

FIRST PART, QUESTION 74

On All the Seven Days in Common (In Three Articles)

We next consider all the seven days in common: and there are three points of inquiry:

- (1) As to the sufficiency of these days;
- (2) Whether they are all one day, or more than one?
- (3) As to certain modes of speaking which Scripture uses in narrating the works of the six days.

Whether these days are sufficiently enumerated?

Ia q. 74 a. 1

Objection 1. It would seem that these days are not sufficiently enumerated. For the work of creation is no less distinct from the works of distinction and adornment than these two works are from one another. But separate days are assigned to distinction and to adornment, and therefore separate days should be assigned to creation.

Objection 2. Further, air and fire are nobler elements than earth and water. But one day is assigned to the distinction of water, and another to the distinction of the land. Therefore, other days ought to be devoted to the distinction of fire and air.

Objection 3. Further, fish differ from birds as much as birds differ from the beasts of the earth, whereas man differs more from other animals than all animals whatsoever differ from each other. But one day is devoted to the production of fishes, and another to that of the beast of the earth. Another day, then, ought to be assigned to the production of birds and another to that of man.

Objection 4. Further, it would seem, on the other hand, that some of these days are superfluous. Light, for instance, stands to the luminaries in the relation of accident to subject. But the subject is produced at the same time as the accident proper to it. The light and the luminaries, therefore, ought not to have been produced on different days.

Objection 5. Further, these days are devoted to the first instituting of the world. But as on the seventh day nothing was instituted, that day ought not to be enumerated with the others.

I answer that, The reason of the distinction of these days is made clear by what has been said above (q. 70, a. 1), namely, that the parts of the world had first to be distinguished, and then each part adorned and filled, as it were, by the beings that inhabit it. Now the parts into which the corporeal creation is divided are three, according to some holy writers, these parts being the heaven, or highest part, the water, or middle part, and the earth, or the lowest part. Thus the Pythagoreans teach that perfection consists in three things, the beginning, the middle, and the end. The first part, then, is distinguished on the first day, and adorned on the fourth, the middle part distinguished

on the middle day, and adorned on the fifth, and the third part distinguished on the third day, and adorned on the sixth. But Augustine, while agreeing with the above writers as to the last three days, differs as to the first three, for, according to him, spiritual creatures are formed on the first day, and corporeal on the two others, the higher bodies being formed on the first these two days, and the lower on the second. Thus, then, the perfection of the Divine works corresponds to the perfection of the number six, which is the sum of its aliquot parts, one, two, three; since one day is assigned to the forming of spiritual creatures, two to that of corporeal creatures, and three to the work of adornment.

Reply to Objection 1. According to Augustine, the work of creation belongs to the production of formless matter, and of the formless spiritual nature, both of which are outside of time, as he himself says (Confess. xii, 12). Thus, then, the creation of either is set down before there was any day. But it may also be said, following other holy writers, that the works of distinction and adornment imply certain changes in the creature which are measurable by time; whereas the work of creation lies only in the Divine act producing the substance of beings instantaneously. For this reason, therefore, every work of distinction and adornment is said to take place "in a day," but creation "in the beginning" which denotes something indivisible.

Reply to Objection 2. Fire and air, as not distinctly known by the unlettered, are not expressly named by Moses among the parts of the world, but reckoned with the intermediate part, or water, especially as regards the lowest part of the air; or with the heaven, to which the higher region of air approaches, as Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. ii, 13).

Reply to Objection 3. The production of animals is recorded with reference to their adorning the various parts of the world, and therefore the days of their production are separated or united according as the animals adorn the same parts of the world, or different parts.

Reply to Objection 4. The nature of light, as existing in a subject, was made on the first day; and the making of

the luminaries on the fourth day does not mean that their substance was produced anew, but that they then received a form that they had not before, as said above (q. 70, a. 1 ad 2).

Reply to Objection 5. According to Augustine (Gen. ad lit. iv, 15), after all that has been recorded that is assigned to the six days, something distinct is attributed to the seventh—namely, that on it God rested in Himself

from His works: and for this reason it was right that the seventh day should be mentioned after the six. It may also be said, with the other writers, that the world entered on the seventh day upon a new state, in that nothing new was to be added to it, and that therefore the seventh day is mentioned after the six, from its being devoted to cessation from work.

