

ST BASIL'S ESCHATOLOGICAL VISION: ASPECTS OF THE RECAPITULATION OF HISTORY AND THE 'EIGHTH DAY'

Mario Baghos

Abstract: Throughout his writings, St Basil the Great puts forward a holistic eschatological vision whereby the glorious transfiguration of the world at the end of time was already precipitated on the very first day of the creation. This paper expounds upon various modern approaches to the concept of the *eschaton* 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. Of course, this recapitulation includes within itself the 'eighth day,' traditionally understood as paradoxically transcending the seven days of creation and thereby identified with the eschatological state. It then seeks to expound upon the existential dimension of the eschatological state, the proper domain of which, for St Basil, was the life of the Church.

Before anything can be said about St Basil the Great's multifaceted eschatological vision, the notion of eschatology as it is conventionally understood must be briefly delineated. Deriving from the Greek adjective *ἔσχατος* (or *τα ἔσχατα* as a noun in the plural tense),¹ 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 in the Church by Christ (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 'last things' (thereby constituting a 'future' eschatology).

The kingdom of God, which is tantamount to a participation in God's 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 of Christ's final judgment of humanity, the resurrection of the dead and the final 'transformation of the cosmos.'² It is important to mention, however, that our present participation in this *eschaton* consists of a mere anticipation or foretaste of the fullness of God's grace that is to fill 'all in all' at the 'last things'.³

This paper will therefore distinguish between the *eschaton* as a future event which has not yet taken place and the eschatological state or mode characteristic of these last things which has already been inaugurated and can for this reason be experienced in the here-and-now. The latter refers to a state of being that is variously described as the kingdom of God/heaven, paradise, eternal life, etc., but which ultimately consists of nothing other than divine participation. The late Fr Georges Florovsky, a pioneer of Patristic scholarship in the 20th Century, gave a detailed description of the already/not yet tension.⁴ With reference to the historical advent of Jesus Christ he affirmed:

The 'end' had 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.⁵

Florovsky used the language of the Gospels in order to articulate his view of the *eschaton*,⁶ which frames 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, is 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.’⁷ This view of eschatology, although doing 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,⁸ when compared to St Basil’s eschatological vision, appears to be reductionist because it circumscribes the eschatological mode to the historical duration between Christ’s first and second comings. It is precisely this which has prompted an exploration of the traditional disposition towards the doctrine as reflected in the writings of the great Cappadocian.

When discussing St Basil’s eschatological vision, it is important to keep in mind that he never intended to articulate a coherent or systematic view of the doctrine. His view of the *eschaton*, inferred from works such as his *Hexaemeron*,⁹ has perhaps been best summarised by Philip Rousseau, who affirmed that although St Basil believed in the termination of the historical process which he envisaged was followed by a transformation of the entire cosmos,¹⁰ this transfiguration – which the saint identified with the ‘eighth day’¹¹ – would have ‘an affinity with the character of the first creation.’¹² This was because St Basil believed that the first day of creation in the Genesis narrative was an ‘everlasting day’¹³ (or the *ἡμέρα μία*, day ‘one’)¹⁴ that contained within itself all of history from alpha to omega. St Basil hence offers a cosmological interpretation of eschatology,¹⁵ which, far from being relegated to the interval between Christ’s first and second comings, 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 him, the mode of being which is to prevail at the ‘last days’ could be experienced as a foretaste in the here-and-now within the sacred liturgical context of the Church. More specifically, the eschatological state or mode of being that could be experienced in the Church was for him tantamount to the process of deification wrought by divine participation.

Contemporary scholarship has had very little to say concerning St Basil’s eschatology.¹⁶ When it has, the clear link between his cosmological interpretation of the *eschaton* – summed up by the ‘everlasting day of creation’¹⁷ or the *ἡμέρα μία* – and the ecclesial interpretation – which

consists of our participation in the divine mysteries (or, sacraments) and the life of the Church leading to deification – has not been fully adduced from his works. To begin with, this paper will attempt to demonstrate that St Basil's cosmological interpretation of the *eschaton* stands as a holistic corrective to the notion of the already/not yet tension as propounded by modern scholars, extending it to the beginning of creation.

