Hexaemeron
by
Gregory of Nyssa[1]

[**M.61**] What are you doing, O man of God? Why do you challenge us, having rebuked us as cowardly, and why are you bring these charges against us, not only regard to what is impossible, but in my opinion, to charge us with something of which we are not guilty? According to divine inspiration with regard to the world's creation about which the great Moses had philosophized, what on the surface seem as mere letters and as contradictory you have enjoined us to study its development in order to understand its progression as well as to show how Holy Scripture is in agreement. Furthermore, we have access to that divinely inspired study by our father [Basil the Great] whose exposition everyone treasures as not being inferior to what Moses had taught. I am quite certain that these people are correct because he who has this faculty resembles a grain from an ear of corn; although [Basil] was not this ear, he had the power to change into something great and beautiful and be endowed with a form with many facets. Should anyone maintain that the great Moses' voice can be explained through the distinguished Basil [**M.64**] by having a clearer understanding--for the teacher's few words effect an increase--such appropriate utterances derive from a lofty philosophy; it is not the ear but the tree according to which the kingdom of heaven was compared, that is, a mustard seed. It increases in the heart through cultivation so that in every place its teaching spreads on all sides; in place of branches it imparts dogmas and piety which reach on high so that lofty, sublime souls which the Gospel calls birds of heaven can nest in its great branches [cf. Mt 13.31]. The nest resembles the soul; having assented to what it seeks, the restless mind's instability whose flight can easily be deceived now rests within itself. How, then, can such a tree whose wood composed of words plant small twigs in our mind? Is it not you who requests this of me who never contradicts the teaching of our father and teacher? But skilled farmers marvel at the variety of fruits in one plant, the result of cultivation. For example, a short leaf on another tree has its bark removed at the base while another larger plant accommodates a certain measure of bark which had been cut in order that its natural moisture may let it develop into a branch. I take this example of a short sprout whose juice had been stirred up by the wisdom of our wise teacher and will attempt to manifest that branch. Although it has already been planted, it is my responsibility to water it. I believe it is good to perceive the intent of the six days (hexaemeron) of creation where clear knowledge with regard to the sun is lacking, that is, this luminous body is not mentioned along with the rest of the stars after three days. We are unable to distinguish the measure of day by morning and evening unless the sun had set and had risen at dawn.

Since the creation of the two heavens is not mentioned when the Apostle speaks of

[1]As far as I know, the critical edition to this text is not yet available. The current translation is from J.P. Migne's **Patrologia Graeca**, volume 44, columns 61-124 (Paris, 1858). Scriptural references follow those of Migne's text. For the most part, I have retained the paragraphs of this text which are somewhat long.

the third heaven [cf. 2Cor 12.2], there remains some doubt as to it because in the beginning one heaven existed [cf. Gen 1.1] and after this the firmament, another heaven which forms a second creation. Unless Moses wrote without proof that a third heaven exists in addition to the two, neither did anything exist after the firmament's creation nor did he admit the principle of a beginning as preceding anything older, for in the beginning it consisted of the heavens, making it clear that creation began afterwards. The beginning is not spoken of as though another principle had existed, for its order is secondary and not the beginning, hence, the reason for not being mentioned. Yet Paul allude to a third heaven [**M.65**] which creation lacks and where the mention of the second heaven is sought. To me, these and similar matters seem the object of our father's teaching when he spoke to a large audience present in this church and made provision for them to receive his message. Among the many listeners were some who grasped his loftier words, whereas others could not follow the more subtle train of his thought. Here were people involved with private affairs, skilled craftsmen, women not trained in such matters together with youths with time on their hands; all were captivated by his words, were easily persuaded, led by visible creation and guided to know the Creator of all things. Should anyone assess the words intended by the great teacher, no doubt he would not omit a single one. They were unfamiliar with senseless controversy concerning the matter under discussion, nor were they entrapped by questions; instead, a simpler explanation sufficed so that they could attend to his words with uncomplicated minds, and his audience could accommodate greater matters which explained various doctrines through the use of pagan (literally, "external") philosophy. If you were at Mount Sinai [cf. Ex 19.16 ff.], forsook the tumult and raised your mind above all concerns, strive to enter with the great Moses the darkness of unutterable contemplation in which he beholds invisible, ineffable realities and seeks to comprehend the necessary order of creation, namely, how the heavens, the earth and light await the divine commandment, whereas the darkness lacked this commandment.

If it is necessary to illustrate the air above by light and to distinguish time by night and day, what need do we have for the sun? If earth was made with the heavens at the beginning of creation, was it not formed? For the act of preparing and of creating seem to mean the same according to this understanding. If the act of creation involves preparation, how can we claim that what is not composite be made? What pertains to water within the spherical shape of the heavens above cannot determine its flow. How can what is made of water be curved which by necessity always flows from the sphere above to lower parts? How can an unsteady base sustain anything stable because it is always precarious? How does a compactly built city which remains not scattered repel assaults against it? On the other hand, the nature of water appears unlikely not to be exhausted by contradictions. It is always [**M.68**] the same in equal measure whether found in springs, rivers, marshes, or if on the surface of springs there is an abundance of water or whether storms or snow make it surge, the swelling of water from above which bursts forth either ceases or increases. Here are the eternal floods which know neither decrease nor increase; in no way does its moisture suffer dissipation, for it does not undergo depletion but perpetually retains an equal amount. Neither does fire consistently remain in its own measure if it extinguishes water, for fire cannot be consumed

by water nor increase its nature.

If you diligently examine these and similar matter which reach on high and which Moses beheld lying in the darkness, you should pay close attention and not consider anything else but the grace present in you and the Spirit of revelation manifested through your prayers which searches the divine depths. The apostolic law obliges us to yield to one another through love; praiseworthy is that service which leads to the discharge of the dictates which I promptly wish to explain and make manifest. Before I begin, let me testify that there is nothing contradictory in what the saintly Basil wrote about the creation of the world since no further explanation is needed. They should suffice and alone take second place to the divinely inspired Testament. Let anyone who hearkens to our attempts through a leisurely reading be not dismayed if they agree with our words. We do not propose a dogma which gives occasion for calumny; rather, we wish to express only our own insights so that what we offer does not detract from the following instruction. Thus let no one demand from me questions which seem to fall in line with common opinion either from holy Scripture or explained by our teacher. My task is not to fathom those matters before us which appear contradictory; rather, permit me to employ my own resources to understand the text's objective. With God's help we can fathom what the text means which follows a certain defined order regarding creation. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" [Gen 1.1], and the rest which pertains to the cosmogenesis which the six days encompass. I think that an exposition of the words should concur with the text [**M.69**] because God's will must conform with his divine nature, for truly his will is wisdom. It is not for us to know the particular workings of his own wisdom. Because power is intimately bound up with knowledge to know what is essential, we are in harmony with the strength of impulses which brings thought to actualization; nothing exists with knowledge but exists together with will and effect minus any temporal interval. Similarly, power is will; it proposes how things might be and provides the impulse to bring thoughts into existence. When we consider all those things which God has created, the will, wisdom, power and things which exist, nothing impedes investigation of matter, that is, how and when to seek it: it is good to pay attention to those accustomed to speak in this way. If God is immaterial, what is the source of matter, how and in what way does it come from him who is without size and is invisible, I mean anything circumscribed by size and dimension? As for other material things, how and in what way is his nature circumscribed since does not resemble them? We offer one solution concerning matter, namely, God's wisdom is not powerless nor is his power foolish. Rather, they are united and are revealed as one as to help each other. For if his will is wise as manifested by the grandeur of his works, his effective power in his all-knowing will is consummated. Thus if the wisdom and power in him follow this, he is not ignorant about the source of matter and its composition, nor is he unable to effect anything he wishes.

