

APPROACHING AN APOLOGY FOR THE HEXAEMERON: ITS AIMS, METHOD AND DISCOURSE

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Abstract: The article addresses a series of current assumptions about St Gregory of Nyssa's *Apology*, such as its supposed exegetical character, and its intent of defending and continuing St Basil's *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*. The presentation of this otherwise ignored treatise is followed by an analysis of its peculiarities, mainly its lack of structure together with its lack of interest in theology and spirituality. The article likewise discusses the *Apology's* attitude towards the Basilian *Hexaemeron* and the scientific or naturalistic approach it adopted. The last aspect points to the apologetic aspect of the treatise, as prevalent over the exegetical one. The article concludes by highlighting the relevance of this treatise to the understanding of tradition and the efforts of mediating the scripturally based Christian worldview by the means of various scientific paradigms.

In the following, I explore a largely ignored treatise authored by St Gregory of Nyssa, entitled Ἀπολογητικὸς περὶ τῆς Ἑξαήμερου, *An Apology for the Hexaemeron*, also known as Εἰς τὴν Ἑξαήμερον, *On the Hexaemeron*.¹ After introducing the context and the main features of the *Apology*, as the treatise will be designated hereafter, I shall discuss the Nyssen's approach to the creation narrative in Genesis 1 and to the natural sciences of the time (without offering a detailed analysis of the cosmography therein), along with examining the rapports between his method and the one employed by St Basil the Great in the *Homilies on the*

Hexaemeron. This comparison is required by the fact that usually, as we shall see, the *Apology* is considered primarily a defence and development of the Basilian homilies, an opinion which I challenge in part, given the discontinuities between the two works, and St Gregory's personal agenda. It is the contention of this paper that in writing the *Apology* St Gregory was less interested in securing his brother's legacy and in fact more interested to assert his own scholarly standing. With reference to the method, I shall argue that St Basil's more rigorously exegetical approach, an approach doubled by his intention to inspire an ethical conduct and a doxological attitude, finds only weak echoes in the scientifically oriented method at work in the *Apology* and its educated readership.² Andrew Louth was right to observe that, apart from their theological commonality and interwoven lives, the Cappadocians "had individual minds."³ The ultimate purpose of this article is to determine the nature of the Nyssen's *Apology*, usually considered an exegetical work when it should be classified as an apologetic tract that contains only infrequent exegetical incursions. There are within it, as we shall see, features that pertain to the genre of early Christian apologetics, concerned with bridging theology and culture, and with presenting theology as a worthwhile contributor in matters of worldview. Accordingly, whilst engaging the various ancient cosmologies, St Gregory's work aims to prove the divine making of the universe through the contemplation of its underlying order (an aspect which cannot be addressed here in detail). The article will close by highlighting the contribution of the treatise in the areas of tradition and the efforts of articulating the Christian worldview within various cultural and scientific paradigms.

Introducing the *Apology*

Given the relative silence surrounding this treatise in recent scholarship⁴ and its absence from the mainstream patristic tradition, an introduction to the *Apology* is necessary. In English speaking scholarship this silence is only rarely broken, such as in the review included by Peter Bouteneff in his *Beginnings*,⁵ the analysis of the concept of seed by Charlotte Köckert,⁶

and the (recently translated) encyclopaedia article by Juan Antonio Gil-Tamayo.⁷

We cannot establish with any certainty when the *Apology* was published. Contemporary scholars insist on the extreme difficulty, if not the impossibility, of tracing in an incontrovertible way the chronology of St Gregory's works,⁸ mainly because of the sparse references to historical events in his writings. For this reason I do not intend to venture into this land of uncertainty other than tangentially, both in relation to the date of the *Apology* and the better-known treatise which according to an auctorial note⁹ precedes it, namely, *On the Making of Man*. Suffice it to say that in all likelihood both treatises were published soon after St Basil's death, although not all scholars share this opinion.¹⁰ I shall return to the significance of this matter.

Together with its preceding anthropological treatise, the *Apology* is dedicated to a younger sibling, St Peter, later bishop of Sebasteia. According to the prologue, Peter asked the Nyssen to clarify some obscure points in the creation narrative, which St Basil's *Hexaemeron* had left unaddressed and for which reason the great Cappadocian had come under the crossfire of some unnamed detractors. Interestingly, as we shall see below, these criticisms coincided with the concerns of St Peter himself, and one might wonder whether or not the latter was the actual source of those queries.¹¹ An issue raised by the anonymous critics was St Basil's silence regarding the possibility of day and night in the initial stages of creation, i.e. in the absence of the sun and other celestial bodies, which were mentioned by Genesis only in the fourth day.¹² Another question unanswered by the Basilian *Hexaemeron* referred to the disinterest of Genesis in the third heaven, mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:2.¹³ To these queries St Peter explicitly added his own interest in a logically organised (εις εἰρμόν) story of creation, one able to go beyond Moses' ostensibly incongruous (ὑπεναντίως) presentation of the facts, and in bringing Genesis to an accord (συμφωνούσαν) with the whole of Scripture.¹⁴ In addition to the worries caused to him by the inadvertences of the narrative, Peter was obsessed with finding out "the necessary order of creation" (τὴν ἀναγκαίαν τῆς κτίσεως τάξιν).¹⁵ Thinking of the Nyssen's approach to

such matters, as made obvious by his lengthy and erudite expositions on natural phenomena – with which I cannot deal in detail here – it seems that Peter was first and foremost interested in the cosmic order, irrespective of Genesis. I shall return to this point. But first we should note another point, which may explain why the *Apology* is sometimes considered a treatise concerned with metaphysical speculations. True, the Nyssen hinted that his younger brother was interested in certain mystical aspects, termed as “the darkness of vision of ineffable things” (τὸν γνόφον τῆς τῶν ἀπορρήτων θεωρίας), inaccessible for those at the foothills of Sinai.¹⁶ For some reason, however, and in stark contrast to his *On the Making of Man*, in which spiritual interpretations abound, the Nyssen was not interested in such topics here – just as he was not steadily concerned with approaching Genesis exegetically, as we shall see in due course.

St Gregory’s first reaction to the above criticisms was to justify his elder brother’s choice of circumventing the more delicate aspects of Genesis by his pastoral sensitivity. Thus, he noted that in his homilies St Basil purposely adopted a method and a manner of speech which aimed at edifying the members of the congregation, both educated and uneducated.¹⁷ The detractors could not grasp “the true purpose (σκοπὸν) pertaining to the teaching (διδασκαλίας) of our father,” which led the Nyssen swiftly to discard as improper both their questions and the queries of St Peter.¹⁸ Regarding Peter’s interest in mystical speculations, St Gregory urged him to lead the search by prayer only and guided by “the Spirit of revelation” (τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἀποκαλύψεως).¹⁹ We discern here an echo of the precautions taken by St Basil in the prologue of the *Hexaemeron*,²⁰ when referring to the need for personal purification as a condition for loftier contemplations. In rehearsing the presuppositions of the prayerful life and divine illumination, St Gregory displayed his own awareness of the difficulties inherent to such undertakings. His provision notwithstanding, by trusting in the prayers of his younger brother, the Nyssen eventually accepted the challenge, which consisted in searching the Scriptures for the order of things created.²¹ We will see later that this amounted to taking Genesis as a pretext for an intricate and erudite depiction, scientific in nature, of physical phenomena. Whilst embarking

on this task, the Nyssen stated once again his reverence for St Basil and the latter's celebrated homilies, whose authority on such topics was yet unsurpassed. By contrast, he continued humbly, his own *Apology* was more like a conjectural scholarly gymnastic (ὡς ἐν γυμνασίῳ ... στοχαστικῶς),²² a draft essay or an "intellectual exercise"²³ rather than a commanding interpretation of Genesis.²⁴

Mentioning the provisional character of the writing, we reach the interesting matters of the shape and content of this "puzzling text,"²⁵ as Bouteneff dubbed it. Whereas the earlier treatise, *On the Making of Man*, is both elegant and rigorously structured, a fact made obvious from its prologue,²⁶ the *Apology* does not seem to follow a plan and therefore presents no discernible order – in contrast with St Gregory's claimed commitment to the principle of ἀκολουθία or the ordered sequence.²⁷ The division of the text in numbered sections belongs to modern editors,²⁸ and should not be taken as illustrating a consistent arrangement of its discourse. The only noticeable structure is that of the Nyssen loosely following the creation narrative,²⁹ which denotes a discontinuous interest in the interpretation of the latter. Carefully examined, the writing appears to be a labyrinth of variations on and notes related to Genesis 1 and cosmology, with the author often abandoning the current theme for some ample scientific digressions, only to return to it and then to leave it again – at times reiterating the same topic in contradictory or at least different ways, as pointed out by Monique Alexandre.³⁰ In short, the *Apology* is an unsystematic parade of sophistication, and does not present the structure of a rigorous treatise.