Whether all these days are one day?

Ia q. 74 a. 2

Objection 1. It would seem that all these days are one day. For it is written (Gn. 2:4,5): “These are the generations of the heaven and the earth, when they were created, in the day that the Lord . . . made the heaven and the earth, and every plant of the field, before it sprung up in the earth.” Therefore the day in which God made “the heaven and the earth, and every plant of the field,” is one and the same day. But He made the heaven and the earth on the first day, or rather before there was any day, but the plant of the field He made on the third day. Therefore the first and third days are but one day, and for a like reason all the rest.

Objection 2. Further, it is said (Ecclus. 18:1): “He that liveth for ever, created all things together.” But this would not be the case if the days of these works were more than one. Therefore they are not many but one only.

Objection 3. Further, on the seventh day God ceased from all new works. If, then, the seventh day is distinct from the other days, it follows that He did not make that day; which is not admissible.

Objection 4. Further, the entire work ascribed to one day God perfected in an instant, for with each work are the words (God) “said . . . and it was . . . done.” If, then, He had kept back His next work to another day, it would follow that for the remainder of a day He would have ceased from working and left it vacant, which would be superfluous. The day, therefore, of the preceding work is one with the day of the work that follows.

On the contrary, It is written (Gn. 1), “The evening and the morning were the second day . . . the third day,” and so on. But where there is a second and third there are more than one. There was not, therefore, only one day.

I answer that, On this question Augustine differs from other expositors. His opinion is that all the days that are called seven, are one day represented in a sevenfold aspect (Gen. ad lit. iv, 22; De Civ. Dei xi, 9; Ad Orosium xxvi); while others consider there were seven distinct days, not one only. Now, these two opinions, taken as explaining the literal text of Genesis, are certainly widely different. For Augustine understands by the word “day,” the knowledge in the mind of the angels, and hence, according to him, the first day denotes their knowledge of

the first of the Divine works, the second day their knowledge of the second work, and similarly with the rest. Thus, then, each work is said to have been wrought in some one of these days, inasmuch as God wrought in some one of these days, inasmuch as God wrought nothing in the universe without impressing the knowledge thereof on the angelic mind; which can know many things at the same time, especially in the Word, in Whom all angelic knowledge is perfected and terminated. So the distinction of days denotes the natural order of the things known, and not a succession in the knowledge acquired, or in the things produced. Moreover, angelic knowledge is appropriately called “day,” since light, the cause of day, is to be found in spiritual things, as Augustine observes (Gen. ad lit. iv, 28). In the opinion of the others, however, the days signify a succession both in time, and in the things produced.

If, however, these two explanations are looked at as referring to the mode of production, they will be found not greatly to differ, if the diversity of opinion existing on two points, as already shown (q. 67, a. 1; q. 69, a. 1), between Augustine and other writers is taken into account. First, because Augustine takes the earth and the water as first created, to signify matter totally without form; but the making of the firmament, the gathering of the waters, and the appearing of dry land, to denote the impression of forms upon corporeal matter. But other holy writers take the earth and the water, as first created, to signify the elements of the universe themselves existing under the proper forms, and the works that follow to mean some sort of distinction in bodies previously existing, as also has been shown (q. 67, Aa. 1,4; q. 69, a. 1). Secondly, some writers hold that plants and animals were produced actually in the work of the six days; Augustine, that they were produced potentially. Now the opinion of Augustine, that the works of the six days were simultaneous, is consistent with either view of the mode of production. For the other writers agree with him that in the first production of things matter existed under the substantial form of the elements, and agree with him also that in the first instituting of the world animals and plants did not exist actually. There remains, however, a difference as to four points; since, according to the latter, there was a time, after the

production of creatures, in which light did not exist, the firmament had not been formed, and the earth was still covered by the waters, nor had the heavenly bodies been formed, which is the fourth difference; which are not consistent with Augustine's explanation. In order, therefore, to be impartial, we must meet the arguments of either side.

Reply to Objection 1. On the day on which God created the heaven and the earth, He created also every plant of the field, not, indeed, actually, but "before it sprung up in the earth," that is, potentially. And this work Augustine ascribes to the third day, but other writers to the first instituting of the world.

Reply to Objection 2. God created all things together so far as regards their substance in some measure formless. But He did not create all things together, so far as regards that formation of things which lies in distinction

and adornment. Hence the word "creation" is significant.

