CAPPADOCIAN LEGACY

A Critical Appraisal

Edited by

Doru Costache and Philip Kariatlis

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The Recapitulation of History and the "Eighth Day":
Aspects of St Basil The Great’s Eschatological Vision

Mario Baghos

Abstract: Throughout his writings, St Basil the Great put forward a holistic eschatological vision whereby the glorious transformation of the world at the end of time was already precipitated on the very first day of creation. This article analyses various modern approaches to the concept of eschatology before addressing St Basil’s cosmological interpretation of the “one day” of creation in the book of Genesis as subsuming within itself all of creation history from alpha to omega. For the saint, this recapitulation includes within itself the “eighth day,” traditionally understood as paradoxically transcending the seven days of the creation narrative and thereby identified with the eschatological state. The article then seeks to assess the existential dimension of this eschatological state, the proper domain of which, for St Basil, was the life of the Church.

St Basil the Great had a complex eschatological vision consisting, in a broad sense, in a cosmological interpretation of the eschaton – summed up by the ἡμέρα μία or “day one” described by Philip Rousseau as an “everlasting day of creation”¹ – and an ecclesial interpretation characterised by our participation in the divine mysteries (or, sacraments) and the life of the Church leading to deification. The connection between these two schemes has not been appreciated by contemporary scholarship, which, in any case, has had very little to say concerning Basilian eschatology. The brief assess-

ments by Rousseau² and Brian E. Daley³ limit the saint’s understanding of the eschaton to the notion of a final judgment, whereas Fr John McGuckin’s excellent appraisal of the eschatology of the Cappadocians jumps from the antecedent ideas in Origen to the two Gregory’s (the Theologian and the Nyssen), thereby omitting Basil altogether. Aside from the emphasis on judgment and the prevailing silence, the notion of the already/not yet tension, whilst remaining an important conceptual apparatus propounded by modern scholars, appears problematic in the effort to appreciate the density of the saint’s eschatological thinking. To begin with, this article will give a brief definition of eschatology, setting the parameters for its use herein. Next, it will assess the second homily of St Basil’s Hexaemeron in order to demonstrate the way in which his cosmological interpretation stands as a holistic corrective to the notion of the already/not yet tension, extending it to the beginning of creation (thus encompassing ‘all things’ from alpha to omega). An ‘extension’ of the eschaton to the beginning of time implies, however, that the divine participation experienced by Adam before the fall was also a foretaste of the eschatological state. Therefore, after delivering the cosmological interpretation, this article will turn to St Basil’s On the Holy Spirit, where it will assess his view concerning the potential for deification that, although lost by the first humans, was reconstituted by Christ in the Church. Indeed, it is in this latter text that the great Cappadocian put forward his ecclesial interpretation of eschatology with specific reference to baptism and participation in the recurrent liturgies of the Church calendar; all of which he considered as conducive towards deification insofar as they were framed and conditioned by the “everlasting day of creation” that contains within itself the eschaton.

Defining Eschatology and the Scope of this Work

Before anything else can be said about St Basil’s multifaceted eschatological vision, the conventional understanding of this notion must be briefly delineated. Deriving from the Greek adjective ἐσχατος (or τα ἐσχατα as a noun in the plural tense),⁴ eschatology generally refers to the ‘last things,’ the final term of history or the fulfilment of the historical process. In a more nuanced way, Christian eschatology is perhaps best reflected by what in scholarly circles is known as the already/not yet tension between the advent of the kingdom of heaven which has ‘already’ been established by Christ in

² Cf. Rousseau, Basil of Caesarea, 335.
the Church (otherwise known as ‘realised’ eschatology) and the consummation of all things in Christ upon his second coming which has ‘not yet’ taken place, but will occur at the ‘last things’ (thereby constituting a ‘future’ eschatology). The kingdom of God, which is tantamount to a participation in his grace, can hence be experienced in the here and now but will not be consummated until the eschaton, which has been variously described as consisting in Christ’s final judgment of humanity, the resurrection of the dead and, in St Basil’s words, the final “transformation of the cosmos.”

It is important to mention, however, that our present participation in this eschatological state – however immediate and direct – constitutes a mere foretaste of the fullness of God’s grace that is to fill “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28) at the ‘last things.’

This article will distinguish between the eschaton as an event that has not yet taken place and the eschatological state characteristic of these ‘last things’ which has already been inaugurated and can for this reason be experienced *hic et nunc*. The latter refers to an immanent state of being that is variously described as the kingdom of God/heaven (Mk 1:15; Mt 3:2), eternal life (Jn 6:58), salvation (Lk 19:9), paradise (Lk 23:43) etc., but which ultimately consists of nothing other than divine participation (2 Pet 1:4); nuances that are present in St Basil, as we shall see. Fr Georges Florovsky, a pioneer of Patristic scholarship in the twentieth century, gave a detailed description of this experiential already/not yet tension, without calling it such. With reference to the historical advent of Jesus Christ, he affirmed:

Christianity is essentially eschatological, and the Church is an “eschatological community,” since she is the New Testament, the ultimate and the final, and, consequently, “the last.” Christ himself is the last Adam because He is “the New Man” (Ignatius, *Ephes.* 20.1). The Christian perspective is intrinsically eschatological [...]. The “end” had

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6 St Basil referred to the “transformation of the cosmos” (μετααναποθήκη τόν κόσμον) throughout his homilies on the six days of creation. See, for example, *PG* 29, 12C (my translation).

