

QUESTION 74

All Seven Days in General

Next we consider all seven days in general. And on this topic there are three questions: (1) about whether there are enough days, (2) about whether there is just one day or more than one, (3) about certain ways of speaking that Scripture uses in narrating the works of the six days.

Article 1

Are these days adequately enumerated?

It seems that these days are not adequately enumerated:

Objection 1: The work of creation is no less distinct from the works of division and adornment than these latter two works are from one another. But distinct days are assigned to division and other distinct days to adornment. Therefore, distinct days should likewise be assigned to creation.

Objection 2: Air and fire are more noble elements than are earth and water. But one day is assigned to the division of the waters and another day to the division of the earth. Therefore, other distinct days should be assigned to the division of the fire and the division of the air.

Objection 3: Birds and fish are no less diverse from one another than are birds and terrestrial animals. What's more, man is more diverse from the other animals than any of the other animals are from one another. But one day is assigned to the production of the fish of the sea and another separate day to the production of the animals of the earth. Therefore, separate days should likewise have been assigned to the production of the birds of the heavens and to the production of man.

But contrary to this:

1. It seems that some of the days are superfluous. For instance, light is related to the celestial lights as an accident to a subject. But a subject is produced simultaneously with its proper accident. Therefore, it should not have been the case that light was produced on one day and the celestial lights on another day.

2. These days are devoted to the first establishment of the world. But on the seventh day nothing was established for the first time. Therefore, the seventh day should not be counted with the other days.

I respond: The explanation for the distinctions among these days can be made clear on the basis of what has gone before (q. 70, a. 1). For the parts of the world had first to be divided, and afterwards each part had to be adorned by being filled, as it were, with its own inhabitants.

Thus, according to the other saints, corporeal creation has three designated parts: (a) the first part, which is signified by the name 'heaven'; (b) the middle part, which is signified by the name 'water'; and (c) the last part, which is signified by the name 'earth'. (As *De Caelo I* reports, the Pythagoreans likewise held that perfection consists in a triad, viz., a beginning, a middle, and an end.) Therefore, the first part is divided on the first day and adorned on the fourth day; the middle part is divided on the second day and adorned on the fifth day; and the last part is divided on the third day and adorned on the sixth day.

By contrast, Augustine, while agreeing with the other saints about the last three days, differs from them over the first three days. For according to him, spiritual creation is formed on the first day, whereas corporeal creation is formed on the other two days, with the higher bodies are formed on the second day and the lower bodies on the third day. And so the perfection of God's works corresponds to the perfection of the number *six*, which arises from its parts being joined together in a certain way, where these parts are *one*, *two*, and *three*. For one day is assigned to the formation of spiritual creation, two days are assigned to the formation of corporeal creation, and three days are assigned to adornment.

Reply to objection 1: According to Augustine, the work of creation has to do with the production of unformed matter and unformed spiritual nature. These two productions occur outside of time (*extra tempus*), as he himself says in *Confessiones* 12, and so the creation of both sorts of creature is posited before any of the days.

However, according to the other saints, one can reply that the work of division and the work of adornment involve certain changes in creatures, and that this change is measured by time. By contrast, the work of creation consists solely in God's action at the instant of His producing the substance of things. And so every work of division and work of adornment is said to have been accomplished "in a day," whereas creation is said to have been accomplished "in the beginning," a phrase that bespeaks something indivisible.

Reply to objection 2: Since the fire and the air are not discerned by ordinary people, they are not explicitly named by Moses among the parts of the world. Instead, as Augustine explains, they are counted either (a) along with the middle part, viz., water, especially as regards the lower part of the air, or (b) along with the heavens, as regards the higher part of the air.

Reply to objection 3: The production of animals is recorded insofar as they serve to adorn the various parts of the world. And so the days that involve the production of animals are distinguished or combined according to whether they agree or differ with respect to the part of the world that is being adorned.

Reply to argument 1 for the contrary: On the first day the nature of light was made in some subject. But it is on the fourth day that the celestial lights are said to have been made—not, as was explained above (q. 70, a. 1), because their substance was made *de novo*, but because they were formed in a way in which they had not been formed before.

Reply to argument 2 for the contrary: According to Augustine, there is something assigned to the seventh day after everything that is attributed to the six days, viz., that God rested in Himself from His works. And so after the six days it was necessary to make mention of the seventh day.

