

Exegetic Homilies Basil Homily 1 CLEANED

St. Basil: Exegetic-homilies Basil Homily 1 HOMILY 1 Creation of the Heavens and the Earth (On the Hexaemeron) "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." An appropriate beginning for anyone who intends to form the world is to first mention the source and the orderly arrangement of visible things. The creation of heavens and earth did not happen spontaneously, as some but originated from God. Who is worthy to hear this narrative? The soul must be prepared, free from the passions of the flesh and undisturbed by worldly cares, dedicated to the pursuit of understanding and ready to receive a worthy concept. Before analyzing these words, consider who is speaking. Even if we cannot match the depth of Moses due to our intellect, we should respect his authority and accept his words. Moses, who as a child was found in the Nile and raised by Pharaoh's daughter among the wise of Egypt, chose affliction with his own people over royal luxury. Demonstrating love for justice, and before becoming a leader, he acted against wickedness. Banished, he helped, he withdrew to contemplation for forty years. At eighty, Moses saw God as closely as humanly possible, as God Himself testified: "I spoke mouth to mouth: and plainly, and not by riddles." Thus, he made himself worthy of seeing God face to face, and he learned directly from God, not in persuasive human language with the teachings of the Spirit aimed at the salvation of listeners. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." What should be said first? Should one refute the heathens or proclaim the truth? Greek philosophers wrote much about nature, but their ideas always overthrew themselves and remained stable. Therefore, there is no need to refute them; they cancel each other out. Unable to recognize God, some attributed creation to material origins, to elements, or to atoms and indivisible particles. They believed that combinations and separations of these produced creation and decay, with stronger unions causing durable things and flimsy, as those who offer them failed to say, "In the beginning God created the heavens and earth." They instead imagined the universe was without guide or rule, borne along by chance. To prevent such error, the account of creation opens by enlightening the mind with the name of God: "In the beginning God created." The word "beginning" shows that it was not eternal; "created" displays the Creator's power who shapes anything by will and ability, bringing the world into existence as easily as a potter forms vessels without exhausting his power. If the world has a beginning, it also will have an end. There should be no doubt: things begun in time end in time. If there is an end in all the study of geometry, arithmetic and astronomy, if, in the end, creation is mistakenly considered co-eternal with God? Those who believe the material the same as the infinite and invisible Creator cannot understand the truth that parts susceptible to change in the whole are as well. Some, lacking understanding, even declared that heaven is co-existent with God, or that it is itself God, or responsible for the order of every

particular thing. Such opinions only increase their condemnation though know much created things, they cannot comprehend the Creator or the judgments that determine the course of Astronomers, observing the stars and heavenly zones, have not learned that God is the Creator and Just Judge understood that the world must be renewed if souls too are to have a new form of life. As present life matches the future existence of souls will correspond with its future state. Instead, they mock when we teach of the world and regeneration of life. Since the beginning naturally precedes what comes after it, the narrative begins: "In the beginning, He created." There existed something before this world, understandable by contemplation but not to beginners. This state proper to the supernatural powers: eternal, without beginning or end a realm in which God spiritual and invisible natures, order, and spiritual creatures beyond our powers to name. These fill the invisible world. When it was necessary to create a world for the training and education of souls, a dwelling place of all changeable things. With this, time itself began: always advancing, never pausing. Such is the nature of time past vanishes, its future is not yet, and its present is barely perceived. All created things are in motion, always growing or fading. The account continues: "In the beginning, he created." Here "beginning" refers to the existence of visible creatures after the invisible. A first movement is also called a beginning, as in, "The beginning of a good way is to just and also as the foundation of a house or the keel of a ship, as in, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In these ways, the word "beginning" fits every stage: as the moment of first movement, the foundation, or the origin. Consider when the world began by tracking backward from now. At a certain point, the heavens and earth were foundation stones. The world was created for some useful purpose, a training ground for rational souls, to guide men from visible things to contemplation of the invisible. For, as the Apostle says, "Since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood through the things that are made." Or perhaps "In the beginning he created" refers to the instantaneous, timeless act of creation, since the beginning is indivisible and an immeasurable beginning of time is not yet time, nor even a part of it. The creation happened immediately, will of God. Among arts, some are creative, some practical, some theoretical. Theoretical arts aim at action of the mind practical at motion of the body, and creative arts leave behind works even after the action is over. So it is with the worldcraft for contemplation, revealing the wisdom of its creator. Moses said, "In the beginning he created," produced" or fashioned," affirming a deliberate act by the Creator, not a shadow or byproduct. The world did exist by its own power but was made by the will of the Good, the Wise, the Powerful. "He created the heavens and the earth." By men extremes, Moses meant the whole: everything between earth was made at that time. The elements fire, water, air for water and fire exist in the earth, as shown by wells and by friction from stone or iron; air is shown by vapor from moist earth warmed by the sun. The heaven above, and the earth, below by naming the furthest apart, all intermediate implied. Exploring the nature of all that exists

would require endless words, but for faith's sake, one need not be curious about the substance of the heavens or earth. Isaiah said simply, "He established the heavens as if the heavens are of a delicate, not dense, nature. As for their form: "He stretches out the heavens as a ceiling." the same to the earth do not exhaust yourself seeking its foundation or the nature of its substance. Remove all its qualities color, cold, density, weight and nothing remains. So do not seek to know what supports earth's weight as air, it is too light to support the earth. If you guess water, how does it support the heavier earth above? If you posit another body, you must always seek a further base, leading to endless speculation. The safest is to admit that things are kept in place by the power of the Creator: "In the hand of God are all the ends of the earth." This is so for our minds and most beneficial to listeners. Some explain the earth's immovability by its central position being equally distant from all sides so as not to incline to any one side. The earth "naturally" occupies the center as the natural place for heavy things, while lighter things move outward. The earth cannot fall, as nature obliges it to remain in its place. If this seems plausible, admire wisdom of God who ordered it this way. Even understanding how something happens does not diminish marvel. But even if not all theories convince you, let faith be stronger than reason. As with the heavens: philosophers have argued that they are made of the four elements or posited a "fifth" for that moves in a circle, not straight arguing that different kinds of motion require different substances. Every new theory overturns the last, but each only reveals human limitation. Rather than arguing substance, as Moses' teaching created the heavens and the earth." Glorify the Master Craftsman for His wisdom and see the beauty of visible things as an idea of the One more beautiful; from the greatness of created things, contemplate the infinite, immense Creator, who surpasses all understanding. Even the most acute mind is at a loss when trying to explain the least thing in the world or give due praise to the Creator. To Him belong all glory, honor, and power forever. Amen[1].