Let us make man in our image according to our likeness." So what did the Jew say about God, who spoke as if questioning and as if the order of the words was sufficient for them to indicate the truth. Just as light shows a token of its shining through small openings, so from this passage a demonstration concerning the second person is clearly given with regard to the shining of the truth. But the Jew, before hearing the truth, fought against it. "God spoke to himself, he said, and he conversed with himself. And it is the same who spoke and the same who created. And God said: Let there be light, and there was light."* (*Hex* 9.6)

The Jews, particularly Philo as reported by Ishac and O'Brien,[65] interpreted this portion "God said: Let us…", and similar portions in many places in Gensis 1, as a conversation between God and angels. Basil rejects this interpretation, because if they consider this portion addressed to the angels, it means that the angels are equal to God "Let us," and they are Lords over the creation. Another interpretation of the Jews is that God addressed himself. According to Basil, this interpretation is rejected and illogical, as the smith does not set alone and says "Let us forge a knife," he works silently; So, God did not speak to himself.

> *So you heard, O Jew fighting against Christ, that to the one who is associate in his tasks he said: "Let us make," and to the one through whom he made the ages, and to the one who brings everything [into being] by the power of his word… So hear again, O newly circumcised, who fights on behalf of Judaism hypocritically feigning Christianity. It is clear that he spoke about the one who is the light of his glory and the resemblance of his greatness, who is the likeness of the invisible God, who is the living and true likeness, he who said: "I and my Father are one. And whoever has seen me has seen the Father." To the Son. (Hex 9.6)*

Along with Jews, Basil attacks those who reject the Son's likeness of the Father. O'Brien identifies them as being from the Neo-Arians like Eunomius,[66] and Ishac identifies them as being Anomoeans.[67]

2.10 Conclusion

The following points are the philosophical and doctrinal thoughts that can be summarized from the above survey:

---

[65] Ishac, "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron," 17; and O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 16.
[66] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 16.
[67] Ishac, "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron," 11.

1- God is the Creator, against those who believe in the spontaneous formation of the world, in particular "the godless atomic cosmogony of Leucippus and Democritus and Plotinus's eternal world."[68]

2- Against dualists and pantheists, Basil argues that matter is neither co-essential nor co-eternal with God.

3- The role of the Holy Spirit began in the Old Testament.

4- Against the allegorism, the darkness mentioned in Genesis 1 is not derived from evil. Evil has no substance.

5- Against the heretics of his days, Basil explains that the Holy Spirit has a creative role in creation.

6- The Father was conversing with the Son during the creation narrative. The Son has a role in creation, He and the Holy Spirit are also creators. This doctrine is mentioned many times in the *Hexaemeron* of Basil, and its portions and paragraphs are sometimes addressed explicitly and directly to Jews or heretics.

7- Against some philosophical thoughts of his day, Basil interprets literally that the firmament is a second heaven, and rejects the assumption that the lower waters are wicked beings.

8- Everything God created is necessary and has a purpose (the Aristotelian final causality, teleology).

9- The four elements, and hypostasis and names of bodies.

10- Basil refutes the conviction of some people who believe that the sun is the cause of life. He defenses against this idea several times.

11- The heterodox doctrine is caused by the wicked, who is in his origin from evil.

12- It is not the warmth of the sun (against some philosophers), nor the breaths of the earth (against Manicheans), nor the waters, but God is the primary cause of the world.

13- Refuting the reincarnation of the human soul in the body of animals.

---

[68] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, 2014, 39.

14- The resurrection of man is real.

15- In addition to the philosophical thoughts which are mentioned in the introduction of this paper (visible creation was created in time, unlike the invisible creation who were created in eternity. The geocentrism. The two contradictory theories, the four elements and the fifth element…etc.).

Basil treats Genesis 1 using the literal interpretation, to make use of some portions such as: "God said…" or "Let the waters bring forth…" or "Let the earth bring forth..." or "Let us..." in mentioning a doctrinal or philosophical idea in his discourse, claiming that he contradicts the allegorical method of understanding the Scriptures. In addition to mentioning heretics and philosophers in many places in his homilies, describing them as wicked, sinners, and harmful people. Ishac asserts that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity occupied a considerable concern in the *Hexaemeron*, using this passage from the ninth homily as a testimony for his assertion:[69]

> *May the Anomoean be confounded, the Jews covered with shame, the faithful exultant in the dogmas of truth.* (*Hex* 9.6)

"St Basil's approach," Doru Costache comments, "was that of a Church shepherd, i.e. shaped by ethical considerations and doxological goals, making use of the available sciences only in moderation."[70] Indeed, what one can notice after reading the nine homilies that most of them contain extended use of the available sciences, such as zoology, botany, geography, geology, astronomy, and agricultural sciences (which I did not mention them because my concern is the doctrinal side). Most of them were used either in ethics, or simply to make his congregation marvel at the great creation created by a great Creator, although sometimes Basil presented a high-detailed explanation, that it would probably make the listeners bored. Again, my inquiry is not about the use of natural sciences in ethics, nor in praising the Creator; Because it is a normal and appropriate use for any audience, regardless of his intellectual level.

Considering the previous doctrinal and philosophical ideas (and there could be more) found in his homilies, one can find an obvious conclusion: this is too many doctrinal and philosophical discussions to be found in nine homilies delivered to the laity during the period of less than one week. Now, let us examine his previous writings, and check whether or not the previous doctrinal ideas were mentioned in them.

---

[69] Ishac, "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron," 11.
[70] Costache, "Making Sense of the World," 6.