With regard to the creation of all things, matter exists by [God's] wise and powerful will to produce beings which are light, heavy, dense, soft, hard, wet, dry, cold, hot, endowed with form, circumscribed and have intervals of time, all of which are simply concepts. None of these attributes consists of matter itself but work together to produce it. Therefore if

God knows everything and has power over them by the his underlying wisdom and power, perhaps we may apply the words of the venerable Moses, "In the head"[2] (Aquila has "in the beginning") God made heaven and earth. Because the prophet composed the introduction to the book of creation which deals with knowledge of God–and this was Moses' intent–those accustomed to appearances are enabled to perceive what transcends the senses. But our vision encompasses heaven and earth, so Moses names each being perceived through our senses in order that he might denote God who embraces all things. In this way we might comprehend [**M.72**] each excellent thing and instead of saying that he made all things together "in the head," God made heaven and earth "in the beginning." Each phrase has meaning, "in the head" and "in the beginning;" both words, "beginning" and "head," signify the same. Clearly each may be taken together, for "in the head" shows that everything was created together; by "beginning" we behold that which is at one moment and without interval of time. "Beginning" we accept as alien to temporal understanding. For as all beings are established at once by God's ineffable power; "beginning" as used by Moses which is understood as "head" is taken as the existence of all things. With regard to the boundary of created beings, silence reveals by extremities. I mean this in a human fashion because they neither pass under the earth nor ascend into heaven. In order to understand this, the beginning of the cosmogenesis is suggested because God is responsible for the causes of all things and the powers, and by the first impulse of his will the substance of each being such as heaven, ether, the stars, fire, air, sea, land, animals and plants. God beholds them all by reason of his power; as the prophet says, "He saw all things before they came into being" [Dan 13.42]. By his power and will each and every part of the cosmos achieves its end, following a certain determined chain of events and order so that fire both comes first and follows everything else. Afterwards by necessity there succeeds a third order as the Creator foreordained; then comes the fourth and fifth orders and the rest in their proper sequence, not appearing by mindless fortune according to a certain disorder and fate. Instead, a necessary order of nature follows with regard to the sequence of created beings so that the [Genesis] narrative speaks about each nature which has come into existence. God's productive words bring each being into existence as befitting him; all are according to a series which are in line with God's wisdom whose voice is direct.

Let us not be ignorant of God's nature which we recognize as his own wisdom and power and which we our minds comprehend. When the world was made and before each of its parts appeared, darkness covered everything; fire's splendor lay hidden within matter and did not yet shine forth, for certain flickers were concealed in the gloom. If they had a natural luminous power through contact with one another, fire came to birth; a spark from them became manifest and appeared with this glow. Thus everything was invisible and imperceptible before any luminous being achieved manifestation. For as a whole and by a single movement of the divine will [**M.73**] everything came into being and each element was compounded with others; fire dispersed the darkness in every place which the abundance of matter had kept hidden. Since divine power is both quick and agile, natural things at the

[2] In kephalaio.

world's birth came into being by God's instigation, and all things endowed with a heavy nature came forth and at once were illumined by light. According to the word of wisdom from the Creator's power, it came into existence when Moses described God's authoritative word, "God said, 'Let there be light and there was light'" [Gen 1.3]. In our opinion, the word was God's power. Thus everything came into being by this word (logos), and anything erroneous (alogos), random and unintentional has nothing to do with God. However, it compels us to believe that each being has a reason, wisdom and creation, a fact better suited to our insight. Since this word is exhortative, what God said, I believe, befits him, and to whom the word of creation refers. Thus the great David uttered, "He made all things in wisdom" [Ps 103.24]. For the divine voice wrote the exhortative words pertaining to the creation which Moses described; David said that [divine] wisdom had generated visible things. For this reason he exclaims that the heavens declare the glory of God [cf. Ps 18.2]; clearly visible things are revealed through a harmony of rotary motion which is accomplished by perfect knowledge, not by words. When saying that the heavens declare and the firmament announces, [David] informs his listeners who are of crasser understanding. Both the sound of a voice and clear word received from the declaration of the heavens do not contain any tongues nor words by which we might hear in order to show that wisdom is contemplated in creation which is the word, even though it may not be clear. Again, God's voice spoke to Moses by marvelous signs among the Egyptians which the more sublime words which the Psalm take up, "He placed his words among them and his signs in the land of Ham" [Ps 104.27]. This word created something marvelous, and clearly the psalm demonstrated that it is not the uttering of words but by signs of power which had been named.

The luminous power assumed first place and was set apart from other natures in the order of beings by reason of its subtle nature and whose splendor is illustrated by its radiant power. The nature of fire effects these by words which alone God can speak and which the luminous word stores up according to the great Moses [**M.76**] in his own writing bears witness when he says, "And God said, 'Let there be light.'" In my opinion this statement teaches that the divine word is operative in every human deliberation. We, however, consider only what has been generated and express wonder through our senses. Where fire is suddenly generated through the striking of stones or through anything which has been rendered, it exceeds the power which comprehended it and consumes the air with flames, something which we cannot fully understand. But we claim that God's word alone is responsible for this marvel who effected it by the unutterable word of power, that is, generating light from fire. As Moses testifies in his own words, "And God said, 'Let there be light and there was light,' and God saw that it was good" [Gen 1.3-4]. Indeed, we must behold God alone, the source of all good things. Our nature is frail which perceives what is generated; we are unable to perceive the word by which they came into existence nor do we have the power to honor it. Praise pertains to what is known, not what we do not know. "God saw that the light was good and divided the light from the darkness" [Gen 1.4]. Again, this took place according to a necessary sequence of nature in a certain order and harmony through God's work to which Moses refers. He instructs us, I think, through words about God's wisdom which preordained all things and which follow a determined order and sequence. For the nature of

light is disseminated in everything to the production of what is natural; it gathers all to itself and fully obscures the rest of material elements under the cover of darkness. Therefore what is begotten according to sequence is not by chance nor from its own power, for Moses declared that God's power is responsible. But the nature of fire is sharp and ever mobile, a fact evident from visible reality. The narrative suggests through this principle [beginning] by a sequence which historically conforms to Moses' description, "And there was evening and there was morning" [Gen 1.4]. Who does not know that creation is twofold, one spiritual and the other perceptible, which the lawgiver presents at once? Moses does not refer to those things which the mind perceives, but he manifests them by visible reality to the senses which adorn them.