We retain from the above that in his engagement with the Genesis narrative of the six days (of which he dealt only with the first four) St Gregory adopted a heavy scientific method and a very technical jargon – impressive, if we think of his mostly informal education, and peculiar, since he was after all a Christian shepherd. True, one can discern in this display of scholarly prowess an effort to emulate the approach of St Basil in the *Hexaemeron*.³¹ It is likewise obvious, however, that the *Apology* illustrates this method only in a reductionist way, since the Basilian homilies, apart from their equally impressive proof of scholarship, ultimately aimed at

exhorting the audiences toward a Christian lifestyle and a doxological mindset. By contrast, deprived of formative goals, the main topics discussed by the *Apology* are the natural movement of the universe within the divine parameters, together with the physical phenomena related to light, the combination of the fundamental elements and the cycles of water. Bouteneff characterised the second part of the treatise quite aptly when observing:

[It] might just as well be entitled *On Fire, Light, and Especially Water*. It consists of page after page (fifteen columns in PG 44) of speculation about water, vapour, ice, and more water, and only then a (considerably shorter) discussion of light.³²

Taking into consideration these aspects, to which I shall return, Johannes Quasten's comment that alongside rectifying "some misunderstandings of the biblical text and of Basil's exegesis" the *Apology* deals with "metaphysical speculations,"³³ is not justified. Treating a variety of natural phenomena extensively and on purely scientific grounds does not amount to metaphysical speculations. The same goes for Paul Blowers' assessment that "in his own *Apologia in hexaemeron*, Gregory provides a kind of philosophical and theological supplement to the doxological approach to creation taken in Basil's homilies."³⁴ Both aspects, the philosophical and the theological, do not count among the strengths of the treatise. And again the same goes for Panayiotis Chrestou's conviction that whilst St Basil's *Hexaemeron* illustrated the "historical and ethical side of the interpretive approach to cosmogony" (τὴν ἱστορικὴ καὶ ἠθικὴ πλευρὰ τῆς ἐρμηνείας τῆς κοσμογονίας), also a practical way of tackling the matters, St Gregory presented the spiritual side (πνευματικὴ) as perceived by way of contemplation (θεωρία).³⁵ With two exceptions, there is no consistent spiritual contemplation in the *Apology*. The metaphysical and mystical sides are poorly illustrated, mainly by the Nyssen's identification of the third heaven with the intelligible and imperishable domain,³⁶ and, more importantly from an exegetical perspective, the brief note on the waters above the firmament, which he took – despite his claimed penchant for a literal approach to the creation narrative³⁷ – as a metaphor for the heavenly powers.³⁸ That said, given this sample of spiritualising exegesis the scholarly opinion vouching for a consistently non-allegorical approach

to Genesis³⁹ in the *Apology* does not stand either. For instance, in support of his conviction that the Nyssen followed the literal method, Bouteneff⁴⁰ argued that the lengthy dealings of St Gregory with the waters could have been a direct reaction to the spiritualisation of this cosmic element in Origen. Given the interpretation of the waters above as a metaphor for unseen realities, as plausible as it seems Bouteneff's understanding should be considered cautiously. To characterise the *Apology's* approach to the creation narrative as either literal or spiritual is a difficult task. Stanislas Giet was right to observe that St Gregory's method here was neither simply literal nor uniquely allegorical.⁴¹

To end this introduction to the *Apology*, I shall briefly return to the most curious feature of the treatise, namely, its lacking spiritual scope and formative purposes. The work distinguishes itself by a scanty theological discourse and an almost complete lack of interest in topics pertaining to the spiritual life, by which it remains unique within the Nyssen's entire literary corpus. For some reason, contemporary scholars ignore this peculiarity. In turn, the Church did not forget it, and consequently pushed the treatise into oblivion. Before St John Damascene's *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, indeed, whose second book displays similar scientific propensities, no other patristic text seems to have favoured the method adopted by the Nyssen's work (to my knowledge, another aspect ignored by scholars), although it is not the place here to discuss whether or not the Damascene drew on the *Apology*. I turn now to the consensus on the continuity between the *Apology* and the Basilian *Hexaemeron*, anticipated by the above discussion.

Continuity or Discontinuity?

I already mentioned that the chronology of St Gregory's writings is uncertain. Nevertheless, as we have seen there is a relative consensus regarding his two works on creation, i.e. *On the Making of Man* and the *Apology*, usually considered as having been published very soon after St Basil's repose. If this opinion is sound, the detail is significant for the understanding of the spirit in which the Nyssen elaborated the two books, without the grasp of which, furthermore, some of the peculiarities

pertaining to the work of interest here, namely, the *Apology*, cannot be properly assessed. Having a hold on this spirit, in turn, casts light back upon the issue of chronology, and in truth the evidence points to an early rather than late date⁴² of their redaction. What matters at this stage however is the consensus on the *Apology* as written soon after St Basil's death. The importance of this aspect will emerge immediately.

Possibly because the Nyssen's two treatises on creation were published shortly after the Basilian *Hexaemeron* and the great Cappadocian's demise, scholars assume that there is a continuation between these works, similar to the link between St Gregory's treatises *Against Eunomius* and the homonymous tome authored by his older sibling.⁴³ Thus, the *Apology* would represent a corollary or a complement of St Basil's *Hexaemeron*.⁴⁴ In reiterating the consensus, Anthony Meredith noted that much of the Nyssen's body of writings "was composed in direct response to the suggestion and memory of Basil," and that specifically his treatises on Genesis represent "critical continuations of Basil's own works in the same areas."⁴⁵ Given that the prologues of the two works duly acknowledged the Basilian input as a starting point for the Nyssen's elaborations,⁴⁶ this opinion seems justified. Whilst sharing this opinion, Anna Silvas pushed it even further by suggesting that in his development of the Basilian legacy the Nyssen acted upon a mandate from his dying brother. More precisely, she proposed that, like in a symbolic recurrence of the passing on of prophetic grace from Elijah on Elisha, we imagine St Basil on his deathbed asking the younger Gregory to continue his work – a mission which the Nyssen would have accomplished as a worthy "heir in doctrinal exposition."⁴⁷ Although I do not dismiss such a possibility, I believe that behind his diptych on creation, and especially the *Apology*, there is a little more than the Nyssen's veneration of his brother. What I propose is that alongside undertaking to defend his departed sibling, through the treatise under consideration St Gregory sought his own establishment as an authority. I am even tempted to believe that he pursued this goal irrespective of and apart from his brother's legacy, although this is not the place to delve into the matter, which would require further exploration. It is certain however that his reference to St Basil's heritage

in the *Apology* is both limited and critical, to the extent that the current idea of continuity in the Cappadocian approaches to Genesis becomes problematic. In fact I challenge the idea of continuity on two grounds, first by the display of emotions transpiring from the *Apology* and second by the Nyssen's scarce references to St Basil's teaching. It is to these aspects that I now turn.