3 The Doctrinal Works of Basil

"For St. Basil," Hildebrand illustrates, "the Trinity was not an academic question or a particularly difficult theological puzzle. Rather, it was central to his understanding of salvation. It was the Life, toward which his whole life was oriented, the goal of all his ascetic striving."[71] It is clear that the doctrine of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Resurrection… etc. occupied Basil's mind to such an extent that his understanding of the Trinity influenced his ecclesiology and his views on the Church.[72] Especially that his years were full of theological controversies, and the Church was full of conflicts, as stated by Druzhinina.[73] Basil attended the synod of Constantinople 359 in company of Eustathius and Basil of Ancyra.[74] He was to engaged in the debate with Aëtius of Antioch, who believed that the Son was unlike the Father in substance, but he fled the council.[75]

Let us take a quick look at some of his doctrinal works:

3.1 *On Faith*

In *On Faith*, the Trinitarian faith of Basil is packed in Scripture, since he uses verses and expressions of the Scripture to express his faith.[76] Hildebrand notices that, on one hand, Basil uses the language of the Scripture, avoiding technical expressions used in the Nicene creed, for example, instead of "God from God, light from light, true God" he uses (John1:1) and (Colossians1:15): "the Word was God and with God, and all things are made through him and hold together in him from true God."[77] It seems that Basil always uses literalism when he comes to theology and doctrine. On the other hand, Basil confesses that one sometimes gets forced to use some teqnical expressions, which are not existed in Scripture, regarding the charachteristic properities of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, to correct some wrong views of heretics who distortedly use the Scripture.[78]

---

[71] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*,2018, 43.
[72] Druzhinina, *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil*, 27.
[73] Ibid, 23.
[74] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*,2018, 10.
[75] Ibid, 12.
[76] Ibid, 43.
[77] Ibid, 45.
[78] Ibid.

Hildebrand concludes an important notion: God nature can't be expressed and comprehensed in one phrase or thought, and his majesty cannot be expressed by one name.[79] Maby this is the reason that makes Basil stick to literalism dealing with doctrine. It is difficult to express the nature of God, therefore, to stay in the safe zone and to avoid heresy, one can rely on the literal expressions of the Scripture which are inspired by God and its words are the truth.

Basil offers a creed, which breifly says: God is one; who is: the almighty Father, the Father and the God of our Lord and God Jesus Christ; who is the Only-begotten Son, in the form of God and equal with Him, who was in the beginning with God, and all things were made through and consist in Him; He assended into heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father; and one only Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth and of adoption; who divides the gifts of God, teaches all things, brings all things to remembrance, and leads us to the true worship of God the Father, of his Only-begotten Son our Lord and God Jesus Christ, and of himself.[80] Hildebrand also mentions Basil's theory about the names of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, which suggests that each name refers to the characteristic quality of his owner "the Father in the characteristics of Fatherhood, the Son in the characteristics of Sonship, and the Holy Spirit in his own characteristics."[81] In the fourth homily of *Hexaemeron*, we found that Basil indirectly applies this theory to materials not just with the three Persons.

3.2 *On the Holy Spirit*

"Basil wrote *On the Holy Spirit*," Hildebrand says, "at a time of theological and ecclesiastical maturity in his life, at a time when he had grown confident in what he wanted to say about God and about being a bishop and living the Christian life, and much of this he said to Amphilochius."[82] Basil was a spiritual father and teacher for Amphilochius, he answered many of his theological and ecclesiastical questions by sending him letters.[83] Epistles 233–36 to Amphilochius, which were written after *On the Holy Spirit*, are among them; they contain

[79] Ibid, 43.
[80] Ibid, 43-44.
[81] Ibid, 45.
[82] Ibid, 18.
[83] Ibid.

and summarize his theological thought against Eunomius.[84] Besides Eunomius, Basil had another opponent, Eustathius of Sebaste, who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit.[85]

In *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil states that these two opponents do not confess the divinity of the Holy Spirit because they cannot find it in the Scripture.[86] Hildebrand explains the view of Basil as follows: Basil employs a distinction between theology and economy regarding the texts which speaks about the Holy spirit, some of them refer theologically to the eternal relationship of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son; And some of them refer economically to Him as the grace granted to us.[87] Thus, when we say "Glory to the Father, with the Son, together with the Holy Spirit," we are describing the communion between the Holy Spirit and God; But when we say "in the Holy Spirit," we are describing the grace given to us.[88] This distinction is used by Basil in this work, as Hildebrand puts, "to defend his doxology."[89]

Basil in both works, *Against Eunomius* and *On the Holy Spirit*, refutes considering the Holy Spirit as being in a middle position between the Creator and the creation, and insists to confess that He is from the God side, not creatures.[90]

Beyond the doctrine and its philosophy, Basil reaches to the worship and praying process, according to him, one cannot truly worship God without confessing the divinity of the Holy Spirit, since worshiping the Son happens by the Holy Spirit, and being sons of the Father happens by the Spirit of adoption.[91] "This idea is so important to St Basil," Druzhinina comments, "that in one of his letters he uses the term "true worshippers" for those believers who worship the Holy Spirit as God."[92]

---

[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid, 50.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid, 52.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid, 54.
[91] Druzhinina, *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil*, 102.
[92] Ibid, 102-103.