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 *eschaton*. This paper, after delivering the cosmological interpretation, will illustrate St Basil's insights concerning the potential for deification which was lost by the first humans but which was reconstituted by Christ in the Church. This will lead into the next section, which will put forward St Basil's ecclesial interpretation of the *eschaton* with specific reference to initiation into the Church via baptism and participation in the recurrent liturgies of the Church calendar; all of which he considered conducive towards deification (which he articulated with specific reference to the Holy Spirit) insofar as they are framed and conditioned by the 'everlasting day of creation' that contains within itself the *eschaton*.

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 expounded upon Genesis 1:5: 'And there was evening and morning, one day.'¹⁸ At the beginning of his interpretation, St Basil asked:

Why did he [Moses] say 'one' and not 'first'? 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.'¹⁹

The Cappadocian's exposition is based on his observation that Scripture calls the first day of creation 'one day' – *ἡμέρα μία* – instead of the 'first' – *πρώτη ἡμέρα* – in a succession of days.²⁰ He affirmed 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 [...]. In fact, it is also characteristic of eternity to turn back upon itself and never to be brought to an end.²¹

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 (*εἰκόνα*) of eternity.²² This led St Basil to stipulate that Scripture calls the beginning of time *ἡμέρα 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.

With regards to the recapitulation of the seven days of Genesis within the *ἡμέρα 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 twenty-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 point²³ once more occurs in one day; so that, as often as through the revolution of the sun evening and morning traverse the world, the circle is completed,²⁴ not in a longer period of time, but in the space of one day.²⁵

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:

... in order to lead our thoughts towards a future life, he [Moses] called that day 'one,' which is an image of eternity, the contemporary of light, the holy Lord's day, the day honoured by the resurrection of the Lord.²⁶

In this passage, Sunday, or Κυριακή, which in Greek literally means the Lord's day and came to be associated with the resurrection of Christ, is identified by St Basil with the one day of creation. Paradoxically, this day leads 'our thoughts towards a future life'²⁷ which means that *ἡμέρα μία* – the 'everlasting day of creation' – insofar as it recapitulates the historical duration from alpha to omega, anticipates the *eschaton* from the very beginning. For St Basil, the *ἡμέρα μία* unfolds through the succession of ages mentioned in Scripture. It must be emphasised, however, that the notion of the 'age' should be distinguished from eternity as such. Two English editions of the *Hexameron*, the one found in 'The Fathers of the Church' series²⁸ quoted above and the 'Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers',²⁹ version, translate *αἰῶνα* as eternity. This is erroneous: the one day, which is the first day of creation, is not to be identified with that which is beyond the creation (i.e., eternity) on account of the fact that the entire creation process depicted in the seven day period is framed within this one day. *Αἰῶν* as a noun, should in this context be translated as 'age,' so that when the saint remarks that the designation 'one day' has 'kinship' to the age,³⁰ the age itself – which is tantamount to the recapitulation of history – is not confused with eternity.³¹ 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, that day which the psalmist called the eighth because it lies outside this week of time. Therefore, whether you say 'day' or 'age' you will express the same idea.³²

The ages mentioned frequently in Scripture are not to be viewed in succession. Rather, we are shown 'differences of conditions and of various circumstances',³³ all of which are framed within this one day (*ἡμέρα μία*)³⁴ or

age (αἰῶν),³⁵ which is somehow related to the eighth 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 point towards the same thing; 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 upon in his *On the Holy Spirit*.³⁶ He stated:

... Sunday seems to be an image of the age to come. Notice that although Sunday is the beginning of days, Moses does not call it the first day, but one day (ἡμέρα μία): ‘And there was evening and there was morning, one day,’ since this day would recur many times. Therefore ‘one’ and ‘eight’ are the same, and the ‘one’ day really refers both to itself and to the ‘eighth’ day. Even the Psalmist follows this usage in certain titles of the psalms. This day foreshadows the state which is to follow the present age.³⁷