The intense emotional burden on St Gregory's shoulders when composing his *On the Making of Man* and the *Apology* is beyond doubt. There is a shared opinion among scholars,⁴⁸ that his early career was eclipsed by the gigantic figure of St Basil, and that he emerged – erupted as it were – out of the woods of anonymity only after his sibling departed. Indeed, both the Nyssen's recognition and literary output significantly increased after January 379, the presumed time of his brother's death.⁴⁹ This evidence prompts me to propose that behind his two works on creation, and particularly the second, there can be discerned a sense of frustration with St Basil's impressive standing. Better camouflaged in *On the Making of Man*, a work intended to fill the gaps left by the Basilian approach to anthropogenesis, this frustration is likely to have triggered in him the desire to prove his worth. What was supposed to be a prudent statement in the prologue of *On the Making of Man* backs my point. There, St Gregory affirmed that in completing the unfinished anthropology of St Basil, his concern was to ensure that the glory of the teacher was not diminished in his disciples.⁵⁰ This is tantamount to saying that he was no less proficient than his brother.

With the months passing after St Basil's repose, this nuance reappeared even more explicitly in the *Apology*. The prologue of the treatise contains the stunning proposition – hidden under the guise of a horticultural parable and repeated expressions of respect⁵¹ – that the Nyssen's work would improve St Basil's teaching on the creation the way a noble sprout boosts the natural qualities of a lower class tree when grafted onto it.⁵² This being the case, the title of the treatise may suggest only to a careless reader that it is mainly about defending the Basilian *Hexaemeron*. A number of scholars believe just that,⁵³ although the interest of the *Apology* seems to lie elsewhere. Deprived of the higher education

enjoyed by his brother, whom he had in turn as a private teacher, and overshadowed by the latter's prominent stature, now it was time for the younger Gregory to affirm his presence. His efforts to surpass St Basil, in knowledge, refinement and logic alike, pervade the work. Given our legitimate reverence for the Nyssen's legacy, which is indeed a significant contribution to the articulation of Christian theology and spirituality, perhaps this assessment looks impertinent. Nevertheless, there are signs in the *Apology* which betray the impetuosity of someone eager to conquer the stage, as it is said in common parlance, after Elvis has left the building – like the straightforward remark that the author will be adopting a position at variance with that of his sibling, yet no less appropriate and wise, regarding e.g. the presence of fire in all things.⁵⁴ Ronald Heine observed that this adversarial attitude reappeared in other works by St Gregory, like the treatise *On the Inscriptions of the Psalms*.⁵⁵ We may infer that, together with revealing the Nyssen's intent of self-affirmation against the memory of his brother, the strong emotional note transpiring from the treatise confirms the opinion which places the *Apology* soon after St Basil's death.

Closely related to the previous, the second ground on which I challenge the idea of continuity between the Nyssen's tract and the Basilian homilies on creation refers precisely to the attitude toward St Basil exhibited by the *Apology*. Reading the title of St Gregory's work, i.e. *An Apology for the Hexaemeron*, it is difficult to discern its true object or what this work is meant to defend. The prologue does not clarify this aspect either. As shown above, it refers to two distinct issues, namely, some queries concerning the Genesis narrative and a number of criticisms levelled against the Basilian homilies. St Gregory pointed to these matters from the outset, when he expressed a humble reticence toward scrutinising the "divine inspiration" (θείαν ἐπίπνοϊαν) pervading the Genesis account, as well as St Basil's "divinely inspired" (θεόπνευστον) and rich interpretation of it.⁵⁶ Yet, although the term "hexaemeron" in the title of the *Apology* may suggest an affiliation with the Basilian work, a possibility further implied by the issues addressed in the prologue, the treatise is not primarily concerned with the celebrated homilies on the

creation. Indeed, with the exception of the justification of St Basil's pastoral approach, nowhere in the *Apology* did St Gregory touch on particular aspects pertaining to his brother's homilies, not even when he pointed out – like in the discussion referring to fire – the different method he was to adopt in the treatise. He preferred instead to address topics related to the creation narrative and, even more so, cosmology and natural phenomena. My understanding corresponds to E. Corsini's observation:

[L]a façon dont Grégoire développe ses arguments n'est celle de quelqu'un qui défende la cause d'un autre. Toujours est-il qu'au lieu de résoudre les difficultés du traité de son frère, Grégoire développe une thèse qui non seulement n'est pas celle de Basile mais qui s'y oppose directement.⁵⁷

I shall return with more details in the next section. In light of the above, we may confidently surmise that the *Apology* was not primarily about defending the *Hexaemeron* or about continuing St Basil's work. Usually ignored by scholars, the above findings point to St Gregory's undertaking to consolidate his position as an independent thinker, albeit within a Cappadocian context. In line with Louth's comment referred to earlier, I would therefore reverse Bouteneff's note⁵⁸ concerning the two Cappadocians and say that although related still theirs were two disparate voices. I turn now to the Nyssen's approach to the creation narrative and cosmology, which offers more glimpses of the *Apology*'s nature and the literary genre to which it belongs. These details will contribute to further our understanding of the rapports between the relevant works of the two Cappadocian fathers.

The Method and the Genre of the *Apology*

Earlier we saw that, alongside the pervading order of the cosmos, the prologue of the *Apology* emphasises the desire of St Peter to learn about less obvious aspects pertaining to Genesis, interests which coincided with those of the unnamed critics of St Basil's *Hexaemeron*. Relevant here is that, following Peter's request, the purpose of the *Apology* should have been to determine the coherence of the Genesis account as such and within the broader scriptural context. Anthony Meredith and John

Behr concurred in identifying this as the goal of the treatise when they observed – independently – that whereas St Basil endeavoured to depict a comprehensive image of the cosmos, the Nyssen was interested in the coherence of the scriptural plot and the order of creation.⁵⁹ In other words, in contrast with St Basil’s homilies, when considered from an exegetical viewpoint the *Apology* would represent a more rigorous approach to Genesis. Partly I disagree with Meredith and Behr’s assessment of the Basilian *Hexaemeron*, which I find as overall illustrating the common exegetical practice of the time, of analysing the texts line-by-line; however, here is not the place to address such matters in detail. Instead, I shall focus on both theirs and the established perception of the *Apology* as an exegetical work – a consensus recently endorsed by the critical edition of Hubertus Drobner, which presents the treatise as a part of St Gregory’s *Opera Exegetica in Genesim*.⁶⁰ I challenge this consensus on the grounds of the method employed by the author, which points more to the apologetic genre and less to the exegetical one.

The various questions regarding Genesis and conveyed by Peter serve indeed as pretexts for the *Apology*. That said, I propose that both the coherence of the narrative of creation and its consistency with the whole of Scripture became secondary concerns within the treatise. The suggestion that the approach of the *Apology*, combining Scripture and scientific information, as we shall see below, envisaged the expectations of an educated readership,⁶¹ could not justify the Nyssen’s careless dealing with the questions posed by the prologue. My contention is based on the evidence that St Gregory neither insisted on the broad scriptural context, which seems to have offered him a vocabulary rather than the means to substantiate his assertions,⁶² nor engaged the Genesis narrative in a meticulous manner, as shown above.⁶³ With the exception of the first two verses of Genesis, which he analysed more carefully, to the extent that he compared four available translations in Greek,⁶⁴ the rest of the treatise shows far less interest in the narrative. There is actually a massive gap, between chapters 31 and 63, where except for one instance (in chapter 44) no reference to the account on the creation can be found. Before we proceed with the examination of St Gregory’s method, it may be useful

to pay attention to the unique sample of consistent exegesis in the entire *Apology*, namely, the interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2.⁶⁵