By contrast, according to the other saints, one can reply that on the seventh day the world had a certain new status, viz., that nothing would be added to it *de novo*. And so after the six days a seventh day is posited and designated as the cessation of work.

Article 2

Are all the days a single day?

It seems that all the days are a single day:

Objection 1: Genesis 2:4-5 says, "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 sprang up in the earth." Therefore, there was a single day on which He made heaven and earth and every plant of the field. But heaven and earth were made on the first day (or, better, before all the days), whereas the plants of the field were made on the third day. Therefore, a single day is both the first day and the third day and, by parity of reasoning, a single day is all the days.

Objection 2: Ecclesiasticus 18:1 says, "He who lives forever created all things at once (*creavit omnia simul*)." But this would not be the case if there were many days of these works, since many days do not occur "at once." Therefore, there is just a single day and not many days.

Objection 3: On the seventh day God stopped doing new works. Therefore, if the seventh day is distinct from the other days, it follows that He did not make the seventh day—which is absurd.

Objection 4: God finished in an instant the whole of the work ascribed to a given day; for in the case of each work it says, “He spoke and it was done.” Therefore, if He had reserved a later work for another day, it would follow that for the rest of the day in question He would have stopped working—which would be superfluous. Therefore, it is not the case that there is any day of subsequent work that is distinct from a day of previous work.

But contrary to this: Genesis 1 says, “The evening and the morning were the second day ... and the third day,” and so on for the others. But one cannot say ‘second’ and ‘third’ when there is just one. Therefore, there was not just a single day.

I respond: On this question Augustine disagrees with the other commentators. For in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 4, *De Civitate Dei* 11, and *Ad Orosium*, Augustine claims that what are called seven days are all a single day presented in a sevenfold manner. By contrast, the other commentators think that there were seven distinct days and not just a single day.

Now there is a big difference between these two opinions when they are applied to the exposition of the text of Genesis.

According to Augustine, ‘day’ refers to a cognition in the angelic mind, so that the first day is a cognition of the first divine work, the second day is a cognition of the second work, and so on for the others. And each work is said to have been done on a given day because God did not produce anything in reality without impressing it upon the angelic mind. But the angelic mind is able to understand many things at once—especially in the Word, in whom every angelic cognition is perfected and terminated. And so a day is distinguished according to the natural order of the things known and not according to either a succession of cognitions or a succession in the production of the things. On the other hand, an angelic cognition can be truly and properly called a ‘day’, since, according to Augustine, light, which is the cause of a day, is properly found in spiritual entities.

By contrast, according to the others, what is indicated by means of these days is both a succession of temporal days and a succession in the production of things.

On the other hand, there is not a big difference between the two opinions when they are applied to the manner in which things were produced. This is because of the two points of interpretation on which, as is clear from what was said above (q. 67, a. 1 and q. 69, a. 1), Augustine differs from the others.

First, Augustine understands the earth and the water that were created first to be totally unformed corporeal matter, whereas he understands the making of the firmament and the gathering of the waters and the appearance of dry land to be the bestowal of forms on corporeal matter. By contrast, the other saints understand the earth and the water that were created first to be the world’s elements themselves, existing with their own proper forms, whereas they understand the subsequent works to be the division of the previously existing bodies. This was explained above (q. 67 a. 1 and 4 and q. 69, a. 1).

Second, they differ over the production of the plants and animals. The other saints claim that in the work of the six days the plants and animals were produced in actuality, whereas Augustine claims that they were produced only in potentiality.

Therefore, given Augustine’s claim that the works of the six days were accomplished simultaneously, what follows is the same mode of production for creatures. For on both views, in the first establishment of things matter existed with the substantial forms of the elements, and, according to both views, in the first establishment of things there were no actual plants or animals.

However, differences remain with respect to four points. For according to the other saints, after the initial production of creatures there was a temporal interval during which (a) light did not exist, (b) the firmament had not been formed, (c) the earth was still covered with the waters, and (d) the celestial lights had not been formed. On Augustine’s interpretation there is no need to make these claims.

Therefore, in order not to do prejudice to either of these opinions, we must reply to the arguments for both sides.