Since fire underpins everything, it has shot out like an arrow from the other primal elements and runs on high by reason of its light nature, outstripping all other things. Fire passes through perceptible reality just like thought and does not directly produce motion since intellectual creation has nothing in common with that which perceptible, whereas fire is perceptible. Therefore fire [**M.77**] has been begotten in the highest realms of creation and is endowed with a circular movement. It is conveyed to everything by the underlying power of nature; it does not have a place to which it is immediately conveyed, for all perceptible creation is circumscribed by its own limitations. Having been moved, it advances by intellectual nature, for as we have said earlier, fire does not have the capability to move itself. Thus Moses' intuition into succession with regard to fire's movement says that light does not remain in the same parts; rather, its quick movement transfers operates through a circuit and its splendor to regions without light and gloom to regions with light. Temporal intervals equally succeed each other in this region below, I mean light and darkness. We believe that God who named the day and night does nothing related to sequence through chance or any other principle. For this reason [Moses] says, "God called the light day and the darkness night" [Gen 1.5]. It is impossible to let pass unnoticed light's power because its rays move upwards to the circle on high, and its movement is directed there; by necessity the fire is overshadowed by its upward course whose denser nature, it seems, is placed in front this splendor. Thus the departure of light is called evening. Again, fire runs in a circle in the region above and leads its splendor to above whose first light is called dawn. Let us repeat the words so as to concur with divine Scripture which lead us to the following chain of thought: "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." We understand these words as the immediate composition of created beings, for they reveal what is contains in them. The furthest human senses can reach are heaven and earth for which reason [David] says that "In his hand are the bound of the earth" [Ps 104.4], and the middle parts are encompassed by bounds. Thus Moses says that material creation is circumscribed, a fact with which we concur by the following words, "Earth was not seen (aoratos) and unfurnished (akataskeuastos)." Clearly this means that God's power over all things in the beginning came into existence by one impulse of creation, for his power seminally contained every created being and came into existence through one initiative. "Earth was not seen and unfurnished," [**M.80**], as if to say that it was and not was. For qualities did not come together; a demonstration of this insight is that the text says it was "not seen." What is not

seen lacks color; color is a certain outflow from the exterior of a given form which never lacks a body. If it was not seen, indeed it lacked color. By it was also unsightly because physical shape was absent. Thus at the immediate creation of the world there was the earth along with the rest of created beings. There remained through the creation of qualities that which can into being, for the text says that the unseen existed, indicating no other created being is to be seen besides it, and also names by the word "unfurnished" that it had not yet became dense with corporeal properties.

These observations become clearer by the interpretations of Symmachus, Theodore and Aquila which run as follows: "The earth was uncultivated and undifferentiated;" again, "There was a void and nothing" and "There was nothing and an abyss." In my opinion, these words clearly mean it was so by being "uncultivated" through [God's] power which alone endowed it with existence. By being "indistinguishable," nothing yet could be detected from another quality; instead, everything was mixed together and qualities were undistinguished, that is, there was no color, form, bulk, depth, size nor was any visible thing perceived as distinct. We get a notion of this from the fact that everything was "empty" and "nothing." The differentiating power belonging to qualities where a voice brought clarity to the void which means that the Creator of all things instituted in advance the capacity to accommodate qualities. He did not have anything "empty" in himself before he brought to completion things endowed with characteristics. The third interpretation derives from the philosophy of Epicurus which we can pass by without consideration. A similar unprofitable opinion about the beginning of creation showed that no being which is indivisible had existence which is equivalent to nothingness and a void. But let us consider that which is reliable, namely, how once the noblest feature of perceptible nature encompassed by fire resulted in the firmament wither it is the boarder existing between the waters on high or below. I believe that the firmament--whether it is a solid, stable body or consists of four elements, or if anything else encompasses it as pagan philosophy maintains--no idea as to its solidity exists except that the noblest aspect of perceptible beings, fire, goes around in accord with its capacity for perpetual movement. Scripture equates this attribute of solidity to what is eternal and incorporeal and that property which is unutterable. Who does not know that everything is made hard through a certain resistance? However, a durable nature which is firm, dense and lasting is not exempt from quality, for what is by nature deep cannot be borne upwards. But everything above is not solid according to perceptible creation, nor is it [**M.81**] dense and corporeal as text's sequence allows us to understand; rather, as it is said, by a spiritual and immaterial comparison everything perceived by the principle of generation is solid if perception escapes it by its natural lightness. It thus follows that fire enables us to comprehend the firmament, that is, the bounds of matter; only by its own bounds is the firmament circumscribed, even though its material nature is compared to what lies above. Heaven is its name just as the term "light" is called day and darkness is called "night." This assumption does not abrogate the division of waters by the firmament's medium and concurs with Scripture. After the earth's creation it is written that "Darkness was above the abyss and the spirit of God was above the water" [Gen 1.2]. Therefore we surmise that God's spirit had no part with such darkness and is completely alien to every type of evil. Sacred Scripture

abounds with innumerable testimonies because God is the "true light" [Jn 1.9] and "dwells in inaccessible light" [1 Tm 4.16].

The spirit of God is also his nature. If God and spirit are one nature, God is light, and indeed the spirit of God would be light. Truly the light present in light fashions those things which are above. The spirit of God by which the water is borne above is a nature other than the flowing waters which are below and by which the firmament is divided between the water above and below. If Scripture names that water by which we assume through a loftier contemplation the fulness of omnipotent thoughts, certainly the same name is not alien from it. God is a "consuming fire" [Dt 4.24, Heb 12.29], but we should hold such fire as pure from anything material. Similarly, when hearing that God is fire, you understand something else by this term; you learn that water is subject to the divine spirit, not that its flow to the earth is inferior, for the spirit of God is not borne to earth and instability. In order to make this clearer, we repeat briefly what had already been said. The firmament which is called heaven is the border of the perceptible creation; beyond lies spiritual (noetos) creation which lacks form, size, place, temporal interval, color, shape, quality and any other thing under heaven. Let no one presume to introduce confusion into the text through figurative expression so that we favor the opinions of those who preceded us and say that those powers which are deficient are the abyss. The worldly powers of darkness are understood to be the darkness above the abyss, for [Moses] wisely says, "And God saw all he had made and [**M.84**] behold, it was exceedingly good [kala]" [Gen 1.31]. If all things which God had made are good, the abyss and all concerning it does not lie outside what God had brought into existence. These are good by his own word and if the abyss was one, light did not yet shine around it. I think that the abyss we hear about from Scripture signifies the fulness of waters, for as the psalm says, "The depths were troubled, the multitude of waters made a sound" [Ps 76.17,18]. But I do not think that the creative power inherent within the nature of things illumines the darkness. Scripture has taught that t firmament separates the waters, so I do not think it absurd to differentiate between them. What tends to above and is light is lighter than the fire; it remains above that which is warm; it is not displaced by a movement of what lies above, neither it is changed by heat into its opposite but remains whole and allows nothing to pass through itself by the fire which runs beneath. How can what lacks matter have a place when it is immaterial? The other water is what we perceive by the eye, touch and taste, for water tends to below, is transparent and known by taste. These inherent qualities are thus transfered to another whose nature we do not perceive.