As a general rule, St Gregory read Genesis from the Septuagint, the version preferred by the early Christians long before his own century.⁶⁶ It is interesting, however, that in his attempt to make sense of the first verses of the creation narrative he felt the need to compare the Septuagint with other translations into Greek, by Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion, which were mainly used by the Hellenised Jews of Late Antiquity. It is uncertain whether the Nyssen cited these other sources directly or from Origen's *Hexapla*, as it is also unclear why he needed to visit other versions of the text. With reference to the latter aspect, I would suggest that this comparative analysis was perhaps motivated by his awareness of the "misuse (κατάχρησιν) of the divine words in the scriptural practice;"⁶⁷ thus, he may have decided that to reach a clearer understanding of the facts it was necessary to collate various translations. Irrespective of the reasons, one thing is certain, namely, that he alternated the Septuagint and Aquila's version in the elucidation of the first word in Genesis, displaying a preference for the latter, which reads ἐν κεφαλαίῳ ("in general" or "in summary") instead of ἐν ἀρχῇ ("in the beginning").⁶⁸ This preference may have been drawn from the fact that Aquila's translation indirectly confirmed the intuition of the Nyssen about Genesis as offering two distinct viewpoints on the creation, that is, as one event and as a series of events.⁶⁹

St Gregory's analysis of the chaos metaphor from the second verse of Genesis is even more remarkable. Here he cited all four translations, pointing out that whereas the Septuagint reads ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκευάστος ("invisible and unstructured"),⁷⁰ the other three versions contain very different solutions. According to the Nyssen,⁷¹ Symmachus gives ἀργὸν καὶ ἀδιάρκιστον ("idle/fruitless and unspecified"),⁷² Theodotion renders the phrase as κένωμα καὶ οὐθέν ("deserted and nothing"), and finally Aquila reduces everything to θὲν καὶ οὐθέν ("utter nothingness").⁷³ These citations do not wholly correspond to the *Hexapla*;⁷⁴ either St Gregory used a different edition of it, or he simply misquoted it, if the Origenian work was indeed his source. A few lines below, the Nyssen noted his dislike for the last rendition of the chaos, which, alongside echoing

the Epicurean nihilism – in fact the famous polarity of Democritus, δὲν-μηδὲν, playing around the notions of body and nothingness – was logically unsound (ἀθεώρητον, lit. unintelligible).⁷⁵ His interest in these nuances notwithstanding, never again did St Gregory repeat this exercise in the *Apology*, in fact paying less and less attention to the text after this point.

Given that after the analysis of the first verses the treatise refers to the creation narrative quite infrequently, this may indicate that the Nyssen primarily used Genesis as a pretext for his own discourse. For instance, when he eventually asked why the scriptural account mentioned the luminaries after three days whereas their role was presupposed far earlier,⁷⁶ St Gregory posed this question only after lengthy explanations of the various natural phenomena.⁷⁷ Moreover, when returning to the scriptural account, sometimes the Nyssen proved to be a critical reader. At some point he felt the need to question the accuracy of Genesis, which did not seem to follow the order of creation, at least as presented by logic and the available sciences. More precisely, he found what appeared to be an illogical break within the narrative, which, rather than introducing later stages of the creation process was supposed to deal with the makeup (κατασκευή) of the air – immediately after treating the themes of light and fire.⁷⁸ Caught in his learned expositions, St Gregory forgot that Genesis does not mention fire at all, just as it does not share the Hellenistic doctrine of the four elements either. Given such examples, it is clear that the *Apology* was intended less as a rigorous exegesis of Genesis and more as a cosmological complement of the anthropology articulated in *On the Making of Man*. Certainly the latter treatise displays similar propensities toward incorporating scientific information – mainly biological, anatomical and medical in nature – within the theological discourse, and can itself be considered as an exegetical work only in a loose way. It is very likely that both works aimed to facilitate the transfer of the Genesis message from its original, Semitic setting, into the cultural categories of the Hellenistic world of Late Antiquity – a task only partially fulfilled by the various translations of Genesis into Greek. On this note, I turn now to the method at work in the *Apology*.

We have found that in the *Apology* the creation narrative seems to have served as a pretext for the Nyssen's erudite descriptions of natural phenomena, in light of the available sciences.⁷⁹ This finding confirms my earlier observation that one of St Peter's queries was about the order of the cosmos as such, irrespective of Genesis. At least one thing is certain; by his rich scientific excurses, the Nyssen satisfied this scholarly interest of his brother. I propose therefore that the opinions, mentioned above, according to which the *Apology* approaches Genesis in an exegetical fashion, and that it interprets the narrative of creation literally, are questionable when considered outside the complexities of the treatise. After all, the end of the prologue warns that since the work illustrates the author's effort to exercise (ἐγγυμνάζειν) intellectually towards making sense of things, it should not be credited as an "exegetical teaching" (διδασκαλίαν ἐξηγητικήν).⁸⁰ We have to look into a broader framework, and not only the field of exegesis, for the method at work in the treatise and the genre to which it belongs. One way to determine these is by discovering the Nyssen's interests. It is significant that alongside paying attention to the cosmic phenomena, sometimes St Gregory emphasised that creation points to the Creator. His exposition on Genesis and cosmology begins, symptomatically, by evoking God's "will, wisdom and power" (τὸ θέλημα, τὴν σοφίαν, τὴν δύναμιν)⁸¹ as the vantage point for the consideration of everything that is. Charlotte Köckert touched briefly on this aspect.⁸² Thus, despite Peter's other query, which referred to a logically organised account on the days of creation, the aim of St Gregory was not to reach a better understanding of Genesis. His interest seems to have been, alongside the effort to integrate the scriptural message with Greek culture, and at least to some extent, to functionalise Genesis as a theological tool, more precisely to ascribe it the task of interpreting the cosmos within a God-centred perspective. In his own words,

[T]he prophet wrote the book of Genesis as an introduction to the divine knowledge (εἰσαγωγικὸν πρὸς θεογνωσίαν), the intention (σκοπός) of Moses being to lead by the hand (χειραγωγήσει) those enslaved by the senses – through the visible things – to the perception of the things that transcend (τὰ ὑπερκείμενα)⁸³ the senses.

Together with its obvious Platonic overtones, the above citation evokes two passages from the Basilian *Hexaemeron*,⁸⁴ relevant to the theme of the cosmos as a school for the God-seeking people.⁸⁵ St Gregory envisaged the *Apology* as an interpretive tool indeed, but not of Genesis. Regardless of the issues raised by his younger sibling, not the narrative of creation was in question here; we should not forget that the Nyssen voiced his respect for the inspired character of Genesis from the outset.⁸⁶ My point coincides with a note of Bouteneff, who discovered a similar attitude toward Genesis in another Nyssenian work.⁸⁷ In all likelihood our treatise was meant as a framework for the consideration of the cosmos – the way it was depicted by the available sciences – through a scriptural lens. Only when perused with the eyes of faith, as shaped by the wisdom of Genesis, could the world be seen as a divine symbol and/or a theophany. Daniel Stramara aptly summarised the Nyssen’s notion of the cosmos as leading to the knowledge of God, in penetrating words albeit without referring to the *Apology*:

God’s creation reveals theological principles at work. The laws of nature reflect the laws of God. The study of nature leads to a greater appreciation for the Divine Nature.⁸⁸

Although the theological perspective was not the focus of the treatise, by this interest, namely, the depiction of creation as pointing to God, the *Apology* is more closely related to the Basilian *Hexaemeron* than admitted by Meredith and Behr. This finding stands despite the fact that the approach of the Nyssen to the Genesis account was less exegetical and in fact more scientifically oriented than St Basil’s. Relevant however is the fact that, like St Basil, in presenting the cosmos as a theophany the Nyssen borrowed from the apologetic genre, illustrated decades earlier by St Athanasius’ *Against the Pagans*.⁸⁹

Together with the unavowed goal of translating the Christian worldview through the available sciences, the prominent feature of the *Apology* remains St Gregory’s passion for cosmology. Both aspects corroborate the apologetic genre as the context of the treatise. Corsini seems to have also hinted at the apologetic nature of the writing, without using the term though, when stating that the treatise was primarily

concerned with the refutation of the Stoic doctrine of *ekpyrosis*.⁹⁰ Whilst I am not convinced that this was the focus of St Gregory's work, I retain the confirmation of its contextual character, which fits the apologetic genre.