7 David S. Dockery’s description of this already/not yet tension as an “intermediate interval between Christ’s resurrection and second coming generally represents the consensus amongst many contemporary scholars. During the interval the age to come overlaps the present age. Believers already live spiritually in the new age, though temporally they do not yet live in that age.” David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 185.
come, God’s design of human salvation had been consummated (John 19.28, 30: τετέλεσται). Yet, this ultimate action was just a new beginning. The greater things were yet to come. The “Last Adam” was coming again [...]. The Kingdom had been inaugurated, but it did not yet come in its full power and glory. Or, rather, the Kingdom was still to come, – the King had come already. The Church was still in via, and Christians were still “pilgrims” and strangers in “this world.” This tension between “the Past” and “the Coming” was essential for the Christian message from the very beginning. There were always two basic terms of reference: the Gospel and the second Advent. Florovsky used the language of the New Testament and patristic literature in order to articulate his view of the ‘last things,’ which framed eschatology between Christ’s first coming or advent – punctuated by the fact that he has already come – and his second coming – which has not yet taken place. The Church, for Florovsky, was therefore caught within a tension between the past marked by the inauguration of God’s kingdom and the future second coming, which will draw history to a close when the kingdom finally descends “in its full power and glory.” This does not mean that the interim between Christ’s first and second comings is meaningless, for Florovsky also highlighted the inherent dynamism of the eschatological experience in the historical process, where history remains “inwardly regulated and organized precisely by this super-historical and transcendent goal, by a watchful expectation of the Coming Lord.” This view of eschatology does much to alleviate the popular (yet highly erroneous) notion that the eschaton is limited to some sort of catastrophic or ‘apocalyptic’ end of linear history. Nevertheless, when compared to St Basil’s eschatological vision, Florovsky’s view – at least in this context – seems inhibited by the Christian

8 Georges Florovsky, The Patristic Age and Eschatology: An Introduction,’ 63-64.
9 The importance that Florovsky placed on eschatology is manifested by the following declaration: “Eschatology is not just one particular section of the Christian theological system, but rather its basis and foundation, its guiding and inspiring principle, or as it were, the climate of the whole of Christian thinking. Christianity is essential eschatological...” Ibid, 63.
10 Ibid, 64.
11 Ibid, 66. For a similar assessment on how the historical process is motivated by its telos, see my article on St Gregory the Theologian in this volume.
12 Examples of contemporary preoccupation with the ‘end times’ can be found in the writings of Richard Landes, who placed a heavy emphasis on the notion of the catastrophic “End of the World” without at all addressing its significant corollary – that of the belief in the transformation or transfiguration of the existing order of things by the grace of God. Cf. Richard Landes, ‘On Owls, Roosters, and Apocalyptic Time: A Historical Method for Reading a Refractory Documentation,’ Union Seminary Quarterly Review 49 (1995): 49.
historicism that he so profusely engaged with;\textsuperscript{13} for it relegates the eschatological mode to the temporal duration between Christ’s first and second comings without sufficiently accounting for how we might in fact participate in this eschatological state.

When discussing St Basil’s eschatological vision, it is important to keep in mind that the saint never intended to articulate a coherent or systematic view of the doctrine.\textsuperscript{14} His view of the eschaton, inferred from works such as his \textit{Hexaemeron}, has perhaps best been summarised by Rousseau, who stated that although St Basil believed in the termination of the historical process that he envisaged would be followed by a transformation of the entire cosmos,\textsuperscript{15} this transformation – which the saint identified with the “eighth day” of the Psalmist that is beyond the week of time (and hence, metahistorical)\textsuperscript{16} – would have, in the words of Rousseau, “an affinity with the character of the first creation.”\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, in discussing the \textit{Hexaemeron}, Rousseau indicated that this affinity should not be viewed as a cyclic return to that creation, asserting that, for the Cappadocian: “all movement in the cosmos, human or otherwise, was regarded as a movement towards [the eschatological] judgment.”\textsuperscript{18} But, along with Daley, Rousseau interpreted St Basil’s eschatology through the lens of apocalypticism in describing it solely in terms of judgement.\textsuperscript{19} Moreover, whilst he pertinently associated protology and teleology, he mitigated their organic relationship by stipulat-

\textsuperscript{13} For more on Fr Florovsky’s attempts to rehabilitate a genuine Christian view of history in light of the adverse influences of German Idealism on the historian’s (and the theologian’s) craft, see ‘The Predicament of the Christian Historian,’ in \textit{The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky}, vol. 2: \textit{Christianity and Culture} (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974), 31-67.