In this passage, there is a more explicit connection between Sunday – the Lord’s day – 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 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’³⁸ 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 all history. Indeed, we can assume that the one day – referring both ‘to itself and the eighth day’³⁹ – is more closely associated with creation’s beginnings and duration whereas the eighth day points towards its end and consummation in the ‘state which is to follow the present age.’⁴⁰ If St Basil identifies ἡμέρα μία with αἰῶν as synonymous ways of expressing the recapitulation of history symbolised by the seven days of Genesis, then the eighth day, which is to ‘follow the present age’⁴¹ or αἰῶν, paradoxically remains within the one day and yet ultimately transcends it.⁴²

Indeed, 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 elaborated upon by St Basil within the framework of his liturgical thought (see below). Despite this, our participation in the

eschatological state in the here-and-now can therefore only be a foretaste or anticipation of the consummation of all things at the end of time. In any case, this widening of the spectrum of the already/not yet tension to include the first things as well as the last implies that the eschatological state or mode could have been experienced at the beginning of creation also. This is 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 by free choice to participate in 'the enjoyment of eternal life' and 'the delights of paradise,'⁴³ that is, divine participation.⁴⁴ 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.'⁴⁵ St Basil stated that this transgression caused Adam to sin

... 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.⁴⁶

We have said in the introduction 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 *On the Holy Spirit*, we observe that the solution to the problem of death is related to the work and person of Jesus Christ. In the fifteenth chapter,⁴⁷ St Basil spoke generally about God's plan to 'recall man from the fall.' For him, Jesus Christ accomplished everything described in the Gospels – his sufferings, the cross, the tomb, and the resurrection – so that humanity might achieve its 'original adoption'⁴⁸ 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 of an ecclesial interpretation of eschatology which denotes 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 which both destroys sin and death by the immersion in the water and raises us up to life by the power of the Holy Spirit; 'the water accomplishes our death, while the Spirit raises us to life.'⁴⁹ 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,⁵⁰ and should be followed by training based on the Gospel so that Christians can undertake the 'resurrectional life' (*ἀναστάσεως βίου*)⁵¹ which manifests itself as 'gentleness, endurance, freedom from the defiling love of pleasure, and from covetousness.'⁵² If Adam's transgression 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 be saved through imitation of Christ and receive its original adoption.'⁵³ Indeed, the Cappadocian maintains that once Christians began to imitate Christ's death and burial in the baptismal font, were raised by the Spirit, and undertook the 'resurrectional life,' they had to become 'determined to acquire in this life all the qualities of the life to come.'⁵⁴ In other words, Christians 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 is highlighted by St Basil in his description of the effects of initiation into the Church through baptism:

At present, before the day of judgment comes, even though the Spirit cannot dwell within those who are unworthy, He nevertheless is present in a limited way with those who have been baptised, hoping that their conversion will result in salvation.⁵⁵

Here, St Basil intimated a belief in what we now call the already/not yet tension: 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 the fruits of the Spirit which they received,'⁵⁶ then the limited presence of the Spirit which they have in this life as an anticipation of the fullness of God's grace will unite the baptised believer completely to God in the life to come, so that:

... Spirit-bearing souls, illumined by Him, finally become spiritual themselves, and their grace is sent forth to others. From this comes knowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, apprehension of hidden things, distribution of wonderful gifts, heavenly citizenship, a place in the choir of angels, endless joy in the presence of God, becoming like God, and, the highest of all desires, becoming God.⁵⁷

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 *On the Holy Spirit*, the saint wrote that this union with God could only take place 'as far as it is possible for human nature,'⁵⁸ thereby intimating the ontological distinction between the uncreated God and created human persons. Nevertheless, this participation consists of a real union in the here-and-now leading to a complete deification at the *eschaton*, the eighth day, the day of the Lord.