As already pointed out, there are however strange aspects about the *Apology*, such as its very thin theology and the heavy display of scientific prowess, which make it peculiar even for the apologetic genre. Scholars have repeatedly praised the Nyssen's awareness of the sciences of his time, in particular physics and cosmology,⁹¹ which he exuberantly paraded for his erudite readership. The portrayal of Moses, the presumed author of Genesis, as "philosophising on the emergence of the cosmos" (ἐν τῇ κοσμογονεΐα φιλοσοφηθέντων)⁹² seems to have been the pretext for this abundant recourse to scientific information. Philosophy means here scientific enquiry, or more specifically the attempt of articulating a holistic image of reality. Monique Alexandre pointed out the Nyssen's intention to elaborate "une vision systématique du monde, de sa création, de son ordonnancement, de sa permanence,"⁹³ emulating that of Moses and the one of his own older sibling. In turn, and along the same lines, Gil-Tamayo asserted that the *Apology* "represents an effort to deepen and harmonize the affirmations of Genesis and the scientific knowledge," an undertaking meant to endorse the creation narrative as a worthwhile source for the general worldview.⁹⁴ Although at the end of the prologue St Gregory stated that his purpose was not to reconcile the contradictory opinions that were put forward,⁹⁵ the prospect of his attempt to bridge the two visions into a holistic depiction of reality is worth pursuing; in fact, I intend to return to this matter in a separate article.

We have not yet reached an answer to the questions concerning the reasons for which St Gregory adopted this unusual approach of discussing the topics at hand more from a scientific angle than a theological one. Earlier I discussed a possible solution for this conundrum, namely, his intention to assert himself as a scholar after the repose of his brother, and the idea proposed by some scholars that he exclusively targeted an educated readership. It could also be added here his apologetic-like interest in showing the Christian worldview as a respectable voice in the cosmological debates of the time. Given the lack of clarity within the

treatise, the issue remains undecidable. What matters is that the above are signs of the *Apology's* complex method, which, far from being reducible to scriptural exegesis, prominently draws on the early tradition of Christian apologetics.

Concluding Remarks

The article addressed a number of misunderstandings related to the purpose and the character of St Gregory of Nyssa's *Apology for the Hexaemeron*, mainly referring to its connection with St Basil's legacy and the genre to which it belongs. We noticed that the Nyssen's treatise was not primarily about defending and/or continuing the Basilian *Hexaemeron*, and that St Gregory entertained his own distinct aims. Although the author never disclosed his goals in full, other than expressing his interest in the order of the cosmos and the logical arrangement of the creation narrative, we inferred that to a large extent the *Apology* was designed to demonstrate his own scholarly worth, notwithstanding the treatise's peculiar lack of structure. We likewise found that the metaphysical speculations and the spiritual topics are not among the strengths of this treatise, and that its theological side is not very solid either. Very likely because of its weak theology and the lack of spiritual relevance, the *Apology* was forgotten by tradition, although similar approaches emerged again later, in the Byzantine era. In terms of the method at work in the treatise, we have seen that even though beginning from certain exegetical presuppositions, St Gregory preferred the apologetic style. This preference transpires through the rigorous scientific approach in the description of natural phenomena, and the attempt to bridge the scriptural and scientific worldviews. We noticed that in his enthusiasm for the task at hand, the Nyssen overstepped however the naturalist dimension of the common Cappadocian discourse and thus produced a treatise which primarily represents a scientific examination of the cosmos and not a theological contemplation of the creation. Nevertheless, this naturalistic and scientific approach found a fortunate theological counterweight in an important statement on the primacy of God's creative intention, wisdom and power. This statement pointed to

St Gregory's apologetic attempt to make room for Genesis and theology within the cosmological debates of his own time.

There are however other aspects that deserve to be highlighted by way of conclusion. One is the fact that with all its eccentricities the *Apology* offers a glimpse of the complexities of patristic tradition, which cannot be reduced to any facile consensus. Likewise related to patristic tradition, by the critical appreciation for the legacy of his older sibling, the Nyssen set through the *Apology* a literary precedent for the centuries to come. For instance, St Maximus the Confessor's *Mystagogy* adopted a similar approach in the seventh century,⁹⁶ having had to grapple further with certain liturgical rites which had already received their standard interpretation in the Areopagitic treatise, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*.⁹⁷ Very much like St Gregory, the Confessor was challenged to navigate between his respect for the work of another and his own pursuits.

Another worthwhile aspect is the Nyssen's contribution to Christian apologetics and indirectly the contemporary field of science and theology. Its weaknesses aside, the treatise represents a fascinating experiment in the context of the fourth century attempts to articulate a Christian worldview within the parameters of the current scientific paradigm. Contemporary Christians have much to learn from the know how of those times. Never tempted to consider theology and science as antagonistic, St Gregory showed in his *Apology* how the narrative of creation can serve as a theological lens for the interpretation of an established scientific worldview. This approach remains relevant since the current climate is no less challenging to Christian consciousness than that of Late Antiquity. Given all the above, it results that the *Apology* remains a rich treasure which requires further exploration.

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Notes

- ¹ I used the critical edition of the Εἰς τὴν Ἑξαήμερον, published in *Gregorii Nysseni In Hexaemeron: Opera Exegetica in Genesim*, part I, ed. Hubertus R. Drobner (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009). In addition, I checked the Ἀπολογητικὸς πρὸς Πέτρον τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, Περὶ τῆς Ἑξαήμερου, published in Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* (PG 44, 61-124), including its reedited version as Ἀπολογητικὸς περὶ τῆς Ἑξαήμερου in Γρηγορίου Νύσσης, Ἄπαντα τὰ Ἔργα, vol. 5, ed. Panayiotis Chrestou (Θεσσαλονίκη: Τὸ Βυζάντιον and Γρηγόριος Ὁ Παλαμᾶς, 1987), 248-360. All translations from the original are mine; I also consulted the modern Greek rendition of Chrestou and the Romanian version from Sfântul Grigorie de Nyssa, *Scrieri*, Second Part: *Scrieri Exegetice, Dogmatico-Polemice și Morale*, Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești 30, trans. and notes by Teodor Bodogae (Bucharest: The Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1998), 92-128. In all references to the *Apology*, the title of the work is followed by numbers indicating the chapters according to the edition of Drobner, followed within the brackets by the corresponding columns in PG and the respective page(s) and line(s) in the edition of Drobner.
- ² On the contrast between Nyssen's intentions and St Basil's pastoral approach, see Juan Antonio Gil-Tamayo, 'AKOLOUTHIA,' in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. by Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco and Giulio Maspero, revised and expanded English edition, trans. by Seth Cherney (Leiden: Brill, 2010): 14-20, esp. 14; Chrestou, 'Εἰσαγωγή,' in Γρηγορίου Νύσσης, Ἄπαντα τὰ Ἔργα, vol. 5 (cited above n.1): 7-16, esp. 10; Peter C. Bouteneff, *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 155.
- ³ Cf. Andrew Louth, 'The Cappadocians,' in Frances Young, Lewis Ayres and Andrew Louth (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, reprinted 2006): 289-301, here 289.
- ⁴ For instance, Louth ('The Cappadocians,' 299) considers *On the Making of Man* as an appendix to St Basil's *Hexaemeron* but pays no attention to the *Apology*. For a similar approach, see Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 753.
- ⁵ Cf. Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 154-57.
- ⁶ Charlotte Köckert, 'The Concept of Seed in Christian Cosmology: Gregory of Nyssa, *Apologia in Hexaemeron*,' *Studia Patristica* 47 (Leuven – Paris – Walpole: Peeters, 2010): 27-32.