Water which is not seen, does not flow and is not constrained but lies outside place and every perceptible quality; if the spirit of God bears this water aloft to the heavens and transcends all things known by the senses, I would not think to hold anything else except water which shares the properties which are common with intellectual substance. For we suspect from that everything moved by nature returns to itself. Nature's bounds consist of temporal limits with regard to things that are in motion, whereas the spiritual and

adiastematic nature is free from tangible and diastematic[3] properties. The furthest boundary of perceptible nature beyond which it cannot reach and what we know by appearances we designate by the name "firmament." Scripture backs up this observation by saying, "And God divided between the water which was below the firmament and the water which above the firmament" [Gen 1.7]. These words disclose no beginning with regard to that water, but its [**M.85**] nature was not mixed by a commonness of names when it does not say "Let there be below" or "It was above the firmament;" instead, one was under the firmament and the other above it. If one was immediately placed in darkness, another is separated below; what is not in darkness is indeed in light, the spirit of God which separates the darkness, both simultaneously being above the firmament which is in between and which the intelligible hearer may judge if our words correspond with the text. With regard to our conjecture concerning the first constitution of beings and how the light does not take second place in the power of being, Scripture mentions darkness before light; we have pondered this concerning the firmament and the difference of waters which nature is divided into heavy and light; we find diverse opinions with regard to each although they have the same name, and the same applies to similar things. Since the waters are discerned from one another, those seen and those comprehended, and the boundary set between the two is heaven, that which was grasped in the beginning with earth and all thing at the constitution of the world, we now have the perfection and naming of the firmament bounded by the circling fire and the second perimeter of light, again overshadowed and illumined the heaven above. Such was the name designated in accordance with the sequence and is the day. By necessity and order number was introduced into creation; no number exists unless composed of units. Everything circumscribed by a certain circumference is called a unit. Since the circle is perfect everywhere, Scripture does well to name the one cycle of a circle when saying, "Evening was made and morning was made, the first day," again, the other being like it. He made two from the composition of both. Next the text adds the generation of number to the myriads of creation, a sequence and order being signified by number: "Evening was made and morning, the second day."

When these things were created, the nature of beings again proceeds by a sequence which necessarily is effected by what had preceded them. The divine commandment comes even earlier, for Moses assures us that the wonder we express over each created being is occasion for the existence of a Creator. Every bright, fiery nature which stands out by reason of its properties when joined with others is passed over in silence when coming to the creation of the air and perhaps is explained by the onrush of fire into these secondary beings. Thus the birth fire produces is full of everything since they had been made light by this fire. Next follows a description of what is heavy. Concerning this Moses [**M.88**] omits the air, not that it contributes nothing to the world, nor is cut off from the powers of the elements but perhaps because its supple, pliant nature receives each being; air has no color, form cannot be seen but makes room for all things and forms around them. Air is essential to reveal light's

[3]Refer to a section on this same Home Page which deals with the concept of diastema.

splendor and again it is shadowed by darkness. Air by itself is neither luminous nor dark; it includes every form, is overcome by every color and accommodates every type of movement. Without labor it cedes to anything brought in from all directions, automatically is divided by the bulk of anything moving here and there and comes back again. But if any moisture is present in it, or anything else for that matter, air is separated by what is projected into it and at once returns into one vessel when it is empty. Air has the ability to reveal numerous things which are supple and pliant. Since human life is also involved as well as every capacity for life–for they have strength in the air--we see and hear through it and receive smell because the drawing of breath is the most common sign of life; if it ceases, so does life. Therefore the wise Moses does not speak as one versed in science about our natural and innate elements which nourish us from birth. When we hear his teaching on this, the innate, native aspect of our nature as it pertains to air and which is in accord with visible creation has been explained in detail. When the second day has passed, God's voice once again issues a command by a harmonious order where the water is separated from the earth. Truly wisdom, the word of God, brought everything into existence not through organs of voice, but it generates them through those marvels we can behold. When the earth is joined with anything moist, we get another quality. The earth became dense with its own qualities so that all parts contribute to being closely pressed and confined from its inherent moisture. How, then, can the water be separated from the earth and be gathered together in the bowels of the earth? This is possible through the divine power and wisdom.

Moses prefaces his text with a marvel of God, introducing it, I believe, with a praiseworthy statement concerning the nature of creation when he speaks of its completion: "God said, 'Let the waters be gathered into their place [**M.89**] and there appeared dry land'" [Gen 1.9]. You see the order inherent in nature, how water once separated from the earth becomes dry and how the earth is no longer like mud mixed with water, for water requires the use of containers. But I find it untimely to mention the waters above the firmament. If the earth is formed to receive the waters, its onrush being situated in caverns and that which is unstable contains fluid, how can water–if it is truly water–withstand what is unstable or remain without diffusion upon that which is raised? If we take the two waters as having one and the same nature, what we see in them applies to all. Therefore the back parts of heaven are divided into channels just like those on the earth and form gullies resulting in banks. What do people claim when the turning of the axis which now is on high bends down? Do not they think containers are with them as they circle and as the water suspended with them flows from caverns? But fire is said to be consuming, needs to devour material, its flame is never extinguished and is quenched without resulting in its own depletion. I prefer to follow the noble voice of our teacher [Basil], and I entreat those with whom I am conversing not to be dismayed over the sequence of what is set before me. The goal of our teacher was not intended to follow his listeners' opinions, but this instruction was to provide a means for learning the truth. If training makes us students, we should consider the development at hand, and should we succeed, our achievement is attributed to the teacher's wisdom. What, then, is our response to contrary opinions? Not only do we see opposite qualities in fire and in water but in each we find some which are contrary. Just as with the elements we remember

that heat militates against cold and dryness against what is moist, so again qualities found in the earth and the air are contrary to others: solidity and rarity, hardness and softness, heaviness and lightness and anything else whose own inherent property is known from its opposite. We cannot learn from those which are contrary and which fail to nourish the other. Neither does the air's lightness increase by consuming what is heavy, nor does the earth's density produce its opposite or levity; neither do the earth's [**M.92**] other properties nourish by expending themselves the air's qualities inherent. Thus no one can claim that from anything contrary that wet and cold derives from fire and dryness; these are not nourished by mutual destruction nor does the power of one derive from the other. We would end up with neither, that is, if the power of each became the annihilation of the other. Each has the capacity to destroy the other, and dominance of the stronger always becomes the ruin of what is weaker, a fact which is true because we have learned it from experience. Whenever fire ravages matter and then hits upon water, we see their mutual destruction, for that which is strong annihilates the other, having been draw to it with equal force. While the power in both is equally balanced, in similar fashion destruction results; neither is nourished by the other, but the two end up by being decimated. As for beasts in the habit of devouring each other, the nature for both is not to live through each other but for their mutual destruction. In similar fashion, anything humid is opposite to what is dry and does not offer mutual protection if one is nourished by the destruction of the other. But it appropriate to take up the text and follow its sequence because God created all things "exceedingly good;" in this way we should examine the perfection of goodness (i.e., beauty) with respect to created beings. When he [Moses] added "exceedingly," he stresses anything which unceasingly tends towards perfection. In the generation of countless animals we see differences with regard to types and bring them into general harmony by remarking that each one of them is "exceedingly" good. On the other hand, the appearance of a milliped, a ground frog nor anything generated from putrefaction in slime qualify for the word "exceedingly." Rather, the divine eye looks not to the beauty of generated beings and does not call their color and form beautiful; rather, each one by itself has a perfect nature. A horse is certainly not a cow; the nature and properties of each is conserved, not by a corruption of nature but by the power of their conservation.