Reply to Objection 3. On the seventh day God ceased from making new things, but not from providing for their increase, and to this latter work it belongs that the first day is succeeded by other days.

Reply to Objection 4. All things were not distinguished and adorned together, not from a want of power on God's part, as requiring time in which to work, but that due order might be observed in the instituting of the world. Hence it was fitting that different days should be assigned to the different states of the world, as each succeeding work added to the world a fresh state of perfection.

Reply to Objection 5. According to Augustine, the order of days refers to the natural order of the works attributed to the days.

Whether Scripture uses suitable words to express the work of the six days?

Ia q. 74 a. 3

Objection 1. It would seem the Scripture does not use suitable words to express the works of the six days. For as light, the firmament, and other similar works were made by the Word of God, so were the heaven and the earth. For "all things were made by Him" (Jn. 1:3). Therefore in the creation of heaven and earth, as in the other works, mention should have been made of the Word of God.

Objection 2. Further, the water was created by God, yet its creation is not mentioned. Therefore the creation of the world is not sufficiently described.

Objection 3. Further, it is said (Gn. 1:31): "God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good." It ought, then, to have been said of each work, "God saw that it was good." The omission, therefore, of these words in the work of creation and in that of the second day, is not fitting.

Objection 4. Further, the Spirit of God is God Himself. But it does not befit God to move and to occupy place. Therefore the words, "The Spirit of God moved over the waters," are unbecoming.

Objection 5. Further, what is already made is not made over again. Therefore to the words, "God said: Let the firmament be made. . . and it was so," it is superfluous to add, "God made the firmament." And the like is to be said of other works.

Objection 6. Further, evening and morning do not sufficiently divide the day, since the day has many parts. Therefore the words, "The evening and morning were the second day" or, "the third day," are not suitable.

Objection 7. Further, "first," not "one," corresponds to "second" and "third." It should therefore have been said that, "The evening and the morning were the first day," rather than "one day."

Reply to Objection 1. According to Augustine (Gen.

ad lit. i, 4), the person of the Son is mentioned both in the first creation of the world, and in its distinction and adornment, but differently in either place. For distinction and adornment belong to the work by which the world receives its form. But as the giving form to a work of art is by means of the form of the art in the mind of the artist, which may be called his intelligible word, so the giving form to every creature is by the word of God; and for this reason in the works of distinction and adornment the Word is mentioned. But in creation the Son is mentioned as the beginning, by the words, "In the beginning God created," since by creation is understood the production of formless matter. But according to those who hold that the elements were created from the first under their proper forms, another explanation must be given; and therefore Basil says (Hom. ii, iii in Hexaem.) that the words, "God said," signify a Divine command. Such a command, however, could not have been given before creatures had been produced that could obey it.

Reply to Objection 2. According to Augustine (De Civ. Dei ix, 33), by the heaven is understood the formless spiritual nature, and by the earth, the formless matter of all corporeal things, and thus no creature is omitted. But, according to Basil (Hom. i in Hexaem.), the heaven and the earth, as the two extremes, are alone mentioned, the intervening things being left to be understood, since all these move heavenwards, if light, or earthwards, if heavy. And others say that under the word, "earth," Scripture is accustomed to include all the four elements as (Ps. 148:7,8) after the words, "Praise the Lord from the earth," is added, "fire, hail, snow, and ice."

Reply to Objection 3. In the account of the creation there is found something to correspond to the words, "God saw that it was good," used in the work of distinction and