- ⁷ Juan Antonio Gil-Tamayo, 'HEX: Apologia in Hexaameron,' in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* (cited above n.2): 387-89.
- ⁸ Cf. Hubertus R. Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church: A Comprehensive Introduction*, trans. by S. S. Schatzmann, with bibliographies updated and expanded by W. Harmless, SJ, and H. R. Drobner (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 279; Ronald E. Heine, *Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, The Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 8; Pierre Maraval, 'Chronology of Works,' in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* (cited above n.2): 153-69, esp. 153, 157; Anthony Meredith, *The Cappadocians* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 53-54.
- ⁹ Cf. *Apology 77*, epilogue (PG 44, 124A; Drobner, 84.3).
- ¹⁰ Gil-Tamayo ('HEX: Apologia in Hexaameron,' 387) believes that the *Apology* was published in early 379, a few months after *On the Making of Man*. Similarly, in the 'Introduction' of his translation of the *Apology* into Romanian, Teodor Bodogae (cf. Sfântul Grigorie de Nyssa, *Scieri*, cited above n.1, 9-14, esp. 10, 12), argues that the two treatises related to the Basilian *Hexaameron* were written shortly after the great Cappadocian's supposed year of repose, i.e. 379. Bodogae takes the mention of Easter in the prologue of *On the Making of Man* as referring to the Paschal season of 379, concluding that the *Apology* should have been written towards the middle of the same year. This opinion is also shared by Anna M. Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters – Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 40. In the same vein, Manlio Simonetti's article 'Exegesis' (in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, cited above n.2, 331-38, esp. 331) places the two works "a little after 379," whereas Jean Laplace, translator of *On the Making of Man* in French, believes that the *Apology* was published in 380. Cf. his 'Introduction' to Grégoire de Nyse, *La Création de l'Homme*, Sources Chrétiennes (Paris and Lyon: Éditions du Cerf and Éditions de l'Abeille, 1943): 5-77, esp. 4. The same goes with Köckert, 'The Concept of Seed in Christian Cosmology,' 27. In turn, and without explanation, Meredith (*The Cappadocians*, 53) pushes the date of redaction somewhere between 380 and 382. Later, in his *Gregory of Nyssa*, The Early Church Fathers (London: Routledge, 1999, reprinted 2002), 5, Meredith proposes that the two writings were published in the interval between Basil's death and 386. Similarly, Heine (*Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms*, 7) believes that *On the Making of Man* was published sometimes between 383 and 385, or soon after, possibly in Constantinople, a reasoning which implicitly refers to the *Apology* too, although Heine ignores the latter treatise. Very generally, Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, 753, believes that much of the Nyssen's literary output was produced in the last fifteen years of his life (St Gregory supposedly died in 395). The possibility

of a later redaction was also suggested by Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 3 (Westminster: Christian Classics Inc., 1986), 256.

¹¹ Cf. Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 154.

¹² Cf. *Apology* 3 (PG 44, 64C; Drobner, 8.12-9.1).

¹³ Cf. *Apology* 3 (PG 44, 64CD-65A; Drobner, 9.1-9). The Nyssen attempted to answer this question in *Apology* 75-76 (PG 44, 120D-121D; Drobner, 81.1-83.9) by identifying the third heaven with the vision of the noetic realm. On the interest of St Gregory in this Pauline text, see James Buchanan Wallace, *Snatched into Paradise (2 Cor 12:1-10): Paul's Heavenly Journey in the Context of Early Christian Experience* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co, 2011), 304-12.

¹⁴ Cf. *Apology* 1, prologue (PG 44, 61A; Drobner, 6.4-6).

¹⁵ Cf. *Apology* 5 (PG 44, 65C; Drobner, 11.8).

¹⁶ Cf. *Ibidem* (Drobner, 11.3-8). The phrase anticipates the Nyssen's famous presentation of the ascent of Moses on Sinai as a mystical experience (PG 44, 372C-376C). Cf. *The Life of Moses* (2.152-61), trans., intro. and notes by Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson, *The Classics of Western Spirituality Series* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1978), 90-93.

¹⁷ Cf. *Apology* 4 (PG 44, 65AB; Drobner, 9.16-11.2). See further nuances on this matter in Jaclyn Maxwell, 'The Attitudes of Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus toward Uneducated Christians,' *Studia Patristica* 47 (cited above n.6): 117-22.

¹⁸ Cf. *Apology* 4 (PG 44, 65A; Drobner, 9.16-17). For more on this matter, see Gil-Tamayo, 'HEX: Apologia in Hexaemeron,' 388.

¹⁹ Cf. *Apology* 5 (PG 44, 68B; Drobner, 13.4-6).

²⁰ Cf. *Hexaemeron* 1.1 (PG 29, 4A-5A). See on this Doru Costache, 'Christian Worldview: Understandings from St Basil the Great,' *Phronema* 25 (2010): 21-56, esp. 29-31.

²¹ Cf. *Apology* 6 (PG 44, 68D; Drobner, 14.6-12).

²² Cf. *Apology* 6 (PG 44, 68C; Drobner, 13.17). PG and the edition of Chrestou read *σχολαστικῶς* instead of *στοχαστικῶς*.

²³ The phrase belongs to Gil-Tamayo, 'HEX: Apologia in Hexaemeron,' 388.

²⁴ Cf. *Apology* 6 (PG 44, 68BC; Drobner, 13.11-14.2).

²⁵ Cf. Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 154.

- ²⁶ Cf. *On the Making of Man*, prologue, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, second series, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 387-88, gives the contents before the actual treatise. So does the Romanian version, at 16-8. In turn, the contents are altogether missing from the *Patrologia Graeca* 44, the edition of Panayiotis Chrestou and the French version in the Sources Chrétiennes series.
- ²⁷ On this principle as central to the Apology, see Gil-Tamayo, 'Akolouthia,' in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* (cited above n.2): 14-20, esp. 16.
- ²⁸ Drobner gives 78 chapters, whereas Chrestou gives a number of no less than 102.
- ²⁹ These are the references, either direct or in paraphrases, to the creation narrative within the *Apology* (following Drobner's edition): chap. 7, 14.13 (Gen 1:1); chap. 8, 16.14-17.2 (Gen 1:1), 17.12-13 (Gen 1:1); chap. 10, 20.2-3 (Gen 1:2), 21.1 (Gen 1:3); chap. 12, 22.22, 23.11-13 (Gen 1:3), 23.18-19 (Gen 1:4); chap. 13, 24.15 (Gen 1:5); chap. 14, 25.16-19 (Gen 1:3-5); chap. 15, 26.1-2, 4-5 (Gen 1:5); chap. 16, 26.17-18 (Gen 1:1), 27.10, 14-15, 28.8-11 (Gen 1:2); chap. 17, 28.14-15 (Gen 1:2); chap 18, 30.2-5, 31.3-6 (Gen 1:5-8); chap. 19, 31.10-11 (Gen 1:2), 32.2-4 (Gen 1:6-8); chap. 21, 33.7-8 (Gen 1:31), 33.9-10, 12-14, 15-16 (Gen 1:2), 33.17-19 (Gen 1:6-8); chap. 23, 35.7-9, 12-14, 17-18 (Gen 1:6-8); chap. 24, 37.5-6 (Gen 1:5), 37.9-10 (Gen 1:8); chap. 26, 39.13-15 (Gen 1:8-9), 40.8-11 (Gen 1:9); chap. 27, 40.16-17 (Gen 1:7); chap. 31, 44.3-4, 10-13 (Gen 1:31); chap. 44, 57.12-14, 57.1-2 (Gen 1:6-8); chap. 63, 71.13-14 (Gen 1:6-7); chap. 64, 71.20-21 (Gen 1:13-7), 72.12-13 (Gen 1:1); chap. 65, 72.16, 73.7-9, 17-18 (Gen 1:3-5); chap. 66, 74.3 (Gen 1:13); chap. 67, 75.1-2 (Gen 1:16); chap. 70, 76.15 (Gen 1:13), 76.18 (Gen 1:16-8); chap. 72, 78.2 (Gen 1:3-5), 78.3-4 (Gen 1:6-8), 78.6-7 (Gen 1:10-2); chap. 73, 79.1-2 (Gen 1:3-5, 19), 79.5-6 (Gen 1:3-5, 16), 79.9 (Gen 1:13), 79.15-17 (Gen 1:3-5, 16); chap. 75, 81.16-17 (Gen 1:8), 82.2-5 (Gen 1:20, 26), 82.5-6 (Gen 1:6), 82.7-10 (Gen 1:16-7), 82.13-14 (Gen 1:8); chap. 77, 83.18-84.1 (Gen 1 as ἐξάήμερον κοσμογένειαν, "the making of the world in six days"), 84.3 (Gen 1:26-27 as ἀνθρώπου κατασκευῆς, "the structure of the human being"). Note the large gaps between chapters 31 and 44 and from 44 to 63.
- ³⁰ Cf. Monique Alexandre, 'L'Exégèse de Gen 1, 1-2a dans l'*In Hexaemeron* de Grégoire de Nyse: Deux approches du problème de la matière,' in Heinrich Dörrie, Margarete Altenburger, Uta Schramm (eds.), *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie: Zweites Internationales Kolloquium über Gregor von Nyssa*, Freckenhorst bei Münster 18-23 Sept 1972 (Leiden: Brill, 1976): 159-86, esp. 160-61.
- ³¹ As pointed out by Quasten, *Patrology*, 264.