If the elements different from each other yet each is "exceedingly" good by itself, they are all perfectly good by reason of their own properties. The earth is good, for it is not good by being separated through destruction in the air but each retains their own properties and maintains them through a natural, divinely endowed power. The air is good; it is not the same as the earth but is sustained by the powers of its own nature. Similarly, water and fire are "exceedingly" good because they are whole by their own properties and by the power of God's will according to each measure by which they were first created and therefore remain in continuity. "The earth stands forever" [Eccl 1.4], never suffering diminishment nor increase. Air maintains its own bounds, nor does fire diminish; how doe these which are consumed differ from water? Yet [**M.93**] when comparing different created beings we see considerable fortitude and power with regard to fire. If we take into careful consideration that which lies above, we notice that the sun shines intensely over the entire earth. Neither does a shadow

extend long in the air, for the sun's superiority is contracted in a conical fashion by its approaching rays. If we carefully observe all these things so that the smallest aspect of the sun's magnitude is measured with the earth's entire water, in what short time does its fire consume it? Yet we observe the sea spreading out equally in all places and the course of rivers maintaining their own bounds; anything moist is witness enough as not to be consumed through such bounds. But just as fire came to birth at the beginning, what is moist is not destroyed but fire maintains its constitution and continuously remains at the beginning of the elements' constitution, for nothing of nature's water is disturbed by the fire which abides.

But let us see that no matter how often it rains, the stronger sun dries up that which a little earlier had been moist. How, then, is such moisture preserved if the sun's rays do not entirely consume it? If water is transferred from one container to another, is that which had been full immediately become empty because is it not present nor wholly in another container? Certainly there is no mistake in making this observation. The same holds true if water is poured from one vessel to another and the moisture arising from the earth is borne into the air, a natural phenomenon when heat imperceptibly draws moisture to itself on high from the earth. The proof lies in denser vapors which often rise from the earth's depths and seem to pour forth as clouds, thus making the dense vapor visible to our eyes. Then the lighter puff of vapor equals the air by reason of its buoyancy which at first is not manifest to sight, and before falling, it is a wisp of water which ends up as a cloud formed through condensation. Thus the light, indivisible drops are borne on high to the air by reason of their buoyancy and are carried along by the wind if the generation of water is sufficient to produce a heavy flow with drops falling from the sky to earth. The heat does not dry up that which is expended, but a cloud full of water results from what had been compressed. Again water is mixed with the earth and results in vapor, clouds and finally rain. Now the earth emits vapor which became a heavy flow [**M.96**] from the clouds congealing and once again this flow is yields vapors resulting in a continuously turning cycle. Should you turn attention to plants and shoots, they all pass to and fro by this cycle. As for the moisture from plants or sprouts, we agree on the following: if anything from the earth passes into it and is nourished by its mass, when that which surrounds it becomes dried, vapor once more is drawn out. The air is already light and water vapor is lighter still because this vapor is still associated with it. For example, when dust is cast into the air for an extended time, it returns to the earth; the moisture does not perish but water is present by reason of its association. Such moisture spawns an increase of similar parts, congeals into clouds and is restored to its own nature through drops. In this fashion the world's elements in every place and created thing have the same measure which at its beginning the Creator's wisdom ordains for the harmony of all.

I am fully aware of any objections, for often we see some clouds torn to pieces by a more excessive heat; if anyone gazes closely, this counters the argument which maintains that no water is extinguished. For when clouds are scattered in the air through turbulence, first their mass decreases by being warmed violently through excessive heat; they are entirely consumed into ashes so that not even a tiny piece remains, the heat having completely devoured any moisture. No longer is there reason to explain the presence of vapor. The

formation of clouds above or the air which disturbed and blown about on high admit of nothing heavy by reason of their lightness; rather, all vapors and whatever rises with them are restricted in the ascent on high with regard to the earth's atmosphere, and their density is measured out, a fact which does not admit them to progress any higher; lightness and ether does not allow anything more dense. Thus historians speak of very high mountains which are perpetually above the clouds where we cannot breathe and wings are unable to function as opposed to those animals at lower altitudes. [Fish] which live in the water cannot live in the air, a fact which clearly demonstrates a boundary or separation between air and what lies above it which belongs to every being whose nature is composed of denser vapors from the earth. Therefore, snow remains unmelted mountain peaks until the summer arrives, the composition of vapors remaining intact due to the frigid air. But those traces resembling fire which some call meteorites have the same cause; erudite men explain this whenever the force of certain winds composed of denser mass and having more matter pass into the region of ether, thereby resulting in immediate combustion. According to the wind's force, the flame which rushes [**M.97**] along is extinguished by the wind and makes the flame fade away. As I have said, the wind is unable to destroy the vapor produced by the clouds. As for those persons hoping to explain through words that which belongs to the region below, by necessity moisture is borne aloft; they teach that it is burned and nothing remains. But I concede that the fire on high destroys water present in vapor, judging it futile and questionable to contest what is evident. We should not tire in pursuing the truth and trace it by every means at our disposal. Not one of these observations are deficient, for I maintain that the measure of water remains constant without diminishment and always makes up for what had been depleted. Confirmation of this comes from experience, namely, that fire is not nourished by every quality of matter it lays hold of, an example being oil joined to something cold; fire easily devours the moisture, resulting in a flame. Fire does not consume oil but the fire caused by this oil, the moisture with fire, ends up in ashes. This is clearly demonstrated when a lamp's thick smoke darkens the flame above; if this continues, some part of it returns to the darkened place through thick smoke. The flame is clean when the oil changes into light through fire; minuscule particles which have been dried up pass into the air from which it sinks upon the earth. Scattered, black minuscule particles of this smoke are present in the air, and we inhale them through our nostrils. Often the chest becomes black by inhaling such particles which form thick, discolored smoke.

This makes it clear that oil's moisture is changed and becomes dry; its bulk is not reduced to oblivion, having been scattered into the air by reason of its buoyancy. We thus learn that when moisture is dried up its entire material is not destroyed. This is certainly true because the whole is constituted from the parts. We have learned this with regard to a part and have taught it with respect to the whole. Without a doubt, only one type of dampness exists. But moisture produces light dust as a result of fire; all humidity while present in fire changes its quality into something dry and is not entirely destroyed. Since a cloud is nothing but vapor which rises as lighter moisture, this is indeed necessary when fire scorches the cloud. The very light, immeasurable bulk of air is not wholly consumed if the humid quality is not saved. Vapor consists of four elements [**M.100**]: humidity, cold, weight and quality

which are opposite to fire and destroy it; neither humidity nor cold can remain in fire. There is quantity present with respect to fire, and quantity and quality are not antagonistic. If vapor's quality is preserved, it unites what belongs to moisture and cold. The quality of heaviness present in vapor is assisted in being preserved by its size (heaviness equally applies to anything moist and dry); no longer does our mind laboriously have to follow a sequence of events in order to recognize how water had become earth by transferring the quality of vapors which the same nature receives. For earth's dry and heavy property seems to be changed into a vapor which had been burned. To me it appears to have received this at the beginning, for I omit the explication where any consideration advances through hypotheses and thus to the truth. Perhaps the sea always retains its own bounds when water is perpetually added little at a time; moisture ascends to the air above by means of heat as we see through the example of a cucumber which draws light particles of water. In both inland and northern regions the situation is different due to the cold because here the sea does not warm them and the vapors are dormant, a fact which we have confirmed on two occasions.