\textsuperscript{14} Indeed, the fact that patristic eschatology did not exist as a ‘systematic’ category until modern times is highlighted by Fr John McGuckin, who affirmed that the fathers only discussed eschatological concerns with reference to \textit{economia}, i.e. those aspects pertaining to God’s relationship with the world (as distinct from \textit{theologia}, which pertains to God’s inner life). Cf. John A. McGuckin, ‘Eschatological Horizons in the Cappadocian Fathers,’ in \textit{Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity}, ed. Robert J. Daly, SJ (Brookline, MA: Baker Academic, 2009), 193-94.

\textsuperscript{15} Cf. \textit{Hexaemeron} 1.4, in \textit{Exegetical Homilies}, trans. Agnes Clare Way, The Fathers of the Church Series, vol. 46 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of American Press, 2003), at 8 (PG 29, 12C). Unless otherwise stated, all references to the \textit{Hexaemeron} will be from this translation and will include the chapter, section and page numbers. The \textit{Patrologia Graeca} will be referenced only when I have included the Greek text, or have translated it myself.

\textsuperscript{16} Cf. \textit{Hexaemeron} 2.8, at 35 (PG 29, 52A).

\textsuperscript{17} Rousseau, \textit{Basil of Caesarea}, 335.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 335.

\textsuperscript{19} Cf. Daley, \textit{The Hope of the Early Church}, 81-83.
ing that the saint only “ostensibly” discussed the beginnings of the universe in order to correctly assess “the form and implication of God’s final judgement.” 20 Although St Basil did in fact refer to the final judgment in various other works, 21 his eschatological vision in the Hexaemeron is far more complex. Influenced by the scriptural imagery concerning the eschatological “day of the Lord” (Isa 2:12; Joel 2:11; Amos 5:18; 1 Thes 5:2; 2 Cor 1:14; 2 Pet 3:10), 22 we have seen that St Basil believed that the first day of creation in the Genesis narrative was an “everlasting day” 23 – the ἡμέρα μία, “one day” 24 – that contained within itself all of history from alpha to omega. The saint hence offered a cosmological interpretation of eschatology, 25 which, far from being relegated to the interval between Christ’s first and secondcomings, is extended to the beginning of the creation of the universe. This cosmological interpretation provides a framework for the existential or experiential dimension of the eschaton; for the saint, the mode of being which is to prevail at the ‘last days’ can be experienced as a foretaste in the here and now within the sacred liturgical context of the Church. More specifically, the eschatological state that can be experienced in the Church was for the Cappadocian tantamount to the process of deification wrought by divine participation. 26 But before turning to the ecclesial context, we must delve deeper into the broader, cosmological description of the eschaton that the saint put forward in his Hexaemeron.

St Basil’s Cosmological Interpretation of Eschatology

The cosmological interpretation of eschatology is perhaps best reflected in St Basil’s Hexaemeron, which contains exegetical and scientific observations of the creation narrative of Genesis delivered for the moral and spiritual edification of the Church. In the second homily, the saint interpreted

20 Rousseau, Basil of Caesarea, 335.
21 Cf. Daley, The Hope of the Early Church, 81-83.
22 In fact he openly quotes Joel and Amos in Hexaemeron 2.8, at 35.
23 Rousseau, Basil of Caesarea, 335.
24 Cf. Hexaemeron 2.8, at 34 (PG 29, 49A).
25 By the term cosmology I do not refer to a scientific explanation of the universe. Rather, the term should be understood in its traditional sense as pertaining to the saint’s Weltanschauung, or worldview.
Genesis 1:5: “And there was evening and there was morning, one day.”

At the beginning of his interpretation, St Basil asked:

Why did he [Moses] say ‘one’ and not ‘first’? [Τίνος ἔνεκεν οὕκ ἔπε πρῶτον, ἀλλὰ μίαν:] And yet, it is more consistent for him who introduced a second and a third and a fourth day, to call the one which begins the series ‘first.’

The Cappadocian’s exposition was based on his observation that Scripture calls the first day of creation “one day” – ημέρα μία – instead of the ‘first’ – πρώτη ημέρα – in a succession of days. Ascribing the reason for this to the “mysteries” (thereby intimating the ecclesial context), he asked rhetorically

Or, is the reason handed down in the mysteries more authoritative [Ἡ κυριώτερος ὁ ἐν ἀπορρήτως παραδίδομενος λόγος], that God, having prepared the nature of time, set as measures and limits for it the intervals of the days, and measuring it out for a week, He ordered the week, in counting the change of time, always to return again in a circle to itself? Again, He orders that one day by recurring seven times complete a week; and this, beginning from itself and ending on itself, is the form of a circle. In fact, it is also characteristic of eternity to turn back upon itself and never to be brought to an end.