3.3 *Against Eunomius* and *Against Eustathius*

In his polemical workes adressed against Eunomius of Cyzicus and Eustathius of Sebaste, Basil mentions some of his Trinitarian thoughts. These two non-Nicene people read the Scripture concerning Christ in a "univocal" way, which is why they misunderstood the right doctrine; unlike Basil and other Nicene writers, who read it in a "partitive" way.[93] In addition, according to Eunomius, and Aëtius as well, the "unbegottenness" is the special property that defined and made God who he is, therfore, it is impossible to say that the Only-begotten Son is truly God.[94] The defense of Basil was briefly as follows: the Son is not created by God, he was in the begginning with God; the Son received the things of God from the Father, the Father is the cause of his divine knowledge.[95]

Hildebrand points out and concludes the main reason why Basil defended the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit against Eunomius and Eustathius: "Basil realized that if Eunomius and Eustathius were right on the Son and the Spirit, then the whole Christian (ascetic) life as he understood it would be ruined. As he so often said, Eunomius and Eustathius cut off our access to God."[96] We have to always keep in mind that, for Basil, theology, spirituality, and ascetic life are interconnected. Hildebrand continues, "If the Son is not equal to the Father, then his humiliations are not the humiliations of God, and our imitation of them cannot make us like God. That is to say, if the Son is not consubstantial with the Father, then a life lived according to his commands cannot bring us to the Father. Something similar holds with the Spirit. When we are baptized into the Spirit, Basil says that we become that into which we were baptized; we become Spirit. But, again, if the Spirit is a creature, then he cannot make us to be like God. He recognized that if the Spirit-fighters were right, then he was living a fantasy and a fraud."[97]

---

[93] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*,2018, 47.
[94] Ibid, 142.
[95] Ibid, 51-52.
[96] Ibid, 55.
[97] Ibid.

3.4 *On Greek Literature*

In this work, Basil urges his nephews and nieces to choose from pagan teachings what is appropriate and to ignore what is not.[98] O'Brien considers this teaching to be a sort of openness to the Greek philosophy, and that the situation in the *Hexaemeron* is reversed, as Basil criticizes their wisdom and contradictory philosophical theories, likening them to blind owls, preferring the simplicity of the words of the Scripture to them.[99] Indeed, one can look at this issue from a different angle than O'Brien. In his *Hexaemeron*, Basil often mentions false philosophical thoughts, which according to *On Greek Literature* should be avoided, as unreasonable and ironic. Thus, the two works complement each other. In *On Greek Literature* Basil warns against following false Greek teachings, and in the *Hexaemeron* he enumerates some of them.

3.5 *To Young Men, How They Would Profit from Greek Literature*

In this work, which is one of Basil's sermons, Basil advises young men:

> *So, then, I have arrived at this counsel: you must not follow them wherever they lead, and give over once and for all the rudders of your mind, as of a ship, to these men. Rather, you should accept whatever is useful from them and know when it is necessary to disregard something.*[100]

It is evident that the community that surrounded Basil, or at least the students, was greatly influenced by Greek philosophy. Both works (*On Greek Literature,* and *To young men, how they would profit from Greek literature*) are sufficient to prove that this issue occupied an important place in the interest and concentration of Basil.

---

[98] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 8.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*,2018, 204.

3.6 *Epistle 9, To Maximus the Philosopher*

In this letter, Basil exhibits his absolute disapproval for the writings of Dionysius, who believed that there is a difference in substance, power, and glory between the Father and the Son, in addition to his denial of the divinity of the holy spirit.[101]

3.7 Conclusion

Druzhinina collected many thoughts from several letters that Basil wrote (*Letter CXXXIII, Letter CCLI, Letter CXXV,* and *Letter CLXXXVIII*), which can be concluded as following: the unity of the Church means the communion of faith and adhering to the correct and unprevented doctrine; Christian takes his identity by confessing the Trinity, which is criterion for the authenticity of faith; Heretics do not belong to the Church because they deny the divinity and the equality of the three Persons of the Trinity.[102] St Basil showed great interest in the doctrine, he tried to convey his orthodoxy thoughts to his congregation even by writing a liturgy which contains theological statements and Trinitarian expressions; "In Basil's thought", Druzhinina comments, "the liturgy was not merely a time of prayer and worship. It was also the time of religious education when the congregation was able to learn proper theological statements and beliefs."[103]

It is clear that doctrine occupied the life of Basil, as he linked it to the life of the church, even among the laity. In *On Fa*ith, Basil defends the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and in his two polemics *Against Eunomius* and *Against Eustathius* as well. In *On the Holy Spirit*, true worship occurs when the believer confesses the divinity of the Holy spirit, otherwise his worshiping is in vain. In his two works against wrong philosophical ideas "*On Greek Literature,* and *To Young Men, How They Would Profit from Greek Literature*" Basil shows great caution in dealing with philosophy.

One can notice that most of the ideas mentioned in Basil's writings above (How much more if we investigate his other works?) are included in his *Hexaemeron* through contemplating the Creation of the World: The divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit; And the

---

[101] Ibid, 136.
[102] Druzhinina, *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil,* 144.
[103] Ibid, 100.

inability of Greek philosophy to be the absolute truth. Even Basil's moral concerns one can find in an earlier work of *Hexaemeron*, which is called *Moralia*. "His desire to keep simplicity in every aspect of his life and his perception of the primitive Church, described in Acts," Druzhinina states, "was reflected in his teaching about the Christian communities. During this time Basil started to write his *Moralia.*"[104] Druzhinina describes the *Moralia* as a manual of rules, duties, and practices, proved by biblical portions, for those who seek to live a an ideal spiritual life.[105]

However, it is clear that Basil devoted his life to confronting false ideas about the Son and the Holy Spirit. If we consider the doctrinal and philosophical ideas collected from the *Hexaemeron* in the conclusion of the first chapter of this thesis, we find that it is possible to sum them up as follows: the Son and the Holy Spirit participated in the process of creation, which proves Their divinity; God (the Trinity) is the Creator of matter, and any other philosophical thought that contradicts this is certainly rejected. The *Hexaemeron* was a summary of his doctrine and a bridge connecting two sides: the first side is the dialogues of Basil with his opponents (or sometimes his students), who were well-versed in doctrine and philosophy; the second side is his secular folk, whose intellectual level considering theology is not ascertained in this paper yet, but who must be familiar with the Orthodox doctrine in order to possess the ability to offer true worship.