First we have said that the ocean is one self-contained entity and is divided into a myriad of seas which lacks boundaries. Should the continuous presence of heat coming from the south enter it, those parts feel a diminution because the flow of water is automatically drawn downward due by a constant ebb and flow. Then the sea's salt permeates the water when moisture ascends, for salt's nature is dry. If this quality is diffused throughout the entire ocean, it goes everywhere. Everything proper to its nature functions in accord with its nature: fire burns, snow is cold, honey is sweet and salt is dry. Because salt's dryness permeates the ocean, divine wisdom is on guard with respect to the rapid evaporation of vapors (for the inherent dryness which prevails over the moisture squeezes and expels from the sea every minuscule particle of water). It is not pointless to consider water which is evaporated everywhere through the moisture [**M.101**] drawn out from the sea. But every drop of vapor becomes a cloud from which rain flows to the earth, for as we have shown above, prophecy attributes to God that "He summoned the water of the sea and made it flow upon the earth" [Amos 5.8], and many other such words. Then all the clouds which ascend on high by the heat end up by being completely evaporated, a fact we have learned by its effect. Therefore we do not mention the train of thought within the objection. Should anyone take issue with our earlier remarks concerning oil, its material is not destroyed after combustion but is relocated in the air and returns to the earth by fire. But how can the opposite quality of water which is subject to evaporation remain undiminished because everywhere heat reduces to ashes the moisture present in vapors and makes it dry, a fact in accord with the order we have examined? If moisture is drawn out like vapor, heat easily catches it and divides it into small, invisible parts resulting in steam. Water has then been completely transformed into the quality of dryness, a fact which is certainly true, for water's abundance always fills what fire had extinguished. Scripture testifies to this opinion: the floods of heaven are open [cf. Gen 7.11+] because it was necessary for rain to submerge every mountain peak with a greater depth of water. But I contend this written account through another use of Scripture, for I am accustomed to use divine words in accord with the written meaning.

What is the meaning of an opening and a closing? It is clear that to open pertains to what is closed and visa versa. According to Scripture there was a severe drought during Elias' time: "Heaven was closed for three years and six months" [3 Kings 17.9]. I think that the floods of heaven which had been opened and as mentioned by Scripture had been closed at the time of drought. But then at Elias' intercession the cloud appeared from the sea and the heavens opened with rain. Clearly this shows that the firmament was not rendered by saying that rain from the waters above gushed forth; rather, heaven is called the air which encompasses the earth, surrounding it with vapors and which is the boundary of the more subtle, transcendent sphere. Nothing heavy has the power to ascend beyond it, neither cloud, wind, vapor, moisture nor any winged creature. Scripture is accustomed to call heaven or that area lying above us as the [place belonging to] "the birds of heaven" [Gen 1.26] or the air through which they fly. But if they have their place, the text does not explain [**M.104**] how the change or evaporation of moisture does not diminish water which has been parched by the heat's power. With regard to this it behooves us to search out another place in Scripture, for a more accurate study is called for and we do not hesitate to explore the question at hand. You have heard the great prophecy of God's power exercised through the wonders of creation: "Who has measured the water in his hand and the heaven with a span and all the earth in a handful? Who has weighted the mountains in a scale and the forests in a balance" [Is 40.12]? I think these words clearly teach that each element is circumscribed by its own measure; God's power encompasses them whose hands and palms are called a span, each one in their own way circumscribing the measure of all creatures. Divine power measures them out evenly, the water by his hand, the entire earth by his palm and the valleys are weighed; if it clear that the mountains are defined, each must remain in its own measure and place, neither subject to increase nor curtailment in what God has measured, for they are under his jurisdiction. Therefore none of these is subject to increase nor decrease with regard to prophecy which testifies about all beings; indeed, each one remains in is own power, has a changeable nature which is clearly visible, transforms into something else and through change and alteration they once again attain what they had in the beginning. But because moisture or vapor has passed into fire, its quality returns to the earth as to dryness which we have shown earlier by the example of oil. Then we considered whether vapor changes into its opposite, being able to remain above since vapor is light because the text understands that having become heated to a high degree, it changes to something lighter and less visible.

But I think we should examine each of these examples. The light quality of smoke cannot remain in the air but passes under its transparency to what is connatural, that is, to the earth as well as onto walls and wooden beams. It follows that we must consider that vapor borne aloft by winds into the region above, that fiery place, and see that when water is changed its matter is preserved; having become dry, it is drawn down to the earth and what is connatural. Each being has the inherent power to be drawn so that nothing lies outside this order because if moisture has become a dry and earthy quality, it is mixed with the earth's dryness. If water's nature is oily, its thick quality would become black, the color of vapors having been baked thoroughly, a fact clear [**M.105**] from the resulting form. Since the nature

of water which has become vapor is very light and subtle, according to what I had already said, moisture's quality becomes dry through fire. We should pay close attention to this pure quality which resembles air simply because it escapes understanding by reason of its lightness. Should anyone believe that the senses are more trustworthy and seeks to observe with the eye those things with immeasurable and invisible mass, it is possible see particles closely pressed in the air when revealed by the light's rays which pass through the windows. It is impossible to behold the countless number of particles swirling about in the air. The person with attentive eyes will always find more delicate particles rushing down; what is manifest in one part of the air is in every part since everything is connected and the whole is made up of parts. If ever these light, minuscule particles are cast through the air and rush to the ground, clearly ether's form is not parted nor broken into pieces (for the nature of fire does not suffer breaking up nor dispersion). We believe that any type of moisture as considered earlier must be completely dissolved so that once heat has consumed anything moist and has reduced it to earth, it is no longer supported by fire but reverts to the soil. A parallel exists with regard to eating food; it is changed into small pieces and having become digested, passes into the various members of the body while being composed of different degrees of dryness and moisture, heat and cold. These members are thus nourished and accommodate the food according to its nature (for whatever favorably accommodates the lightness of digestion adapts this to itself). In a different manner that which always belongs to the earth belongs to those indivisible particles. Once everything that has been borne aloft receives what is according to its nature, this same nature is altered; a lump of earth to a lump of earth, sand into sand, a stone into a stone and everything else which happens to have received solid material. If anyone thinks this corresponds to a stone's hardness and examines it closely, closer reflection reveals no need for contention. In all likelihood, what the winds have swept up certainly must fall down to the earth. But someone may say that our own words are not in accord with our intent; water always has the same measure as from the beginning, and the opposite is certainly not true. [**M.108**] If the water which has passed into fire remains or reverts to being evaporated in the ground, it suffers the same diminishment; despite water's constitution and abundance, it ends up by being consumed. Therefore we must pay careful attention to the nature of things in order to have our assumption be rightly be in accord with the goal we have proposed.