The very structure of the week in Genesis is therefore pre-ordained by God to measure the interval of time and, by returning upon itself, to constitute an image of eternity (see below). This led St Basil to stipulate that Scripture calls the beginning of time ημέρα μία (rather than the ‘first’ day) because it wishes to frame the succession of the days of the week depicted in Genesis within this one day.

Regarding the recapitulation of the seven days of Genesis within the ημέρα μία or day ‘one,’ St Basil stated:

[Moses] said ‘one’ because he was defining the measure of day and night and combining the time of a night and day, since the twen-

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28 Hexaemeron 2.8, at 34 (PG 29, 49A).

29 Hexaemeron 2.8, at 34-35 (PG 29, 49BC).

30 Cf. Hexaemeron 2.8, at 35 (PG 29, 52B).
ty-four hours fill up the interval of one day, if, of course, night is understood with day [...]. It is as if one would say that the measure of twenty-four hours is the length of one day, or that the return of the heavens from one point to the same point once more occurs in one day [άπο τοῦ αὐτοῦ σημείου ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πάλιν ἀποκατάστασες ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ γίνεται]; so that, as often as through the revolution of the sun evening and morning traverse the world, the circle is completed, not in a longer period of time, but in the space of one day.\footnote{Hexaëmeron 2.8, at 34 (PG 29, 49B).}

Day and night, comprising a single day, represent the origin and climax of creation; the revolution of the heavens (or rather, the earth according to our modern scientific understanding) in the twenty-four hour period is depicted as a recapitulation or, literally, restoration (ἀποκατάστασις) of all things into this single day, which is to be considered in light of its totality or its fullness. The ἡμέρα μία therefore recapitulates within itself all of history from beginning to end as metaphorically represented by the creation narrative of Genesis. This is especially made clear when St Basil declared that:

\begin{quote}
... in order to lead our thoughts towards a future life [πρὸς τὴν μέλλουσαν ζωὴν], he [Moses] called that day ‘one,’ which is an image of eternity [μίαν ωνόμασε τοῦ αἰῶνος τὴν εἰκόνα], the contemporary of light, the holy Lord’s day [τὴν ἁγίαν Κυριακήν], the day honoured by the resurrection of the Lord.\footnote{Hexaëmeron 2.8, at 35 (PG 29, 52B).}
\end{quote}

In this passage, Sunday, or Κυριακή, which in Greek literally means the ‘Lord’s day’ associated with the resurrection of Christ, is identified by St Basil with the ἡμέρα μία or “one day” of the creation. Paradoxically, this day leads “our thoughts towards a future life” which means that the ἡμέρα μία, insofar as it recapitulates the historical duration from alpha to omega, anticipates the eschaton from the very beginning. For St Basil, the ἡμέρα μία unfolded through the succession of ages mentioned in Scripture.\footnote{Cf. Hexaëmeron 2.8, at 35.} Taking as a pretext David Bradshaw’s succinct explanation that for Basil eternity is not characteristic of our own experience of time (although Bradshaw did identify, quite rightly, eternity with the present αἰῶν or age in certain Basilian passages),\footnote{Cf. David Bradshaw, ‘Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers,’ The Thomist 70 (2006), 37.} I would like to emphasise that, in this particular context, the notion of the ‘age’ should be distinguished from eternity as such. Two English editions of the Hexaëmeron, the one found in ‘The Fathers of the
Church’ series quoted above and the ‘Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers’ version, translate αἰῶνα as eternity. This is incorrect: the one day, which is the first day of creation, is not to be identified with eternity – which is beyond the creation – on account of the fact that the entire creation process depicted in the seven day period is, for St Basil, framed within this one day. Αἰῶν as a noun, should in this context be translated as ‘age,’ so that when the saint remarked that the designation ‘one day’ has ‘kinship’ to the age, the age itself – which is tantamount to the recapitulation of history – is not confused with eternity. In any case, St Basil noted the symbolic scriptural equivalence of the age and the mystical eighth day of creation:

Scripture presents to us many ages, saying in various places ‘ages of ages,’ still in those places neither the first, nor the second, nor the third age is enumerated for us, so that, by this, differences of conditions and of various circumstances are shown to us, not limits or boundaries and successions of ages. ‘The day of the Lord is great and very terrible,’ it is said. And again, ‘To what end do you seek the day of the Lord? And this is darkness and not light.’ For, Scripture knows a day without evening, without succession, and without end [ἀνέσπερον καὶ ἀδιάδοχον καὶ ἀπελεύθητον], that day which the psalmist called the eighth [OGLEH] because it lies outside this week of time [διὰ τὸ ξιω θεοθα τοῦ ἐβδομαδικοῦ τοῦτου χρόνου]. Therefore, whether you say ‘day’ or ‘age’ you will express the same idea [Ὅστε κἂν ἡμέραν εἴπης, κἂν αἰῶνα, τὴν αὐτὴν ἔρεις έννοιαν].