So, one can infer that Basil's use of doctrine and philosophy comes from his view that they are necessary and important for any Christian, not just theologians, rather laypeople as well. But the next question is why did Basil use the literal interpretation? Did he used it before in his other exegetical works? Or did he intentionally use it here, in *Hexaemeron*, because it helps him extract doctrine from a scriptural text? Did he use it in another interpretive works without mentioning doctrine?

---

[104] Ibid, 21.
[105] Ibid.

4 Literal and Allegorical Methods in Interpretive Works of Basil

The schools of interpretation of the Scriptures are classified into two main schools: the Alexandrian and the Antiochene school.[106] In the *Hexaemeron*, there are many examples testify that Basil uses the literal interpretation that belongs to the Antiochene school, and refutes the allegorical interpretation that belongs to the Alexandrian school:

> *Now some people in their impiety have introduced a change into the words of scripture according to their own wishes. I am not the inventor of these things, but I encountered those who were engaged in such efforts, who do not accept the words of scripture in the sense that they were spoken. Water, they say, is not water but is some other nature. And again they interpret fishes differently in accordance with their own opinion; and in their arguments they turn the species of animals and of reptiles into another meaning. They are like men who apply interpretations to dreams which they see; and just as they are deluded in their sleep to follow them, so contrary to their meaning they fabricate interpretations. But if I hear grass from scripture, 1 recognize it as grass; and tree, and animal, and cattle, and fishes, and reptiles of the earth. And I accept everything as it is spoken in the account of creation. I am not ashamed to accept the words of the scriptures as they were spoken, as the Apostle said: "I am not ashamed of the gospel."* (*Hex* 9.1)

"Scripture formed the backbone of his family life as a child and young man;" Hildebrand comments on Basil, "it inspired his every ascetical impulse… and it occupied the center of the great theological polemics in which he participated."[107]

Hildebrand summarizes Basil's view of the Scriptures, describing it as the same as that of the ancient church, as follows: the Scriptures are written by inspiration of God; The authors did not invent a single word; The Holy Spirit took care to write every word in its proper and rightful place;[108] Since they have an authorship from God, they have no real

---

[106] For further information about these two schools, their representatives, and differences between them, see: Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, 2014, 44-45.
[107] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*,2018, 24.
[108] Ibid.

contradictions in them, and if they seem to contradict each other, the problem is with understanding on the part of the reader side, not with the Scriptures.[109]

Most scholars unanimously agree on the literalism with which Basil adheres in composing the *Hexaemeron*. Ishac, for example, describes the literal analysis for πνεῦμα (in Hebrew רוּח, in Syriac ܪܘܚܐ, which means both wind and spirit) in the second homily, assisted by anonymous Syriac author, as a literal commitment; As the Syriac language is close to Hebrew.[110] "The better interpretation (to prove the Orthodox dogmas)," Ishac concludes, "depends on the right understanding to the original scriptural language. In short, as it is the case in Jacob's Hexaemeron, similarly, the linguistic exegetical genre is clear in Basil's *Hexaemeron*."[111]

In the third homily, O'Brien and Lim note that Basil opposes the mythological allegorical teachings of Neoplatonism that involve demons in understanding the movement of the sea.[112]

After reading the ninth homily, one can observe, as O'Brien does, that Basil considers anyone who gives his own opinion attempting to interpret the words of the Scriptures to be insulting the Holy Spirit, because he considers himself more intelligent than Him.[113] Commenting on the same homily, Ishac says: "According to Basil, the faithful Christian reads the words of Scripture and believes that they express what they mean literally."[114]

Even Basil's use of some of the behaviors and peculiarities of some animals and plants, as aforementioned in this paper, is to reflect them on the daily life of humans, and to make them a model for their moral life. This use is not considered a sort of allegorism, as Andrew Brown argues, and it is not a departure of literalism, rather "Basil is careful to retain

---

[109] Ibid, 25.
[110] Ishac, "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron," 6-7.
[111] Ibid, 7.
[112] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 6. And Lim, "The Politics," 356.
[113] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 5.
[114] Ishac, "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron," 8.

the reality of the references to created entities and then exploit their value as moral symbols, a practice that already had currency in the church of the time."[115]

Lim argues that literal interpretation should be used with simple people, while the allegorical one is appropriate for mature Christians; This is what made Basil choose literalism to compose the *Hexaemeron*, since allegorism may misleads simple Christians towards heresy.[116] O'Brien agrees with Lim about that,[117] but in contrast, DeMarco has inquiries about Basil's use of literalism before an uneducated audience.[118] Anyway, it is hard to link Basil's use of literalism with the type of his audience, since it was composed of many intellectual levels as we will see in the fourth chapter of this paper.

On the other hand, in addition to his inquiries about Basil's use of literalism before an uneducated audience, DeMarco draws attention to the fact that Basil dealt with allegorism by using it in interpreting other books, but later took the position of rejecting it when he composed the *Hexaemeron*.[119] O'Brien agrees with DeMarco, and states that Basil used both literal and allegorical methods in his interpretation of the Psalms, but his early use of allegorism rather than literalism, and his extensive use of literalism in the *Hexaemeron*, may be seen as a conversion from the Alexandrian to the Antiochian school.[120] DeMarco makes these suppositions: "It is of course also possible that Basil was giving way to perceived pressures, or that he felt Genesis in particular should not be subjected to allegory, while other texts still could be. Certainty is not possible here, but his strong language in the ninth homily seems to me to point to a developed conviction against allegory, though this not the prevailing opinion at the moment."[121] DeMarco does not clarify what pressure he is talking about, or even where it came from, while O'Brien suggests that Basil may have been subjected to pressure from the audience.[122] O'Brien refers to the high educated group of Basil's listeners who need a high-level scientific type of homilies. Or as Lim puts, "He is distressed that some people have failed to appreciate the literalist interpretations he has given a few days