What, then, is the nature of things? The Creator who made the earth's elements did not endow any one of them with constancy and permanence. That is, all things are subject to change and the power of change is maintained through other things by means of a certain type of revolution where everything reverts to some earthly element and they return into themselves from other elements. This change is unceasing among the elements and by necessity they pass into other things, undergo alteration and once again change into other things, for not one of them retains its own identity unless it mixes with another durable substance. How, you ask, does change come about through the four changeable elements which go around in a circular course? For all things do not change by external influence nor are they subject to by a cycle of change where each being are united; rather, water flows back to the air in the form of vapor which fire turns back into earth. Such are the ashes associated

with fire; the earth itself has endured this cycle of alteration. It remains to be seen whether the nature of water has its origins from the earth, and we must consider if earth can change its nature into water. Indeed, no one can accuse us of idle talk when they follow the sequence of our remarks. Consider many dry things which have become moist from their own nature as with salt which has been mined and consists in water having been reduced to ashes. Its property is dryness if moisture departs and changes into salt's own dryness. We observe this in honey which having become dried by heat, once again dissolves in water. But let us pass beyond these matters, for it is better to examine a certain necessary sequence already present from the beginning. We know that there is not one simply quality from each element by which they are constituted and others which are opposed to each other; rather, each cooperates with those which are different. Those which are opposite qualities and have nothing in common can be in harmony, for example, when earth and water are not mixed we have dryness and water, yet cold equally unifies [**M.109**] these opposing elements. Similarly, water is separated from air by the opposition of weight to lightness, yet both share in each other's nature by reason of moistness. Again, air differs from fire by reason of heat's opposition to cold, yet they have in common the quality of lightness, and this opposition forms a mutual correspondence with respect to quality. Thus fire is separated from the earth's heaviness by lightness, but dryness is present in both and by this a truce is maintained among them. How do I start my explanation from this point? Namely, that cold is also seen in the earth; water and air are more adaptable to water and retains the nature of water through an aversion to dryness which blunts any harm resulting from dryness.

Dryness is natural to heat, and fire is not present in something else whereas cold can be joined to water; in fire and water we seen opposite qualities so that moisture fights with water and heat with cold. If moisture were not permitted to be united with cold, it would follow that the quality of cold is naturally present in the earth and the earth in water. For the natural union of water with cold does not permit separation of one from another but each is separate; they are not alone but the power of one is seen in both. Just as water differs from the air and cold results from small droplets, cold is also present in the depths of the earth, and the quality of moisture's union with cold not severed; rather, the power of cold naturally lies in the earth and like a seed, cold always generates a quality like itself, changing the earth when it is extremely cold. If anyone asks us how cold becomes hard, we are at a loss as with other matters. The same applies to water poured into the air; how something heavy tends towards above or how heaviness is changed into something light. We grasp such things by sense and are unable to explain nature's operations. If anyone has accepted this opinion on the strength of witnesses, we show it in a straightforward manner by the example of a well. If you persevere in digging deep into the dry earth, you will not discover water immediately but first reach moisture present in the ground. Upon making your way to frigid areas in the depths, you will find something like clay or lumps of earth; next you will hit upon something indistinct and gooey after which you will descend to colder regions. Once you have cut a passageway through the rock where [**M.112**] the sun's heat no longer penetrates, you will be hindered by the rock's density. Finally you will get streams of water by your efforts at digging which tend to form into a circle or what is commonly called a well. Thus once you have

hollowed out a spot, moisture from all sides of the well presses together which are found in most places; after small drops have gathered together by having cut veins resulting in broader passages, rivulets form and then merge. Thus water comes to birth and moistens earth with its coldness where water retains its own identity. In the same way moisture which has gathered together into streams run freely once a channel is opened in the earth. Such is the name for a spring. One sign signaling the presence of frigid waters in northern locales is the fact that the water is much colder. Cold does not impede the flow of water at its birth if is exposed to the sun. Just as water has gathered together from drops and becomes rain, if one looks at the drops themselves, they appear insignificant. Thus water in its descent is always small, and where many small rivulets gather together, it forms a river. Having considered these matters, what is the source or supply of such abundant waters? Do we not assume the presence of lakes within the earth's bosom? Yet if they do not flow out, in a short while they become empty so that others take their place by necessity. The sequence of events here is that others seek to fill their place; if more lakes are discovered beyond these, we can explain the fullness of other lakes with regard to their origin. We can advance without coming to an end, positing lakes for other lakes and so forth in order that those coming from springs might not be quenched as long as it is connected with the starting point of those furthest away, the source of water. Perhaps it would be helpful to trace the cause of the first water, to consider the nature of springs and not those lakes under the earth as well as why it descends immediately. For how can what runs on high, the place of its proper nature, be carried below? Subsequently, the great size of those lakes which continuously flow outward remain full without ever being extinguished. But it is clear from what we have explained that the abundance of water in a river does not cease, and the earth gives way to its flow. The earth's mass remains constant [**M.113**] while moisture is constantly being dried up and fills what has become less from its mass. This being the case, we no longer see elements stumbling into each other but there is a sequence binding them; each is the cause of the other, takes into account the birth of that into which it has changed and from there they are restored to their original condition. When such water ascends, it becomes vapor in the air; air saturated with moisture becomes dry in the heat above; what is earthly is separated from moisture through fire; the coldness present in the earth through into water, and so it goes unceasingly. There is no impediment nor infringement, but the boundaries remain constant from the beginning.

Thus we can understand something about the water above the firmament by the nature of water through the sequence of ideas, namely, that fire is not nourished by water's depletion. It can be demonstrated that heat is not nourished by cold but is quenched and that water vanishes by dryness, not increased. But it is time to consider other matters, that is, the third day when all the stars in the heavens were made. Because the sustaining divine word brought them into existence which Moses' lofty teaching historically teaches, we understand that the divine voice is not a command effected through words but through deeds and wise power. This word of God generates wonders and speaks and because everything together with respect to creation sustains its fullness by the first will of God which according to wisdom must follow an order with respect to all the elements and is in accord with divine commandments. It comes together and is established in the first perceptible act of creation

by an all-embracing voice which Moses demonstrates by saying, "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." He says that God made the fullness of beings which follows a certain natural order. In second place comes light, but it did not immediately illumine all things; rather, parts of creation without light acted as an obstacle. Also God bestowed upon creation as a starting point the fiery and radiant power which is luminous and mobile by nature and which leapt into being before every else. Then all things were gathered together and wandered about after which they were again divided into what was both common and appropriate to them. It is clear from what is visible that the power of light's nature is one, but the generative word named one light that which was assembled from all things. We would not be at fault when the divine voice signifies everything by a single voice, namely, that light, not lights, was commanded to come into being. If anyone considers visible reality, he will notice considerable difference with regard to light's power.

For this reason the psalmist says, "He alone who made the great lights" [Ps 135.4]; "There is another glory of the sun," [**M.116**], says the Apostle, "and another glory of the moon and another of the stars; each star differs in glory" [1 Cor 15.41], a statement which takes into account the differences with respect to light. For if all things have the capacity to give light as Paul has enumerated, each does so in its own power and glory. One light fittingly applies to all things regarding their class as unmixed and different. If these have their own way, I do not think they would support our opinion of the order if we understand Moses correctly, that is, in the beginning all luminous power was gathered to itself as one light. Since many things are light and mobile, the difference between them is less in the nature of all things; the interval of three days' time has sufficed so that each thing clearly and distinctly is made different from each other. Light and the subtle substance of fire is totally removed from matter in the conspicuous features of sensible creation (which the intelligible and incorporeal nature admits). However, what is inert and heavy consists of something light and subtle. This inner property is divided into seven parts, each with respect to others and their like, and have a relationship and distinction from different genuses. Thus in the sun's luminous nature are present all parts where each contribute to the other and produce one great light. This is evident from the moon, other wandering bodies and the stable stars which have in common a similarity with respect to elements and form one from their rays. The great Moses is content only to name their general characteristics, the great light and the lesser, calling the rest by the generic name of stars. If we find this wearisome and are unable to follow the subtlety of divine wisdom, no one should excuse our fallible [human] nature. By this I mean that while no one can give an explanation, they might at least get an idea about one of them. I speak of persons considering this interval of three days where time suffices to distinguish each being by the light seen in them. It is evident that our insight becomes clearer when the measure of time concurs with the distinction of light and by the measure of time and the activity of fire according to its movement, the division of light which distinguishes its nature. Thus each one of these innumerable differences with respect to light is characterized by its own property. The light belonging to each person has its own innate power without [**M.117**] disorder or confusion because divine wisdom designates them according to each natural property, and this is an order not to be trespassed. In this fashion

the highest region restrains those of a higher order of being in a superior realm. Also those situated in the middle zone are subject to order whether this happens to be a southern or northern region, that area in between them, places with snow, or the completion of the zodiac's circle and again in this, that or some other circling of the stars; however, each one maintains its own place and remains unmoved and fixed in its own nature and capacity according to the Creator's resourceful wisdom.