The ages mentioned frequently in Scripture are not to be viewed in succession. Rather, we are shown “differences of conditions and of various circumstances,” all of which are framed within this one day (ἡμέρα μία) or age (αἰῶν), which, as can be seen above, is somehow related to the eighth

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35 This translation states, at page 35: “Therefore, He called the beginning of time not a ‘first day,’ but ‘one day,’ in order that from the name it might have kinship with eternity.”


37 In the Greek, this is literally expressed as συγγενικῆς ἔχη πρὸς τὸν αἰῶνα (PG 29, 49C).

38 Hexaemeron 2.8, at 35 (PG 29, 49D-52A). One of the troparia of the Paschal resurrection service of the Orthodox Church, for example, exclaims: “Oh Great and Holiest Pascha, Christ! Oh! Wisdom and Word, and Power of God! Grant us a clearer sign, that we may partake of You, in the unwaning Day (τὴ ἀνεπέριφ ἡμέρα) of Your Kingdom.” Greek Orthodox Holy Week and Easter Services, A New English Translation, trans. George L. Papadeas (Florida: Patmos Press, 2007), 456. Here, the resurrection of Christ is depicted as foreshadowing the “unwaning day” or the day “without evening” – the eschaton.
day that exists outside the week of recurrent time. Indeed, the scriptural references to ἡμέρα μία, αἰῶν, the eighth day, and the day of the Lord all seem to “express the same idea”; namely, the recapitulation of the history of creation from beginning to end. There are, however, nuanced distinctions between these designations, especially between the notions of ἡμέρα μία and the eighth day, which St Basil elaborated with reference to the “first day of the week,” 39 that is Sunday, in his On the Holy Spirit. He stated:

... it [τῇ ἁναστάσιμῳ ἡμέρᾳ, the day of resurrection] also seems somehow to be an image of the age to come. On account of this, although it is the beginning of days, Moses names it not “first” but “one.” For it is written, “There was evening, and there was morning, one day” (Gen 1.5), as if the same one often repeated. Now, “One” and “Eighth” are the same, which indicates of itself that the really “one” and true “eighth” – which the Psalmist mentions in some titles of the psalms – are the state after this time [τῇν μετὰ τὸν χρόνον τούτον κατάστασιν], the unceasing, unending, perpetual day, that never-ending and ever-young age. 40

In this passage, there is a more explicit connection between Sunday – the day of the resurrection – and what is simultaneously referred to as both the ἡμέρα μία and the eighth day. Moreover, we are given a clearer indication of the fact that, as the first day of the week, Sunday is simultaneously identified with the one day within which all of creation history is recapitulated and the eighth day that exists outside the “week of time” 41 precisely because the eschaton is included within this recapitulation. In other words, although the one day and the eighth day are indeed inter-related, they refer to two aspects of the same recapitulation of history. Indeed, we can assume that the one day is more closely associated with creation’s beginnings and duration whereas the eighth day points towards its end and consummation in the “the state after this time.” If St Basil identified ἡμέρα μία with αἰῶν as analogous ways of expressing the recapitulation of history symbolised by the seven days of Genesis, then the eighth day, which is beyond the

39 On the Holy Spirit 27.66, trans. Stephen Hildebrand, Popular Patristics Series 42 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), at 106. Literally, the text reads ἐν τῇ μιᾷ τοῦ Σαββάτου, “on the one [day] of the Sabbath,” which once again connotes the ἡμέρα μία (PG 32, 192A). Unless otherwise stated, all references to On the Holy Spirit will be from this translation and will include the chapter, section and page numbers. The Patrologia Graeca will be referenced only when I have included the Greek text, or have translated it myself.

40 On the Holy Spirit 27.66, at 106 (PG 32, 192AB).

41 Hexaemeron 2.8, at 35 (PG 29, 52A).
present αἰῶν, paradoxically remains within the one day and yet ultimately transcends it.

In light of all this, we can safely affirm that the overlapping of days one and eight, like two sides of the same reality, makes the eighth day, the eschaton, present in the here and now; an aspect which is elucidated by St Basil within the framework of his liturgical thought (see below). This means that, despite the fact that the fullness of this eschatological experience will not take place until the end of time, our participation in the eschatological state in the here and now is immediate and direct. In any case, this widening of the spectrum of the already/not yet tension to include the first things as well as the last also implies that this state could have been experienced at the beginning of creation. This was illustrated by St Basil with reference to the first humans in his Homily Explaining that God is Not the Cause of Evil, where he discussed the doctrine of humanity’s creation in the image of God. Adam, “having just then been given life,” was called to participate by free choice in “the enjoyment of eternal life” and “the delights of paradise,” i.e. divine participation. Resting amidst paradise, he became satiated by the blessings of Eden and was led by the devil to the transgression of the commandment of obedience when he ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; a commandment that was put in place so that “we might justly be worthy of the crowns of perseverance.” St Basil stated that this transgression occurred for Adam

... through wicked free choice, and he died through sin. “For the wages of sin is death” [Rom 6.25]. For to the extent that he withdrew from life, he likewise drew near to death. For God is life, and the privation of life is death.