---

[115] Andrew Brown, "Creation & Time in Basil's Hexaemeron." Blog entry in blog series of the Carl F.H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding, "Reading Genesis with the Church" (May 3, 2017). Accessed 07-15-2023. https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/2017/05/creation-time-in-basils-hexaemeron/
[116] Lim, "The Politics," 363.
[117] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 6.
[118] DeMarco, "The Presentation," 350-51.
[119] DeMarco, "The Presentation," 350-51.
[120] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 5.
[121] DeMarco, "The Presentation," 351.
[122] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 4.

earlier."[123] Who are some uneducated people. However, regardless of the issue of audience and pressure, Basil uses both methods, literal and allegorical, in his interpretive works. "Basil's method of interpreting scriptures," Lim states, "is founded on a three-fold division similar to Origen's… There is no compelling reason to think that Basil fails to make use of the prevalent Alexandrian allegorical method which he claims he knew well from the labors of others."[124] Lim believes that Basil is "debt to and acquaintance with Alexandrian exegetes," namely Origen and Philo Judaeus' *De Opificio Mundi*. [125] Even Hildebrand after demonstrating the importance and accuracy of the Scriptures in Basil's point of view, admits that Basil sometimes seems to be inclined to use allegorism in places: "In Basil's view," Hildebrand says, "if the prophet requires the presence of the Spirit in order to speak the word of God, then the reader does so in order to understand it. Sometimes Basil sounds much like the allegorists when he insists upon the conditions for the right interpretation of Scripture… Meditation yields the hidden meaning of the Scriptures… Even when Basil takes a more literal than allegorical reading of the text, he requires much of the reader; he must be free of passion, unburdened by life's cares, industrious, and inquisitive. While the Scriptures presuppose curiosity, they also produce it. God has made them purposefully obscure, not because he "begrudges us the knowledge," but to kindle our desire for the mysteries there hidden."[126]

The book that Basil interprets allegorically is the Psalms. Hildebrand points out that while modern commentators classify Basil as an anti-allegorism Antiochian interpreter, these commentators follow his interpretive method in the *Hexaemeron*, regardless of his method in his homilies on the Psalms.[127] Hildebrand remarks that Theodore composed a historical commentary on the Psalms, whilst Basil in his homilies did not show much tendency to treat the Psalms in the same method: "Most of the time," Hildebrand says, "he turns to questions of history only when there is some problem, such as a contradiction between a historical account and a psalmic inscription."[128] Basil offers spiritual, Christological, sacramental, ecclesiastical and Holy Spirit-related interpretations of the Psalms; These interpretations vary according to the view of Basil in order to be employed in the appropriate place, and therefore the text will

[123] Lim, "The Politics," 357.
[124] Lim, "The Politics," 360.
[125] Ibid, 352.
[126] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*,2018, 24.
[127] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, 2014, 52.
[128] Ibid, 48.

be subjected to Christological use.[129] The question remains, as Hildebrand asks, since the homilies on the Psalms precede the *Hexaemeron*, what changed in Basil's conviction to take this strict stance against allegorism in his later work? Hildebrand presents the answer in the form of three suppositions:[130]

- Basil was influenced by Diodore of Tarsus, founder of the Antiochian school, and recognized the dangers of allegory. This supposition is also mentioned by Arko, but she comments that "there might be some truth in such a supposition, but we have to find deeper reasons;"[131] And by Lim, calling it a "reasonable conjecture."[132]

- The difference between the two audiences addressed by these two works is the reason of changing the method of explanation.

- Or the difference between these two books, the Psalms and Genesis.

Eventually, Hildebrand addresses these three suppositions, and finds out that none of them reflects the absolute truth. Rather the method followed by Basil is the same in both interpretive works, but "it became more sober, mature, and critical." [133] Briefly, Basil was aware of the concept that God used both the Old and New Testaments to talk about Christ, "though it is true that he became far more sensitive to the abuses of the allegorical method… Basil had become more mindful of the perils of allegory without substantially changing his method. He remains throughout committed to the unity of the two Testaments and to the freedom of God to communicate truths about Christ and the life of Christians through the texts of the Old Testament: these things are the immediate and obvious consequences of the text's divine authorship."[134]

In addition to the Psalms, Arko and Lim discuss another work taken up allegorically by Basil, the *Philocalia*, the first work of Basil with Gregory of Nazianzus (358-360, some twenty years before the *Hexaemeron*). Arko, because of composing the *Philocalia*, describes the literalism in the *Hexaemeron* as a surprising decision, as the *Philocalia* is "a kind of

---

[129] Ibid, 49, 51.
[130] Ibid, 53.
[131] Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis," 489.
[132] Lim, "The Politics," 352.
[133] For further reading on this issue, see: Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, 2014, 54-56.
[134] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, 2014, 55-56.

manual of allegorical exegesis, a collection of fragments from Origen's works concerning the methodology of allegory, to be more exact."[135] Arko finds that Basil's literalism in the *Hexaemeron* is directed against "the heretical positions which were based on allegory."[136] Those heretics distorted the legacy of Origen by their false metaphors.[137] Lim also comments on the allegorism found in *Philocalia,* describing this work as a "compilation of the writings of Origen."[138] According to Lim, the first section of this work is about Origen's principles of allegorical interpretation, what leads Lim to the conclusion that Basil was undoubtedly familiar with the Alexandrian school, thus, Basil was not a critic of this school, at least around 358.[139]

Conclusion

In his *Hexaemeron*, Basil believes that applying allegorism to the Scriptures is a kind of insult to the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, he used it in other previous works. Many assumptions have been made among scholars about this transformation of his exegetical approach, and they can be summarized as follows:

1- Basil changed his interpretive method from the allegorical method at the beginning of his life to the literal method in the later work, the *Hexaemeron,* because his convection in allegorism has changed.