The mind is overcome with dizziness and tedium when considering these and similar things, since it is unable to know how the measure of three days can suffice for the difference of these innumerable stars. Similarly, we include the vast yet stable spheres in the midst of each interval; God's great wisdom establishes the sun so that we might not live in darkness as well as the stars' shining light before it dissipates when coming to us from such a great distance. The sun's splendor is set above us so that the great distance of stars may not dim its rays and that the excessive light from what is composed of denser material from above might not draw nearer, I mean the moon which circles the earth, that it might not be drawn down; such is the moon's splendor: when obscured, it nevertheless retains the same capacity for light. The moon's dense composition blunts its light, but the greater radiance of the sun's rays do not alter its luminous nature. Our innate poverty cannot grasp the wisdom of these marvels nor can it grasp the order according established by the lawgiver. However, I think that we can behold in due measure their order and understand it by offering some informed conjectures.

Let us now repeat the order of those things which have been created. Light takes precedence by reason of its mobility which follows closely upon the firmament's circuit, fire being the determining fact for this circular motion. A light nature is distinguished from a heavier one as we see with the distinction between earth and water. The nature arrayed below is light, subtle and sublime; all are not the same, for an interval of time is inserted which distinguishes between those properties held in common from those which are particular. The firmament contains an infinite number of stars whose physical properties differ and occupy the highest point of creation; each one has its own place and does not cease its eternal movement nor leaves its own place. But their stable order has a nature which perpetually moves. In second place [**M.120**] after this quick movement in its own path comes its circle followed by the third and fourth all the way up to the seventh according to their respective velocity. Inasmuch as each of the higher ones descends to a lower plane, it assumes a slower movement in the firmament. Thus on the fourth day of creation when light had not yet been created there existed a luminous property with respect to each of these entities. Other stars then appeared and were seen in greater mass along with the sun and moon whose birth at the first creation had the occasion for light and whose constitution (indeed time contains all movement and it is necessary that parts be in accord with each other in some chronological interval) was perfected in three days. Thus the sequence offered by the great Moses concurs with the creation of beings. Everything according to the Creator's power which he made materially with regard to their constitution, the partial showing of what is seen in the cosmos, has a certain natural order, sequence and perfection at a given interval. Then light shone at

once and brightened every luminous nature such as the sun and the moon. Similarly with regard those things which flow, not everything does so at the same rate; rather, each one differs from the other such as oil, quicksilver and water. If we mix them all in the same jar, after a short time we first see the quicksilver by reason of its heavier nature and downward tendency; it retains its own parts even if it should be dispersed everywhere. Then we have water after which comes oil whose parts float on the surface and stay there. I think we are compelled to make a hypothesize concerning the idea set forth as it pertains to the process of exchange so that with regard to things which flow downwards, we can see once again those which are borne above. All things by reason of their levity at the first creation tended towards above because each had a swiftness inherent in its nature; by following this tendency in their own respective ways they all ran together and thus we behold a difference with regard to speed as well as their capacity.

Just as with regard to flowing there is a difference not through a separation of matter but each one is distinct from the other, thus in the interval of three days' time the illuminating power of the sun was dispersed to all as well as gathered to itself. If anyone asks us about the third heaven of which Moses is silent, Paul beheld it and entered it as an inner sanctuary and heard unutterable things [cf. 2 Cor 12.2-4]; we claim that the [**M.121**] third heaven is not outside what we have expounded. It seems to me that the great Apostle who stretched out to what was in front of him had transcended the bounds of physical sensation and entered spiritual comprehension which no corporeal vision can accurately grasp by thoughts. He says in his own words that "whether I was in the body or outside the body, I did not know. God knows that such a man was snatched up to the third heaven." I think that the highest peak of the perceptible world is the third heaven which Paul named; by a three-fold division he named everything visible which is in accord with Scripture and designated each of these parts as heaven. Scripture names one heaven, the bound of the denser air where we have the clouds, winds and the realm of high-flying birds; it names the clouds and birds of heaven, not simply heaven but the firmament of heaven. The text reads, "Let the waters bring forth reptiles having life (literally, 'of living souls," psuchon zoson) and winged creatures flying above the earth in the firmament of heaven" [cf. Gen 1.20]. Then Scripture names another heaven as the firmament which is believed to enclose the stable sphere in which stars migrate by reason of their movement. "God made the great lights and placed them in the firmament of heaven that they might give light to the earth" [Gen 1.16]. It is clear that the order which transcends everything above and is the highest point of the perceptible cosmos which boarders the intelligible realm, is called firmament and heaven.

In his desire to transcend speech, [Paul] exhorts us not to look at visible things because they are transitory, whereas what is not seen is eternal [cf. 2 Cor 4.18]. Having shown us his desire as an example, Paul knows that every man lives in the perceptible world, and he has entered the inner sanctuary of the spirit. Since he is familiar from childhood with holy words, by his own written words he designates the third heaven that realm of these three division in which the world is located. Paul left the air, passed through the midst of the

circling stars, transcended the limit of ether's bounds and having come to firm and intelligible nature, knows the beauties of paradise and has heard what human nature cannot utter. O man of God, we respond to your intelligent question and transfer nothing of our written report into figurative allegory, nor do we leave unexplored any objection brought to our attention. Instead, we have presented the text itself as far as possible and have followed the order of nature by considering terms without contradicting the [**M.124**] those opinions which men hold according to a more superficial knowledge and which agree insofar as we were able to demonstrate. We have deemed it unprofitable to mention the rest of created beings within the six days of creation because the voice of the lofty teacher found nothing of value there except the creation of man which we discussed in our own book. We have sent it to you in full, in that text and as well as the present one, having entreated you and all who may read it to see that we are in accord with what our teacher had pondered. Rather, to complete what was left undone I offer for consideration with regard to man my labors in this treatise concerning the Hexaemeron. By following the succession of scriptural insights I desire to write about these matters, to guard the letter of the text and the consideration of nature which agrees with it. If anything is omitted, I am not jealous with regard to your understanding and desire that you add anything which happens to be missing, for no consideration of wealth hindered the widow's voluntary offering of two obols. Neither the skins, the wood and hairs brought to Moses for the tabernacle's construction, as well as gold, silver and precious stones were impediments. We therefore took them into consideration, that is, if our order of hairs might become woven through your own purple with gold and placed over the text whose name is Reason, Declaration and Truth. Such were the titles bestowed by Moses upon the priestly garments and which are in accord with God's guidance to whom is fitting glory and power with his Only-Begotten Son and the all holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

+ The End +