Although baptism and undertaking the 'resurrectional life' constitute an anticipation and foretaste of the *eschaton* leading to deification, St Basil seems 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 age to come.'⁵⁹ Returning to the themes adumbrated in his *Hexameron*, the saint maintained that Sunday represents both ἡμέρα μία and the eighth day which 'foreshadows the state which is

to follow the present age: a day without sunset, nightfall, or successor, an age which does not grow old or come to an end.⁶⁰ Participation in the liturgy hence consists of a proleptic participation in the *eschaton* which is simultaneously framed within the one day of creation and frames creation history within itself as the eighth day.⁶¹ St Basil stated:

The entire season of Pentecost is likewise a reminder of the resurrection we expect in the age to come. If we count that one day, the first of days, and then multiply it seven times seven, we will have completed the seven weeks of holy Pentecost, and the season ends on the same day it began (Sunday) with fifty days having elapsed. Therefore this season is an image of eternity, since it begins and ends at the same point, like a circle.⁶²

Pentecost, the period immediately following the Lord's resurrection, reminds us of the resurrection of the age to come because the seven week season – with its eight Sundays – begins and ends with a Sunday which represents the *ἡμέρα 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 which constitutes an image of eternity 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 'reserved to members of the household of the faith'⁶³ – within the tradition of the Church in his *On the Holy Spirit*, the Cappadocian expounded upon some symbolic liturgical actions, affirming:

For instance, we all pray facing East, but few realize that we do this because we are seeking Paradise, our old fatherland, which God planted in the East of Eden. We all stand for prayer on Sunday, but not everyone knows why. We stand for prayer on the day of the Resurrection to remind ourselves of the graces we have been given: not only because we have been raised with

Christ and are obliged to seek the things that are above, but also because Sunday seems to be an image of the age to come.⁶⁴

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, which ‘makes our mind to focus on the future instead of the present,’⁶⁵ facing the East – the symbolic location of the Garden of Eden representative of the paradisiacal life – and also:

... every time we bend our knees for prayer and then rise again, we show by this action that through sin we fell down to the earth, but our Creator, the Lover of Mankind, has called us back to heaven.⁶⁶

In the original text the past tense is used for ‘he called us back to heaven’ – εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀνεκλήθημεν⁶⁷ – because Christ, by his resurrection, has already re-established the potential for divine participation 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 *eschaton*, 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 to be anticipated and included within the *ἡμέρα μία* of creation simultaneously identified with *Κυριακή* (the Lord’s day), the present *αἰὼν*, 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 was

encompassed by day one, the *eschaton* itself frames the entire history of creation from beginning to end as a reality which 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 before the fall. This deifying foretaste, though lost to humanity because of the first Adam's transgression, was re-established by the 'last Adam',⁶⁸ within the Church and will be consummated at his second coming. Thus, in this cosmological interpretation, the person of Jesus Christ remains central to a proper understanding of eschatology without 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 is a dynamic movement of the *eschaton* 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 interpretation 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 which will not be consummated until the last things. 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 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 indicate the consummation of all things in God which has not yet taken place.

Such a thorough eschatological interpretation of the liturgy indicates that the saint was profoundly influenced by its rhythms which informed not only his ecclesial interpretation of eschatology, but also his insight into traditional 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 which 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 with 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 as an anticipation in the here-and-now will be consummated at the *eschaton* in our own persons.

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NOTES:

¹ Cf. G.W.H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 551.