2- Basil changed his method because of the possible difference between the two audiences to which both works, the *Hexaemeron* and his homilies on the Psalms, were addressed.

3- Basil changed his method to suit a different type of book.

4- Basil did not change his conviction, as his interpretation of the Psalms is not allegorical, but rather spiritual, Christological, ecclesiastical… etc.

---

[135] Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis," 489.
[136] Ibid, 490.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Lim, "The Politics," 351.
[139] Ibid.

5- Basil does not reject the allegorism completely. He rejects the false and distorted allegorism that leads to heresy.

These five main opinions of scholars are diverse and dissimilar, one cannot find a common conclusion for them, but is forced to choose one of them. However, it is clear, directly from the text of the *Hexaemeron*, that Basil deliberately did not use the allegorism, whether Basil changed his convection, and consequently his method, or because of the type of the interpreted book, or the addressed audience; And his rejection is directed at the allegorism which leads to heresy; And his use of literalism benefited him to extract some doctrinal teachings about Christology, the Holy Trinity, and etc. Among his interpretive works, These three points are only found in the *Hexaemeron*. Hence, his method, i.e., the use of literalism and rejection of allegorism, has doctrinal goal, that is, refusing some heretical thoughts, which are aforementioned in this paper, about doctrine and Greek philosophy that spread in his time.

When one reads the *Hexaemeron*, and touches the density of philosophy and doctrine, and the literal method of interpretation, he will inevitably ask himself: Was the congregation present, the people who listened to these nine homilies, satisfied? Did they understand Basil? Or did they only benefit from the moral part of his speech, and abandon his high-level part of it? In order to know the answer, we have to investigate the level of education of the people who were in the church back then, and the surrounding circumstances.

5 The Intended Audience and Surrounding Circumstances

Ishac argues that the homilies of the *Hexaemeron* were addressed to some catechumens in the period before the celebration of the Resurrection feast; Ishac contends that the cosmological topic preached by Basil was useful for catechetical purposes.[140] "There is a kind of resemblance between Basil and Cyril of Jerusalem's chosen topics for this celebration," Ishac says, "which is followed by baptism at the end of the Lent."[141] Supposing that there were some catechumens in the audience, this solves my inquiries about addressing dogma (and perhaps philosophy) in the *Hexaemeron* before laypeople, because it is convenient to make people understand their faith before receiving the Resurrection feast, in order to receive baptism with an orthodox base. However, it is still an assumption. Moreover, we still have a question: Did those catechumens understand Basil thoughts? Were dogma and philosophy beneficial for them?

Based on the high cultural level of the *Hexaemeron*, one might assume that the audience was consisted of well-educated people. On the other hand, after reading the following passages, it seems that this assumption should be reconsidered:

> *It has not escaped me that artisans earn their livelihood from daily work in their crafts. Now behold there are among us those who are concerned about our homily, because they are distracted with regard to their long endless work. But I declare in order to persuade their souls, that this short time which they have lent to God is not deprived of much reward, but there will be a great increase for it from him in many [ways].* (*Hex* 3.1)
>
> *So let us consider that the race of mankind is brief in days and short in joy. For all their recreation and all their joy is of little duration and of few days in their flowering, and like grass that flowers and like the herb of the field that withers. Such is all their glory, and in accordance with the word of the prophet they were likened to a fitting example. Let us look at a man at the time of his prosperity, how he is firm of body and energetic in his pleasures, strong in health, lively in his aspect, secure in his vigour, agile in his youth, prosperous in his way of life, overflowing in all I evils. While he is living in this fashion, in a few days his aspect is impaired from sudden exhaustion and he loses his strength in a short illness. Consider again another person*

---

[140] Ishac, "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron," footnote No. 9.
[141] Ibid.

> *similar to this one, famous in his wealth and successful in his pleasures, abounding in possessions, with servants and retainers and [attended] by foreigners and strangers… Add also to this opulence majesty with powers and royal honours, and leadership of armies, and governorship of nations, judgeship with administration…* (*Hex* 5.2)

In the first passage, it is clear that Basil addresses his speech to the artisans. In the second passage, Basil comforts poor people, the lower-class people, who did not receive a high-level education comparing with the high-class people. Indeed, DeMarco comments that Basil wrote his homilies for a wide audience at multiple intellectual levels.[142] Arko says that "Basil turns to the faithful of Neoceasarea, mostly simple people, among whom some were intellectuals."[143]

Brown states that, in general, Christian leaders of a high intellectual level such as Basil, used to express deep philosophical concepts even to lay audiences.[144] O'Brien argues that Basil did not seek to satisfy everyone, but rather, as a well-educated bishop, composed a sophisticated work for a wide audience regardless of the satisfaction of his actual audience.[145] "That he did not do this to everyone's satisfaction," says O'Brien, "is revealed by the numerous complaints which he received from his congregation."[146] These complaints are evident in many places in the *Hexaemeron*. In fact, satisfying every member in the audience is a very difficult, or even impossible, mission; But at least, as a well-versed shepherd, he could compose mediocre homilies to satisfy as many people as he can. If one were to support the view of O'Brien that Basil only focused on his own privilege by providing high-level homilies to show his skills, it would be like saying that Basil is a selfish shepherd. If Basil had wanted to focus on his own privilege, he would not have followed the pastoral path and become a shepherd, because he was well educated and well qualified to be in a high imperial office; But instead, as Brown comments, Basil "had devoted his life to serving Christ in the church"[147] Thus, I think there is a different reason.