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42 Homily Explaining that God is Not the Cause of Evil 7, trans. Nonna Verna Harrison, in On the Human Condition, Popular Patristics Series 30 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2005), at 74. These homilies are often considered to be spurious, but are acknowledged as Basilian in content by scholars such as Harrison. Cf. Harrison, ‘Introduction,’ in On the Human Condition, 15. Rousseau, for instance, simply takes them for granted as constituting homilies 10 and 11 of the Hexaemeron. Cf. Basil of Caesarea, 324.

43 Peter C. Bouteneff’s monograph on the early Christian readings of Genesis 1-3 contains a section on the Hexaemeron which, whilst giving a concise summary of St Basil’s interpretation of ἡμέρα μία, does not contain any information concerning the Cappadocian’s disposition towards the eschaton or the eighth day, which, as we have seen, was for him recapitulated along with the rest of history within this one day. Cf. Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), 134.

44 Homily Explaining that God is Not the Cause of Evil 9, at 77.

45 Homily Explaining that God is Not the Cause of Evil 7, at 74-75.
We have said in the first section of this article that divine participation is tantamount to the eschatological experience. Adam’s participation in God gave him life, but when he dissociated himself from God, he experienced death as a result of the fall. Returning to the saint’s On the Holy Spirit, we observe that the solution to the problem of death is related to the person and work of Jesus Christ. In the fifteenth chapter, St Basil spoke generally about God’s plan to restore humanity from the fall. For him, the Lord accomplished everything described in the Gospels – his sufferings, the cross, the tomb, and the resurrection – so that humanity might achieve its “original adoption [τὴν ἀρχαίαν ἐκείνην υἱόθεσίαν]” consisting of nothing other than an experience of God (to be considered as tantamount to the eschatological experience) which, according to the saint’s aforementioned homily, was lost by Adam. What is significant, and to be explored in detail below, is that the Cappadocian believed that humanity could only become worthy of this adoption via an imitation of Christ within the sacred ecclesial context.

**St Basil’s Ecclesial Interpretation of Eschatology**

St Basil’s On the Holy Spirit is replete with both tacit and explicit indications that the Church is the proper context for our participation in the eschatological state. In the same chapter fifteen he outlined the twofold function of baptism as an initiation ritual that both destroys sin and death by the immersion in the water, and raises us up to life by the power of the Holy Spirit; “as death is accomplished in the water, our life is worked through the Spirit.” We stated in the introduction that the eschaton has been traditionally associated with the resurrection of the dead. For St Basil, baptism anticipates this resurrection, and should be followed by training based on the Gospel so that Christians can undertake the “resurrectional life” (ἀναστάσεως βίου) which manifests itself as “freedom from anger, the suffering of evil, freedom from the filth of loving pleasure, freedom from the love of money,” i.e. a dispassionate way of life. If Adam’s transgression

46 Cf. On the Holy Spirit 15.35, at 66. Although there is no direct reference to Adam, he is clearly implied in the concept of the fall.

47 Ibid.

48 On the Holy Spirit 15.35, at 68.

49 St Basil affirmed: “The Lord, therefore, in restoring us to the resurrected life [through baptism], sets forth the Gospel’s whole way of life ...”. On the Holy Spirit 15.35, at 68.


led to separation from God – and hence death – the “resurrectional life” inaugurated by Christ and imparted to believers by the Holy Spirit in baptism reverses this because, according to the saint, Christ undertook to be crucified and resurrected so that humanity might receive its “original adoption by imitating Christ” (διὰ μιμήσεως Χριστοῦ). Indeed, the Cappadocian maintained that once Christians begin to imitate Christ’s death and burial in the baptismal font, are raised by the Spirit, and undertake the “resurrectional life,” then those things “which are procured according to nature in the next age” (i.e. aspects pertaining to resurrection), can be “set up by our choosing” *hic et nunc.* In other words, Christians actively and willingly anticipate the eschaton with their initiation into the Church via baptism and by incorporating a way of life that sings forth the resurrection, all of which consist of nothing other than a manifestation of the ‘already’ in the already/not yet tension, otherwise known as realised eschatology.

That this realised eschatology is intrinsically linked to divine participation leading to deification was highlighted by St Basil in his description of the effects of initiation into the Church through baptism, where the Holy Spirit remains “present somehow to those who were once sealed [by baptism] and awaits their salvation by conversion.” Here, St Basil intimated a belief in what we now call the already/not yet tension, but instead of articulating it exclusively with reference to Christ, the pneumatological dimension was also emphasised, pointing clearly to the fact that the Son and the Spirit (and, by implication, the Father with whom they are inseparably united) work together in the eschatological activity of salvation. If the faithful, having been raised by the Holy Spirit in baptism and sealed with him “for the day of redemption” – that is the eschaton – have preserved “undiminished and inviolate the first-fruits which they have received from the Spirit,” then his limited presence in this life will unite the baptised believer completely to God in the life to come, so that “Spirit-bearing souls” ...