Reply to objection 1: On the day on which God created heaven and earth He also created every green plant of the field—not in actuality but before they grew up out of the earth, i.e., in potentiality. Augustine ascribes this to the third day, whereas the others ascribe it to the first establishment of things.

Reply to objection 2: God created all things at once with respect to their substance—a substance that was in some sense unformed. But as far as the formation that was accomplished through division and adornment is concerned, it did not all take place at the same time. Hence, Scripture expressly uses the verb *to create* [for the first establishment of things].

Reply to objection 3: On the seventh day God stopped doing new works, but He did not stop propagating some things from others. The fact that other things come along after the first day pertains to this propagation.

Reply to objection 4: The fact that not all things are divided and adorned at the same time does not stem from God’s lack of power (as though He needed time to operate), but is instead meant to preserve order within the establishment of things. And so different days had to be devoted to the different states of the world, and a new state of perfection was in every case added to the world by a subsequent work.

Reply to argument for the contrary: According to Augustine the order of the days has to be traced back to the natural order of the works that are attributed to the days.

Article 3

Does Scripture use appropriate language to express the works of the six days?

It seems that Scripture does not use appropriate language to express the works of the six days:

Objection 1: Just as light and the firmament and other such works were made through God’s Word, so too were heaven and earth, since “all things were made through Him,” as John 1:3 says. Therefore, mention should have been made of the Word of God in the creation of heaven and earth, just as it was in the other works.

Objection 2: Water was created by God, even though there is no mention of its having been created. Therefore, the creation of things is not adequately described.

Objection 3: As Genesis 1:31 says, “God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good.” Therefore, in the case of each work it should have said, “God saw that it was good.” Therefore, it was wrong to omit this in the case of the work of creation and in the case of the work of the second day.

Objection 4: The spirit of God is God. But it does not befit God to move (*ferra*) or to have a position. Therefore, it was wrong to say, “The spirit of God moved over the waters” (Genesis 1:2).

Objection 5: No one makes what has already been made. Therefore, after it said, “God said, ‘Let there be a firmament (Genesis 1:6)’” and it was made, it was wrong to add, “God made a firmament” (Genesis 1:7). And the same thing holds for the other works.

Objection 6: Morning and evening are not sufficient to divide a day, since there are many parts of a day. Therefore, it was wrong to say, “Morning and evening were the second (or third) day” (Genesis 1:8 and 1:13).

Objection 7: It is the term ‘first’—and not the term ‘one’—that corresponds to ‘second’ and ‘third’. Therefore, it should have said, “Morning and evening were the first day,” where it in fact says “one day” (Genesis 1:5).

Reply to objection 1: According to Augustine, the person of the Son is mentioned both in the first

creation of things and in the division and adornment of things, though in different ways.

For the division and adornment pertain to the formation of things. But just as the formation of artifacts is accomplished through the form of the craft that exists in the craftsman's mind and is called his 'intelligible word', so too the formation of the whole of creation is accomplished through the Word of God. And this is the sense in which there is mention of the Word in the work of division and adornment.

On the other hand, in the creation the Son is mentioned as a beginning, when it says, "In the beginning God created ...," since 'creation' is being understood as the production of unformed matter. However, according to the other saints, who claim that the elements were created first with their proper forms, a different reply must be given. For instance, Basil claims that the phrase "God said ..." signifies a divine command. But before mention is made of a divine command, a creature has to be produced that would obey the command.

Reply to objection 2: According to Augustine, 'heaven' refers to unformed spiritual matter, whereas 'earth' refers to the unformed matter of all bodies. And so no creature is omitted.

By contrast, according to Basil, heaven and earth are posited here as two endpoints, so that the things in the middle are implicitly understood by reference to them, especially in light of the fact that the motion of each body in the middle is either toward the heaven, as with the motion of light bodies, or toward the earth, as with the motion of heavy bodies.

Others, however, claim that Scripture normally includes all four elements under the name 'earth'. Hence, in Psalm 148:7, after it says, "Praise the Lord from the earth," it adds, "fire, hail, snow, and ice."

Reply to objection 3: In the case of the work of creation there is something that corresponds to what is said in the case of the work of division and adornment, viz., "God saw that this or that was good."