Johannes Karayannopulos mentions the circumstances that surrounded the inhabitants of Caesarea, describing that in 369 they were subjected to a famine due to a poor harvest, which led to an increase the prices of goods. Karayannopulos argues that this poverty

---

[142] DeMarco, "The Presentation," 333.
[143] Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis," 487.
[144] Brown, "Creation & Time in Basil's Hexaemeron." Accessed 07-15-2023.
[145] O'Brien, "The Actuality of St Basil the Great," 1.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Brown, "Creation & Time in Basil's Hexaemeron." Accessed 07-15-2023.

made Basil exhibit two main behaviors: feeding the poor, and focusing on their salvation amidst this bad situation.[148] Karayannopulos poses this question: "How did Basil, the zealot Christian, the hierarch who was ready to sacrifice himself for his flock, confront the two enormous social problems: one contemporary — the problem of slavery — and the other the eternal problem of humanity, the question of social justice in its most common manifestation — the contrast between great wealth and extreme poverty?"[149] And answers that Basil extracted the solution from the Christian ascetic principles, which can be summarized as the eternal life; Slavery and social injustice provide people with ways forward the eternity, and the wealthy may consider their wealth as "a medium for testing them." Therefore, these misfortunes should be exploited as a means to gain the eternal reward.[150]

According to the following points:

1- The argument of Karayannopulos on the poor situation of people, and Basil's reactions caring about salvation.

2- The schism that the church suffered during Basil's life because of heresies.

3- The importance of Orthodoxy for salvation in Basil's view that we found in the second chapter of this paper.

4- The fact that most of the attended audience was not satisfied during the presentation of the *Hexaemeron*.

One may figure out that Basil actually did not care about the understanding or satisfaction of his folk; But not in order to show his skills, yet he wanted to guarantee that he finished his mission as a shepherd at the end of his life, and handed over the whole means to his folk, the means that they need to achieve the eternity.

---

[148] Johannes Karayannopulos, "St Basil's Social Activity: Principles and Praxis." In, Paul J Fedwick, *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, 375–91. 2 vols (375–91. Toronto, 1981) 375.
[149] Ibid, 384-85.
[150] Ibid, 389.

Conclusion

Druzhinina mentions that in the *Letter CXXVII,* Basil states that he was willing to give up his life to pacify the Churches.[151] And in other places he likens the church and its schisms to his sick body, and "In many other epistles," Druzhinina states, "St Basil often uses the images of a ship or a boat, of continual storms and of potential shipwreck when he appeals for help in the face of heresy and schism. (See, for example, *Letter LXXXI, Letter LXXXII, Letter XC, Letter XCI, Letter CLXI, Letter CCX.)*"[152] It is clear that dogma and church schisms occupied Basil's life, to such an extent that in the *Hexaemeron,* his last work, he dealt with dogma, which is one of the main reasons that caused these schisms. Dogma is important for any Christian for his salvation, even if it seems sophisticated, he needs to be familiar with it. It is not to show his intellectual level, neither to satisfy his audience's expectations, that was composed of various intellectual levels; Basil composed the *Hexaemeron* to make sure that he is leaving this life fulfilling his duties completely.

[151] Druzhinina, *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil,* Chapter 6, footnote 37.
[152] Ibid, 141.

Conclusion

Ostensibly, It is obvious that the purpose of Basil is to glorify the Creator and His wisdom in creating the world, but at the same time he explained the theology of creation. He argued some theological thoughts and philosophical spread ideas of the day, as Arko says: "These sermons can be seen as a textbook of theology of creation, since they contain the most important dogmatic themes. By his interpretation Basil strives, as a good shepherd, to protect his flock from the dangers of heresy."[153] Hildebrand comments that for Basil, Scripture and physical word are both teachers who teach us about God, so he used both to say that they both uncover the truth about God, especially in doctrinal issues."[154] Basil was forced to preach about Mosaic account of creation during the Lent, Sasse comments that this custom "goes back to the Ancient Church where in the East sermons on the Hexaemeron were preached at the beginning of Lent."[155]

Basil, or any other shepherd, had of course a common main goal, which is, as Druzhinina says, "to make Christians keep the sound faith, to think together with each other or to change their opinion and attitude in order to constitute one body." [156] Or as Karayannopulos expresses that "the real ecclesiastical leader ought to be, according to Basil, above all, the herald and the interpreter of the Christian dogma, as well as the good manager of his flock."[157] It is true that Basil composed the *Hexaemeron* as an exegetic work to explain Genesis 1; But having reading it, one can notice that there is another and a deeper goal, which is his audience's faith.

Druzhinina mentions that Basil's first experience of the church outside his family did not meet his expectations; Divisions among the church grieved him deeply, this disappointment played a pivotal role in his life and in his church ministry.[158] In ***Epistle 92, to the Italians and Gauls***, Basil writes:

> *It is not only one Church which is in peril, nor yet two or three which have fallen under this terrible storm. The mischief of this heresy spreads almost*

---

[153] Arko, "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis," 492.
[154] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea,*2018, 28.
[155] Sasse, "Hexaemeron," 69.
[156] Druzhinina, *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil,* 149.
[157] Karayannopulos, "St Basil's Social Activity," 376.
[158] Druzhinina, *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil,* 19-20.