- ³² Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 156. On the nature of the waters as the main topic of the *Apology*, see E. Corsini, ‘Nouvelles Perspectives sur le Problème des Sources de l’Hexaëméron de Grégoire de Nysse,’ *Studia Patristica* 1:1 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957): 94-103, esp. 97, 100.
- ³³ Cf. Quasten, *Patrology*, 264.
- ³⁴ Paul M. Blowers, ‘Entering “This Sublime and Blessed Amphitheatre”’: Contemplation of Nature and Interpretation of the Bible in the Patristic Period,’ in Jitse M. van der Meer and Scott Mandelbrote, *Nature and Scripture in the Abrahamic Religions: Up to 1700*, Volume 1, Brill’s Series in Church History 36 (Leiden: Brill, 2008): 147-76, at 157.
- ³⁵ Chrestou, ‘Εἰσαγωγή,’ 11. Similarly, Donald L. Ross shares the opinion that the *Apology* offers an allegorical interpretation of the creation and the world; cf. his ‘Gregory of Nyssa’ (section 3: ‘World’) published in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/gregoryn/>), December 2006.
- ³⁶ *Apology* 75-6 (PG 44, 120D-121D; Drobner, 81.1-83.9).
- ³⁷ Cf. *Apology* 21 (PG 44, 81D; Drobner, 33.1-2); 77 (PG 44, 121D; Drobner, 83.10-18). On this passage, briefly, see Hubertus R. Drobner, ‘Allegory,’ in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* (cited above n.2): 21-26, here 21.
- ³⁸ Cf. *Apology* 19 (PG 44, 81BC; Drobner, 32.4-7).
- ³⁹ See Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 156; Gil-Tamayo, ‘HEX: Apologia in Hexaemeron,’ 387; John Anthony McGuckin, ‘Patterns of Biblical Exegesis in the Cappadocian Fathers: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and Gregory of Nyssa,’ in S. T. Kimbrough, Jr. (ed.), *Orthodox and Wesleyan Scriptural Understanding and Practice* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2005): 37-54, esp. 48; Simonetti, ‘Exegesis,’ 332-33.
- ⁴⁰ Cf. Bouteneff, *ibidem*.
- ⁴¹ Stanislas Giet, ‘Introduction’ to Basil de Césarée, *Homélies sur l’Hexaëméron*, Greek text, intro. and trad. by S. Giet, Sources Chrétiennes (Paris: Cerf, 1949): 5-84, here 23.
- ⁴² Without providing details, Quasten (*Patrology*, 263) leaves the question open, asserting that *On the Making of Man* was probably published either immediately after 1 January 379 or later in St Gregory’s life.
- ⁴³ Cf. e.g. Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church* 279.
- ⁴⁴ Cf. Corsini, ‘Nouvelles Perspectives,’ 95.

- ⁴⁵ Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, 53. In his *Gregory of Nyssa*, 5, Meredith adds that the two works continue and partially correct the Basilian *Hexaemeron*. Similarly, Simonetti ('Exegesis,' 331) observes that by his two treatises St Gregory defends and deepens the Basilian interpretation of the creation narrative. See also Chrestou, 'Εἰσαγωγή,' 10.
- ⁴⁶ Cf. *On the Making of Man*, prologue (PG 44, 125BC); *Apology* 2, prologue (PG 44, 64BC; Drobner, 7.14-8.11).
- ⁴⁷ Cf. Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 40.
- ⁴⁸ See John Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 2: *The Nicene Faith*, part 2 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 411; Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, 53; Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 40.
- ⁴⁹ For a recent review of the debates around St Basil's death, see Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 32-39.
- ⁵⁰ Cf. *On the Making of Man*, prologue (PG 44, 125C).
- ⁵¹ Cf. *Apology* 1-2 (PG 44, 64BC; Drobner, 6.13-7.3; 7.17-8.8).
- ⁵² Cf. *Apology* 2 (PG 44, 64BC; Drobner, 7.18-8.11).
- ⁵³ See Chrestou, 'Εἰσαγωγή,' 11; Drobner, 'Allegory,' 21; Gil-Tamayo, 'HEX: Apologia in Hexaemeron', 387.
- ⁵⁴ Cf. *Apology* 28 (PG 44, 89BC; Drobner, 41.12-42.6).
- ⁵⁵ Cf. Heine, *Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms*, 9.
- ⁵⁶ Cf. *Apology* 1-2 (PG 44, 61A-64B; Drobner, 6.1-8.1).
- ⁵⁷ Corsini, 'Nouvelles Perspectives,' 96: "The manner in which Gregory develops his arguments is not that of someone who defends another's cause. It is obvious that instead of solving the difficulties pertaining to his brother's treatise, Gregory develops a thesis which, far from being that of Basil's, opposes it directly" (my translation, emended by Margaret Beirne). At 102 Corsini reiterated the independent nature of the *Apology* from the Basilian *Hexaemeron*. Similarly, Laplace ('Introduction,' 6) observed that whilst *On the Making of Man* and the *Apology* "pretend" to continue the unfinished homilies of St Basil, "en réalité, le point de vue que dirige les deux frères est fort différent" ("in reality, the points of view of the two brothers are very different"). See also the similar conclusion of Giet, 'Introduction,' 20-24, 73.
- ⁵⁸ Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 166, notes that it is about two "disparate, yet related, voices."

⁵⁹ See Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 411; Meredith, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 5. For further opinions on this matter, see McGuckin, 'Patterns of Biblical Exegesis in the Cappadocian Fathers,' 49; Simonetti, 'Exegesis,' 336.

⁶⁰ Cf. also his *The Fathers of the Church*, 279.

⁶¹ See Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 155; Gil-Tamayo, 'AKOLOUTHIA,' 14.

⁶² According to the critical edition of Drobner, the following are the relevant parallels to the creation narrative in the Scriptures, cited either directly or by paraphrase. I indicate them in the order of the chapters where they can be found: 2 Cor 12:2, the third heaven (chap. 3); Rom 1:20; 2 Cor 12:4, gazing upon the unseen of God via the visible creation (chap. 5); Col 1:17, all things exist in the power of God as their beginning (chap. 9); Ps 103:24, all are created in God's wisdom (chap. 11); Ps 18:2, the heavens proclaim God's glory (chap. 11); Ps 18:4, the voices of creation (chap. 11); Ex 7-14 and Ps 104:27, miracles in Egypt (chap. 11); Ps 94:4, all creation is in God's hands (chap. 16); 2 Macc 1:24, God as the one bringing to existence all creation (chap. 17); John 1:9 and 1 Tim 6:16, God as light and dwelling in the transcendent light (chap. 19); Deut 4:24 and Hebr 12:29, God as consuming fire (chap. 19); Eph 6:12, the master of the world of darkness inhabiting the abyss (chap. 19); Ps 76:17, the abyss troubled at the sight of God (chap. 19); Ps 103:24 and John 1:1, the wisdom in which all are created is the Logos of God (chap. 26); Eccl 1:4, the earth is established forever (chap. 31); Amos 5:8 and 9:6, God commands the waters (chap. 42); Gen 7:11, 19-20, the cataracts of heaven (chap. 43); Luke 4:25, 3 Kings 17, 18:44-45, Gen 7:11, 4 Kings 7:2, and James 5:17-18, Elijah closing and opening the waterfalls of heaven (chap. 44); Is 40:12, God measures the creation (chap. 45); Ps 135:7 and 1 Cor 15:41, the luminaries (chap. 65); Ps 103:24, the greatness of God's creation (chap. 69); 2 Cor 12:2-4, the third heaven (chap. 75); 2 Cor 4:18, the visible and the invisible (chap. 76). None of these parallels contribute decisively to solve the issues pointed out by the prologue.