... are themselves made spiritual, and they send forth grace to others. Thence comes foreknowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, apprehension of secrets, distributions of graces, heavenly citizen-

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53 PG 32, 132AB (my translation).
ship, the chorus with angels, unending joy, remaining in God, kinship with God, and the highest object of desire, becoming God. \(^58\)

In this passage, participation in the eschatological state, which can be experienced as a foretaste in this life, is shown to be conducive towards not only becoming like God, but becoming God. Elsewhere in his *On the Holy Spirit*, the saint wrote that this union with God can only take place “as much as human nature allows,”\(^59\) thereby intimating the ontological distinction between the uncreated God and created human persons.\(^60\) Baptism and undertaking the “resurrectional life” bring about this immanent anticipation of the eschaton leading to deification, and St Basil seemed to imply that it is the recurrent act of participation in the rhythms of the Church that makes the eschatological state a present reality for believers. This is because for him, the Sunday of the weekly cycle is simultaneously identified with the one day of creation and the eighth day, thus representing an “image of the expected age” (τοῦ προσδοκομένου αἰῶνος εἶναι εἰκῶν).\(^61\) Returning to the themes expounded in his *Hexaemeron*, the saint maintained that Sunday represents both ἡμέρα μία and the eighth day which symbolises “the state after this time, the unceasing, unending, perpetual day, that never-ending and ever-young age.”\(^62\)

Participation in the liturgy hence consists of a proleptic participation in the eschaton that is simultaneously framed within the one day of creation and paradoxically frames creation history within itself as the eighth day.\(^63\) St Basil stated:

> And all of Pentecost is a reminder of the resurrection in the expected age (Καὶ πᾶσα δὲ ἡ πεντηκοστὴ τῆς ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι προσδοκομένης ἀναστάσεως ἐστὶν ὑπόμνημα). For that one and first day (μία ἐκείνη καὶ πρώτῃ ἡμέρᾳ), multiplied seven by seven times, completes the seven weeks of holy Pentecost. Beginning on the first day it ends on the same day, unfolding fifty times through similar days in between.

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\(^{59}\) *On the Holy Spirit* 1.2, at 28.

\(^{60}\) Nevertheless, this participation consists in a real union in the here and now leading to a complete deification at the eschaton, the eighth day, the day of the Lord.

\(^{61}\) PG 32, 192A (my translation).

\(^{62}\) *On the Holy Spirit*, 27.66, at 106.

\(^{63}\) See the previous section of this article.
Therefore it imitates the [expected] age in likeness, insofar as in cyclical motion it begins and ends at the same starting point.⁶⁴

Pentecost, the period immediately following the Lord’s resurrection, reminds us of the resurrection of the “expected age” because the seven week season – with its eight Sundays – begins and ends with the “one and first day” – i.e. a Sunday – which represents the ημέρα μία that frames within itself the creation up to the eschaton. St Basil used the same analogy here as the one he employed in the Hexaemeron; that of a circle beginning and ending upon itself. The eschatological state therefore permeates the liturgical experience of the weekly Sunday liturgy that constitutes an image of the expected age as it is celebrated throughout the year and especially during the period of Pentecost. From this we can infer that the entire liturgical calendar – encompassing every day of the week in its yearly rotation – insofar as it is framed within the one day of creation that contains within itself the eighth day, allows us to participate in the eschaton as an anticipation of the fullness of God’s grace which is yet to come. But the foretaste of the eschaton in our liturgical experience is not just limited to the Sunday or to the cycles of the calendar. In an explication of the place of dogmata – or those teachings “guarded in the Church” (ἐν τῇ Ἑκκλησίᾳ περιφυλαγμένων)⁶⁵ – in his On the Holy Spirit, the Cappadocian explained the existential significance of some symbolic liturgical actions, affirming:

... we all look to the East for prayers, but few know that we seek the ancient fatherland, paradise, which God planted in Eden in the East. We complete our prayers standing on the ’one day of the Sabbath (ἐν τῇ μίᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου, Sunday),’ but not everyone knows why. By standing for prayer on the day of the Resurrection we remind ourselves of the grace we have been given; for not only are we thus resurrected with Christ and bound to seek the things from above, but because it [i.e. Sunday] seems to be an image of the expected age (ὅτι δοκεῖ πως τοῦ προσδοκωμένου αἰώνος εἶναι εἰκών).⁶⁶

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⁶⁴ PG 32, 192BC. Hildebrand translated ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι προσδοκωμένης ἀναστάσεως as “the resurrection to come in eternity.” On the Holy Spirit 27.66, at 106. The previous translation of this text published in the same series, however, renders it as “the resurrection we expect in the age to come.” On the Holy Spirit 27.66, trans. David Anderson, Popular Patristics Series 5 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), at 101. Although αἰῶν can in fact be translated either way, i.e. as either ‘eternity’ or ‘age,’ Anderson’s rendering seems to conform to the saint’s disposition outlined in the body of my article. I have chosen, however, attempt my own translation of the passage so as to bring out nuances relevant to my argument.