adornment, and this appears from the consideration that the Holy Spirit is Love. Now, “there are two things,” says Augustine (Gen. ad lit. i, 8) which came from God’s love of His creatures, their existence and their permanence. That they might then exist, and exist permanently, “the Spirit of God,” it is said, “moved over the waters”—that is to say, over that formless matter, signified by water, even as the love of the artist moves over the materials of his art, that out of them he may form his work. And the words, “God saw that it was good,” signify that the things that He had made were to endure, since they express a certain satisfaction taken by God in His works, as of an artist in his art: not as though He knew the creature otherwise, or that the creature was pleasing to Him otherwise, than before He made it. Thus in either work, of creation and of formation, the Trinity of Persons is implied. In creation the Person of the Father is indicated by God the Creator, the Person of the Son by the beginning, in which He created, and the Person of the Holy Ghost by the Spirit that moved over the waters. But in the formation, the Person of the Father is indicated by God that speaks, and the Person of the Son by the Word in which He speaks, and the Person of the Holy Spirit by the satisfaction with which God saw that what was made was good. And if the words, “God saw that it was good,” are not said of the work of the second day, this is because the work of distinguishing the waters was only begun on that day, but perfected on the third. Hence these words, that are said of the third day, refer also to the second. Or it may be that Scripture does not use these words of approval of the second days’ work, because this is concerned with the distinction of things not evident to the senses of mankind. Or, again, because by the firmament is simply understood the cloudy region of the air, which is not one of the permanent parts of the universe, nor of the principal divisions of the world. The above three reasons are given by Rabbi Moses*, and to these may be added a mystical one derived from numbers and assigned by some writers, according to whom the work of the second day is not marked with approval because the second number is an imperfect number, as receding from the perfection of unity.

Reply to Objection 4. Rabbi Moses (Perplex. ii) understands by the “Spirit of the Lord,” the air or the wind, as Plato also did, and says that it is so called according to the custom of Scripture, in which these things are throughout attributed to God. But according to the holy writers, the Spirit of the Lord signifies the Holy Ghost, Who is said to “move over the water”—that is to say, over what Augustine holds to mean formless matter, lest it should be supposed that God loved of necessity the works He was to produce, as though He stood in need of them. For love of that kind is subject to, not superior to, the object of love. Moreover, it is fittingly implied that the Spirit moved

over that which was incomplete and unfinished, since that movement is not one of place, but of pre-eminent power, as Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. i, 7). It is the opinion, however, of Basil (Hom. ii in Hexaem.) that the Spirit moved over the element of water, “fostering and quickening its nature and impressing vital power, as the hen broods over her chickens.” For water has especially a life-giving power, since many animals are generated in water, and the seed of all animals is liquid. Also the life of the soul is given by the water of baptism, according to Jn. 3:5: “Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”

Reply to Objection 5. According to Augustine (Gen. ad lit. i, 8), these three phrases denote the threefold being of creatures; first, their being in the Word, denoted by the command “Let... be made”; secondly, their being in the angelic mind, signified by the words, “It was... done”; thirdly, their being in their proper nature, by the words, “He made.” And because the formation of the angels is recorded on the first day, it was not necessary there to add, “He made.” It may also be said, following other writers, that the words, “He said,” and “Let... be made,” denote God’s command, and the words, “It was done,” the fulfilment of that command. But as it was necessary, for the sake of those especially who have asserted that all visible things were made by the angels, to mention how things were made, it is added, in order to remove that error, that God Himself made them. Hence, in each work, after the words, “It was done,” some act of God is expressed by some such words as, “He made,” or, “He divided,” or, “He called.”

Reply to Objection 6. According to Augustine (Gen. ad lit. iv, 22,30), by the “evening” and the “morning” are understood the evening and the morning knowledge of the angels, which has been explained (q. 58, a. 6,7). But, according to Basil (Hom. ii in Hexaem.), the entire period takes its name, as is customary, from its more important part, the day. And instance of this is found in the words of Jacob, “The days of my pilgrimage,” where night is not mentioned at all. But the evening and the morning are mentioned as being the ends of the day, since day begins with morning and ends with evening, or because evening denotes the beginning of night, and morning the beginning of day. It seems fitting, also, that where the first distinction of creatures is described, divisions of time should be denoted only by what marks their beginning. And the reason for mentioning the evening first is that as the evening ends the day, which begins with the light, the termination of the light at evening precedes the termination of the darkness, which ends with the morning. But Chrysostom’s explanation is that thereby it is intended to show that the natural day does not end with the evening, but with the morning (Hom. v in Gen.).

* Perplex. ii.

Reply to Objection 7. The words “one day” are used when day is first instituted, to denote that one day is made up of twenty-four hours. Hence, by mentioning “one,” the measure of a natural day is fixed. Another reason may be to signify that a day is completed by the return of the sun to the point from which it commenced its course. And yet another, because at the completion of a week of seven days, the first day returns which is one with the eighth day. The three reasons assigned above are those given by Basil (Hom. ii in Hexaem.).