- ² St Basil refers to the ‘transformation of the cosmos’ (μεταποιηθῆναι τὸν κόσμον) throughout his homilies on the six days of creation. See e.g. *Hexaemeron* 1.4, PG 29, 12C.
- ³ See 1 Corinthians 15:28: ‘When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.’
- ⁴ David S. Dockery’s description of this already/not yet tension generally represents the consensus amongst many contemporary scholars, describing it as an ‘intermediate interval between Christ’s resurrection and second coming. 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.
- ⁵ Georges Florovsky, ‘The Patristic Age and Eschatology: An Introduction,’ in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, Volume Four: Aspects of Church History* (Vaduz: Buchervertriebsanstalt, 1987), 64.
- ⁶ In order to indicate the importance that this great writer placed on eschatology, one need not look further than his article ‘The Patristic Age and Eschatology: An Introduction.’ Here, Florovsky declared: ‘For indeed 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.
- ⁷ *Ibid*, 64.
- ⁸ Examples of contemporary scholarship’s preoccupation with the ‘end times’ can be found in the writings of Richard Landes, who places a heavy emphasis on the notion of the catastrophic ‘end of the world’ without 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): 49-50.
- ⁹ *Hexaemeron* comes from the Greek word Ἑξάήμερον and literally means ‘six days.’
- ¹⁰ *Hexaemeron* 1.4, PG 29, 12C.
- ¹¹ *Hexaemeron* 2.8, in St Basil, *Exegetical Homilies*, The Fathers of the Church Series, Vol. 46, trans. Sister Agnes Clare Way (Washington D.C: The Catholic

University of American Press, 2003). All subsequent references to the English texts of both the *Hexaemeron* and *On the Holy Spirit* will include the chapter and section (e.g. *Hexaemeron* 2.8, *On the Holy Spirit*, 27.66). Moreover, references to *Patrologia Graeca* appear when the original Greek has been consulted.

¹² Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 335.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 335.

¹⁴ *Hexaemeron* 1.2, PG 29, 49A.

¹⁵ 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 worldview.

¹⁶ It must be emphasised that there is a significant lack of secondary source material on St Basil's view of eschatology. It is for this reason that this paper refers mostly to the primary texts.

¹⁷ P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 335.

¹⁸ The Greek reads, *καὶ ἐγένετο ἑσπέρα, καὶ ἐγένετο πρωί, ἡμέρα μία*. *Hexaemeron* 2.8, PG 29, 49A. This is taken directly from the Septuagint text. Cf. *Septuaginta*, Volumen 1 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1982), 1.

¹⁹ *Hexaemeron* 2.8.

²⁰ In the original Greek text, the observation reads: *Τίνος ἕνεκεν οὐκ εἶπε πρώτην, ἀλλὰ μίαν*. *Hexaemeron* 2.8, PG 29, 49A.

²¹ *Hexaemeron* 2.8.

²² The Greek reads: *μίαν ὠνόμασε τοῦ αἰῶνος τὴν εἰκόνα*. *Hexaemeron* 2.8, PG 29, 52B.

²³ The Greek reads: *ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ σημείου ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πάλιν ἀποκατάστασις ἐν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ γίνεται*. *Hexaemeron* 2.8, PG 29, 49B.

²⁴ *Hexaemeron* 2.8., PG 29, 49B.

²⁵ *Hexaemeron* 2.8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.8. The name of Moses added.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.8.