⁶³ Cf. n. 29.

⁶⁴ *Apology* 7 (PG 44, 68D; Drobner, 14.13).

⁶⁵ For an analysis of the Nyssen's reflection on the two verses, see Alexandre, 'L'Exégèse de Gen 1, 1-2a,' 161-82.

⁶⁶ Cf. Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Versions of the Bible*, translated by Wilfred G. E. Watson (Boston and Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2000), 47-50.

⁶⁷ *Apology* 44 (PG 44, 101C; Drobner, 57.2-3).

- ⁶⁸ *Apology* 8 (PG 44, 69D; Drobner, 16.14-17.1). Cf. Monique Alexandre, *Le Commencement du Livre Genèse I-V: Le version grecque de la Septante et sa réception*, Christianisme Antique 3 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1988), 67, 71, with references to the Nyssen's use of Aquila's phrase.
- ⁶⁹ For creation as one event, see *Apology* 8 (Drobner, 16.14-17.19). For creation as a series of events, suggested e.g. by the metaphor of the seed that has the potential to grow, see *Apology* 16 (Drobner, 27.11-14). The best summary of this double perspective can be found in *Apology* 64 (PG 44, 113C; Drobner, 72.10-15).
- ⁷⁰ Quoted in *Apology* 16 (PG 44, 77D; Drobner, 27.10). On the significance ascribed by the Nyssen to these words, see Alexandre, 'L'Exégèse de Gen 1, 1-2a,' 172-73.
- ⁷¹ *Apology* 17 (PG 44, 80B; Drobner, 28.12-15).
- ⁷² On the significance ascribed by the Nyssen to these words, see Alexandre, 'L'Exégèse de Gen 1, 1-2a,' 173-74.
- ⁷³ For Aquila's version, PG 44, 80B, gives οὐθὲν καὶ οὐθὲν.
- ⁷⁴ The text of the *Hexapla* as we know it offers different solutions for Aquila's and Theodotion's respective translations. Thus, for Aquila it gives κένωμα καὶ οὐθὲν whereas for Theodotion κενὸν καὶ οὐθὲν with the variant οὐθὲν καὶ οὐθὲν. Cf. *Origenis Hexaplorum*, Tomus I: Prolegomena, Genesis – Esther, ed. Fridericus Field (Oxford: Clarendon, 1875), 7. For details on these translations, see Alexandre, 'L'Exégèse de Gen 1, 1-2a,' 169-70; eadem, *Le Commencement du Livre*, 76-77, 79.
- ⁷⁵ *Apology* 17 (PG 44, 80C; Drobner, 29.12-13). Cf. Alexandre, 'L'Exégèse de Gen 1, 1-2a,' 170.
- ⁷⁶ Cf. *Apology* 64 (PG 44, 113AB; Drobner, 71.19-21).
- ⁷⁷ Cf. *Apology* 27-63 (Drobner, 40.16-71.18).
- ⁷⁸ Cf. *Apology* 24 (Drobner, 37.11-38.10sq).
- ⁷⁹ According to the critical edition of Drobner, the cosmological and scientific sources of the *Apology*, referred to either directly or indirectly, likewise as either reliable or questionable authorities, amount to 23 authors. It is not clear whether Drobner considered these sources as actually used by St Gregory or he only meant to draw parallels to well-known scientific sources of Late Antiquity. In a private conversation, Adam Cooper, to whom I am grateful for this observation, noticed that Simplicius, twice mentioned by Drobner (at 25.7 and 29.12-17), was a 6th century author; the Nyssen could not have consulted

his works. Corsini, 'Nouvelles Perspectives,' 103, suggested that the source of St Gregory's scientific information must have been school handbooks.

⁸⁰ *Apology* 6 (PG 44, 68C; Drobner, 13.20-14.2).

⁸¹ *Apology* 7 (PG 44, 68D-69A; Drobner, 14.13-15.8).

⁸² See Köckert, 'The Concept of Seed in Christian Cosmology,' 27.

⁸³ *Apology* 8 (PG 44, 69D; Drobner, 17.2-6). Here, the Nyssen reiterated what he already stated about his brother's pastoral strategy adopted in the *Hexaemeron*; cf. *Apology* 4 (PG 44, 65AB; Drobner, 10.9-13). Cf. *Apology* 13 (PG 44, 69D-72A; Drobner, 23.19-24.10), a passage ignored by Köckert who only refers to chapters 5, 8 and 64.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Hexaemeron* 1.6 (PG 29, 16BC); 1.11 (PG 29, 28AB).

⁸⁵ Cf. Costache, 'Christian Worldview,' 28-36.

⁸⁶ Cf. n.56 above.

⁸⁷ Cf. Bouteneff, *Beginnings*, 154-55.

⁸⁸ Daniel F. Stramara, 'Surveying the Heavens: Early Christian Writers on Astronomy,' *St Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 46:2-3 (2002): 147-62, at 155.

⁸⁹ See for instance *Against the Pagans* 34-44 (PG 25, 69A-88D).

⁹⁰ Cf. Corsini, 'Nouvelles Perspectives,' 97, 102-103.

⁹¹ Cf. Bodogae, 'Introducere,' 9-10; John F. Callahan, 'Greek Philosophy and the Cappadocian Cosmology,' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958): 30-57, esp. 53-54; Corsini, 'Nouvelles Perspectives,' 95, 101-103; Meredith, *Gregory of Nyssa*, 5-6; Simonetti, 'Exegesis,' 332-33. For the use of science in other Gregorian works, see Jean Daniélou, 'Grégoire de Nyse et la philosophie,' in Dörrie, Altenburger, Schramm (eds.), *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie* (cited above n.30): 3-17; Laplace, 'Introduction,' 19-35; Morwenna Ludlow, 'Science and Theology in Gregory of Nyssa's *De Anima et Resurrectione*: Astronomy and Automata,' *Journal of Theological Studies* 60:2 (2009): 467-89; Stramara, 'Surveying the Heavens,' 153-55; Susan Wessel, 'The Reception of Greek Science in Gregory of Nyssa's *De Hominis Opificio*,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 63 (2009): 24-46. For the propensity of the Cappadocians to rely on science in order to demonstrate Christian truths, and their general appreciation for scholarship, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 22-39.

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- ⁹² *Apology* 1 (PG 44, 61A; Drobner, 6.2). This statement confirms Daniélou's conclusion that for the Nyssen there is no separation between theology and philosophy; cf. 'Grégoire de Nysse et la philosophie,' 16-17.
- ⁹³ Cf. Alexandre, 'L'Exégèse de Gen 1, 1-2a' 159: "a systematic vision of the world, of its creation, order and permanence" (my translation).
- ⁹⁴ Gil-Tamayo, 'HEX: Apologia in Hexaemeron,' 387.
- ⁹⁵ Cf. *Apology*, prologue (PG 44, 68D; Drobner, 14.6-8).
- ⁹⁶ Cf. *The Mystagogy*, prologue (PG 91, 660D-661A).
- ⁹⁷ *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, PG 3, 369-584.

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