> *from the borders of Illyricum to the Thebaid. Its bad seeds were first sown by the infamous Arius; they then took deep root through the labors of many who vigorously cultivated the impiety between his time and ours. Now they have produced their deadly fruit. The doctrines of true religion are overthrown. The laws of the Church are in confusion. The ambition of men, who have no fear of God, rushes into high posts, and exalted office is now publicly known as the prize of impiety. The result is, that the worse a man blasphemes, the fitter the people think him to be a bishop. Clerical dignity is a thing of the past. There is a complete lack of men shepherding the Lord's flock with knowledge. Ambitious men are constantly throwing away the provision for the poor on their own enjoyment and the distribution of gifts. There is no precise knowledge of canons. There is complete immunity in sinning; for when men have been placed in office by the favor of men, they are obliged to return the favor by continually showing indulgence to offend- ers. Just judgment is a thing of the past; and everyone walks according to his heart's desire. Vice knows no bounds; the people know no restraint. Men in authority are afraid to speak, for those who have reached power by human interest are the slaves of those to whom they owe their advancement. And now the very vindication of orthodoxy is looked upon in some quarters as an opportunity for mutual attack; and men conceal their private ill-will and pretend that their hostility is all for the sake of the truth. Others, afraid of being convicted of disgraceful crimes, madden the people into fratricidal quarrels, that their own doings may be unnoticed in the general distress. Hence the war admits of no truce, for the doers of ill deeds are afraid of a peace, as being likely to lift the veil from their secret infamy. All the while unbelievers laugh; men of weak faith are shaken; faith is uncertain; souls are drenched in ignorance, because adulterators of the word imitate the truth. The mouths of true believers are dumb, while every blasphemous tongue wags free; holy things are trodden under foot; the better laity shun the churches as schools of impiety; and lift their hands in the deserts with sighs and tears to their Lord in heaven. Even you must have heard what is going on in most of our cities, how our people with wives and children and even our old men stream out before the walls, and offer their prayers in the open air, putting up with all the inconvenience of the weather with great patience, and waiting for help from the Lord.*[159]

"In some sense then," Lim says, "there is no need to find external influence to explain why Basil resorts to the literal interpretation. The interest he shows with the Antiochenes in combatting heresies and a common insight into the origin of heresies as empty and wild speculations would fuse together with predictable results." [160] Indeed, the investigation that is made in the fourth chapter of this paper, which is literally an investigation of "external influence", supports Lim's theory; The hard circumstances surrounding Basil's

---

[159] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*,2018, 78-79.
[160] Lim, "The Politics," 360.

audience pushed Basil, to strengthen their orthodoxy faith by using literalism and philosophy in order to make them guarantee the good afterlife before his death. This is not a hard mission for Basil, as Ishac refers, that "Basil's ability of contemplation allows him to understand the divine mysteries from nature."[161] So, he summarized his theology and dogmatic controversies in a wonderful nine homilies, and provided them before his flock.

Illustrating that the *Hexaemeron* was not merely an exegetic work, but an apologetic work addressed to laypeople rather than opponents or theologians is very important for any contemporary shepherd. Simple spiritual sermons are important, and laypeople need them, but on other hand, dogma is not exclusive for the clergy, and laypeople should understand their faith in order to worship God properly. Shepherds should be acquainted with the science of the day, philosophy, and theology, and use them as much as they can, in the appropriate manner, in composing appropriate sermons that benefit their people and flourish their spirituality, especially if the situation of the folk is the same as that of Basil's folk.

[161] Ishac, "Jacob Of Edessa's Hexaemeron," 19.

Bibliography

primary sources:

Thomson, R. W. (1995). *The Syriac version of the Hexaemeron by Basil of Caesarea*. CSCO 550, 551 (Scriptores Syri 222-223) Louvain: In Aedibus Peeters.

Secondary sources:

Arko, Alenka. "Between Literal and Allegorical Exegesis: The Cappadocian Fathers on Hexaemeron." *Lateranum* 79, no. 2 (2013): 485-502.

Beer, Wynand de. "The Patristic Understanding of the Six Days (Hexaemeron)." *Journal of Early Christian History* 5, no. 2 (2015): 3-23.

Brown, Andrew. "Creation & Time in Basil's Hexaemeron." Blog entry in blog series of the Carl F.H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding, “Reading Genesis with the Church” (May 3, 2017). Accessed 07-15-2023. https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/2017/05/creation-time-in-basils-hexaemeron/

Costache, Doru. “Making Sense of the World: Theology and Science in St Gregory of Nyssa’s An Apology for the Hexaemeron.” *Phronema* 28, no. 1 (2013): 1–28.

DeMarco, David C. "The Presentation and Reception of Basil’s Homiliae in Hexaemeron in Gregory’s In Hexaemeron." *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 17, no. 2 (2013): 332-352.

Druzhinina, Olga A. *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil the Great: A Trinitarian Approach to the Life of the Church*. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016.

Hildebrand, Stephen M. *Basil of Caesarea*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2014.

Hildebrand, Stephen M. *Basil of Caesarea*. The Early Church Fathers. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018.

Ishac, Ephrem Aboud. “Jacob Of Edessa’s Hexaemeron: A Preliminary Comparison With Basil Of Caesarea’s Hexaemeron.” *Parole de l’Orient* 38 (2013): 109-138.

Karayannopulos, Johannes. “St Basil’s Social Activity: Principles and Praxis.” In Fedwick, Paul J, *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic, 375–91*. 2 vols. Toronto, 1981.

Lim, Richard. "The Politics of Interpretation in Basil of Caesarea's Hexaemeron." *Vigiliae Christianae* 44, no. 4 (1990): 351-370.

O’Brien, Carl. “St Basil’s Explanation of Creation.” In Hällström Gunnar af. (2011), *The Actuality of St. Basil the Great: Conference Lectures: Texts from the Conference the Actuality of St. Basil the Great in Turku 2010*. Turku: Åbo Akademi.

Sasse, Hermann. “Hexaemeron: Theology and Science with the Church Fathers.” *The Reformed Theological Review* 17, no. 3 (October 1958): 65–72.