- ²⁸ This translation states, at page 34: ‘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’ (emphasis added).
- ²⁹ Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Volume 8: *Basil: Letters and Selected Works*, trans. Blomfield Jackson, Phillip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995). This translation states, at page 64: ‘If then the beginning of time is called ‘one day’ rather than ‘the first day,’ it is because Scripture wishes to establish its relationship with eternity’ (emphasis added).
- ³⁰ Cf. *Hexaemeron* 2.8. In the Greek, this is literally expressed as συγγενές ἔχει πρὸς τὸν αἰῶνα. PG 29, 49D.
- ³¹ For more information on St Basil’s disposition towards eternity cf. David Bradshaw, ‘Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers,’ *The Thomist* 70 (2006): 336-337.
- ³² *Hexaemeron* 2.8. The Greek text of the sentence beginning with ‘For, Scripture’ quoted above reads: Ἐπεὶ ἀνέσπερον καὶ ἀδιάδοχον καὶ ἀτελεύτητον τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην οἶδεν ὁ λόγος, ἦν καὶ ὀγδόην ὁ Υἱαὸς ἡμῶν προσηγόρευσε, διὰ τὸ ἔξω κείσθαι τοῦ ἑβδομαδικοῦ τούτου χρόνου. PG 29, 52A. The day ‘without evening’ – ἀνέσπερον – appears often in the hymnography of the Orthodox Church as a metaphor for the *eschaton*. One of the *troparia* of the Paschal resurrection service, 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* (τῆ ἀνεσπέρω ἡμέρα; emphasis added) 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*.
- ³³ *Hexaemeron* 2.8.
- ³⁴ *Hexaemeron* 2.8., PG 29, 49A.
- ³⁵ *Hexaemeron* 2.8., PG 29, 49C.
- ³⁶ Cf. St Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* 27.66, in *Popular Patristics Series*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimr’s Seminary Press, 2001).
- ³⁷ *On the Holy Spirit*, 27.66.
- ³⁸ *Hexaemeron* 2.8.
- ³⁹ *On the Holy Spirit*, 27.66.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 27.66.

⁴¹ Ibid, 27.66. (emphasis added).

⁴² It is precisely for this reason that we call it the eighth day.

⁴³ St Basil the Great, 'Homily Explaining that God is Not the Cause of Evil' 7, in *On the Human Condition*, trans. Sister Nonna Verna Harrison, Popular Patristics Series (Crestwood NY: SVS Press, 2005). These homilies are often considered to be spurious, but are acknowledged as Basilean in their content by scholars such as Harrison. Ibid, 15. Rousseau, for example, simply takes them for granted as constituting homilies 10 and 11 of the *Hexaemeron*. Cf. P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 324.

⁴⁴ 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, is bereft of any information concerning the Cappadocian's disposition towards the *eschaton* or the eighth day, which, for the saint, was recapitulated along with the rest of history within this one day. Cf. Peter C. Bouteneff, *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), 134.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 9. See the whole context, pages 74-77.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 7.

⁴⁷ Cf. *On the Holy Spirit*, 15.35. Although there is no direct reference to Adam, he is clearly implied in the concept of the fall.

⁴⁸ *On the Holy Spirit* 35, PG 32, 128D. The final phrase in the original text reads τὴν ἀρχαίαν ἐκέλευεν υιοθεσιαν. The rendering 'original adoption' is hence more consistent with the Greek than the rendition given in the Popular Patristic Series, which translates it as 'original birthright.' *On the Holy Spirit*, 15.35.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ St Basil affirms: 'The Lord describes in the Gospel the pattern of life we must be trained to follow after the (baptismal) resurrection.' *On the Holy Spirit*, 15.35.

⁵¹ *On the Holy Spirit* 15.35, PG 32, 132A.

⁵² *On the Holy Spirit*, 15.35.

⁵³ *On the Holy Spirit* 15.35, PG 32, 128D.

⁵⁴ *On the Holy Spirit*, 15.35.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 16.40.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 9.23.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 1.2.

⁵⁹ *On the Holy Spirit*, 27.66.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ See the previous section of this article.

⁶² *On the Holy Spirit*, 27.66. The word ‘eternity’ should be read as ‘age.’

⁶³ *On the Holy Spirit*, 27.66.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 27.66.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ *On the Holy Spirit* 66, PG 32, 192C.

⁶⁸ G. Florovsky, ‘The Patristic Age and Eschatology: An Introduction,’ 64.

Mario Baghos is a PhD candidate in Ancient History at Macquarie University having achieved First Class Honours during his undergraduate theological studies. He is the recipient of three prestigious Sydney College of Divinity awards for academic excellence and a doctoral scholarship from Macquarie. He is associate teacher in Church History at St Andrew’s Greek Orthodox Theological College and his research interests include the notion of the *polis*, the history and philosophy of mentalities, and both traditional and non-traditional eschatology.