⁶⁶ PG 32, 189C-192A (my translation).
St Basil affirmed that even our participation in the symbolic gestures of the liturgy – which can be held on any day of the week – allow us to presently anticipate the eschaton, thereby reinforcing the fact that the eschatological state can be experienced in the here and now within the Church. These gestures include standing for prayer, which leads “our minds from the present to the future,” facing the East – the symbolic location of the Garden of Eden representative of the paradisial life – and also

... every time we bend our knees and rise again, we show by this work, that through sin we have fallen to the earth, and through his love for humanity, our creator has called us up to heaven.

In the original language the past tense is used for “has called us up to heaven” – εἰς οὐρανόν ἀνεκλήθημεν – because Christ, by his resurrection, has already re-established the potential for deification which can be variously described as our reconstitution into heaven, paradise, the eighth day, and is hence tantamount to the eschatological state that has not yet been consummated.

Conclusion

For St Basil, the last things are harmoniously related to the first things, teleology is contained within and precipitated by protology. In his writings, the eschaton – the future life – is anticipated by and included within the ημέρα μία of creation simultaneously identified with Κυριακή (the Lord’s day), the present αἰών, and the eighth day, which is included within and yet ultimately transcends the recapitulation of history (and, by extension, all things) within day one. Consequently, the eighth day, as posited by the Cappadocian, becomes a hermeneutical key for a proper understanding of the already/not yet tension. Far from being limited to the historical duration between Christ’s first and second comings, the eschaton – expressing the fullness of the kingdom that has come in Christ and is to be consummated upon his return – was initiated by God at the beginning of time. This means that, insofar as it is encompassed by day one, the eschaton itself frames the entire history of creation from beginning to end as a reality that can be experienced in any epoch. In fact, it was on account of this mysterious anticipation of the eschaton at the beginning of creation that Adam, through divine participation leading to deification, paradoxically experienced it be-

68 PG 32, 192C (my translation).
fore the fall. Although lost to humanity because of the old Adam’s transgression, this deifying foretaste was re-established by the “last Adam”\textsuperscript{69} within the Church and will be consummated at his second coming. Thus, in this cosmological interpretation, the person of Christ remains central to a proper understanding of eschatology without it becoming relegated to the historical interim between his first and second advents; between the past inauguration of the kingdom and its future consummation. Instead, what we perceive with St Basil’s cosmological interpretation is the dynamic movement of the eschatological experience from day one to the establishment of the Church in Christ, the members of which actively anticipate its consummation on the last day.

This cosmological interpretation informed St Basil’s ecclesial view of the eschaton, where he repeatedly indicated that the Church remains the proper domain for our participation in the eschatological reality. Initiation into the Church through baptism anticipates the life to come, allowing Christians, who have been raised from death by the Holy Spirit, to manifest the resurrectional life. Indeed, the reception of the Holy Spirit through baptism endows one with the potential for deification, which begins in this life but will not be consummated until the last things. Hence, the work of the Son is related to the work of the Spirit, both of whom are one with the Father, meaning that the eschatological vision of the saint is entirely consonant with the Church’s experience of God as Trinity. But despite the real potential for becoming like God facilitated by baptism, St Basil emphasised the need for recurrent participation in the liturgy in order for this divine participation – as a foretaste of the eschaton – to become a concrete reality for each and every Christian. This is because the liturgical calendar imitates the entire eschatological scheme in all its complexity. Sunday liturgies, for example, are significant because they occur on the Lord’s day, the day of resurrection, and as such constitute an image of the life to come. Moreover, the entire liturgical calendar, including all of its feasts and cycles, insofar as it is framed – along with the historical duration from alpha to omega – by ἡμέρα μία, constitutes a foretaste of the eighth day on whichever day the liturgy is celebrated. For St Basil, even the symbolic gestures of the liturgy, such as standing and facing the East, already point towards the consummation of all things in God that has not yet taken place.

Such a thoroughly eschatological interpretation of the liturgy indicates that the saint was profoundly influenced by its rhythms that informed not only his ecclesial interpretation of eschatology, but also his insight into tra-

\textsuperscript{69} Florovsky, ‘The Patristic Age and Eschatology: An Introduction,’ 64.
ditional cosmology. Although we have shown that St Basil’s cosmological interpretation of the eschaton acts as a framework for the ecclesial one, it is precisely his experience of the liturgy – as a bishop and shepherd – that contributed to his articulation of the former as the proper context for the latter; the homiletic nature of the *Hexaemeron* must not be forgotten. In any case, the significance of the Cappadocian’s eschatological cosmology lies in the fact that it is predominantly existential, indicating that it is in the Church – in our experience of her mysteries and her liturgical feasts – that we participate in a reality beyond our finite human condition and are given the promise that if we continue to walk the path of the resurrectional life, then the foretaste of the kingdom that we receive in the present will, in the age to come, be entirely consummated in our own persons.