To see this clearly, notice that the Holy Spirit is the Love. Now as Augustine explains in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 1, "There are two things for the sake of which God loves His creatures, viz., (a) that they might exist and (b) that they might remain in existence. Therefore, (a) in order that what would remain in existence might exist, it says, 'The spirit of God moved over the waters'"—insofar as 'waters' refers to unformed matter, in the way that the craftsman's love 'moves over' a given material in order that he might form a work from it—"whereas (b) in order that what He had made should remain in existence, it says, 'God saw that it was good'." The latter signifies the divine craftsman's delight in the thing made (not that He knows it in any other way, or that it pleases Him in any other way, than before He had made it).

And so the Trinity of persons is made known both in the work of creation and in the work of formation. More specifically, in the work of creation, the person of the Father is made known through "God created ...," the person of the Son is made known through "the beginning" in which He created, and the person of Holy Spirit is made known by the fact that He "moved over the waters." Again, in the work of formation, the person of the Father is made known in God's speaking, the person of the Son is made known in the Word by which He speaks, and the person of the Holy Spirit is made known in the delight with which God sees that what He has made is good.

On the other hand, in the work of the second day, the reason why it does not say, "God saw that it was good" is that the work of dividing the waters is begun on that day and completed on the third day. Hence, what is said on the third day refers back to the second day as well.

An alternative reply is that the reason why Scripture does not use an approval of this sort is that the division posited on the second day is of things that are not evident to the people.

Yet another reply is that 'firmament' here is being taken for the cloudy air, which is not one of the permanent parts of the universe or one of the principal parts of the world.

These are the three explanations given by Rabbi Moses.

On the other hand, some give a mystical explanation based on numbers: The reason why the work of second day is not given an approval is that the number *two* recedes from oneness.

Reply to objection 4: By ‘the spirit of the Lord’ Rabbi Moses understands the air or the wind, just as Plato did. And he claims that the text says “the spirit of the Lord” because Scripture was everywhere accustomed to attributing the breathing of the winds to God.

However, according to the saints, “the spirit of the Lord” refers to the Holy Spirit, who is said to move over the waters—i.e., over unformed matter, according to Augustine—“so that no one might think that God loves the works He has made out of a necessity of need. For a love borne of need is subject to the things that it loves. And it is appropriate that what is first made known is something inchoate over which He is said to move. For He does not move over a place, but rather moves with a preeminent power” (Augustine, *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 1).

On the other hand, according to Basil, he moves over the element water, i.e., “He fosters and enlivens the nature of the waters, like a hovering mother-hen, impressing vital power on the things that are being fostered.” For water especially has a vital power, since most animals are generated in water and the semen of all animals is liquid. Also, spiritual life is given through the water of Baptism; hence John 3:5 says, “Unless you are reborn of water and the Holy Spirit”

Reply to objection 5: According to Augustine, the threefold *esse* of things is designated by three of the phrases: (a) the *esse* of things in the Word is designated by its saying, “Let there be ...”; (b) the *esse* of things in the angelic mind is designated by its saying, “It was made”; and (c) the *esse* of things in their proper natures is designated by its saying, “He made it.” And since the formation of the angels is described on the first day, it was not necessary to add “He made it” there.

By contrast, according to the other saints, one can reply that the fact that it says, “God said, ‘Let there be ...’” signifies God’s command with respect to making, whereas the fact that it says, “It was made” signifies the completion of the work. But it was necessary to add how it was made, especially because of those who claimed that all visible things were made by the angels. And so to exclude this, it adds that God Himself made them. Hence, in the case of each of the works, after it says, “And it was made,” some act of God’s is added, either “He made it” or “He divided them” or “He called it ...” or something of this sort.

Reply to objection 6: According to Augustine, ‘morning’ and ‘evening’ refer to the morning knowledge and evening knowledge of angels, which was explained above (q. 58, aa. 6 and 7).

Alternatively, according to Basil, the whole of a time was customarily named by its principal part, viz., day, in the way that Jacob said, “The days of my wandering” (Genesis 47:9), without making any mention of night.

Now evening and morning are posited as the endpoints of a day, the beginning of which is morning and the end of which is evening.

Alternatively, ‘evening’ designates the beginning of night, whereas ‘morning’ designates the beginning of day. And it was fitting that when the first division of things was mentioned, only the beginnings of the times should be designated.

Moreover, evening is mentioned first because, given that the day begins with light, the terminus of light, i.e., evening, occurs before the terminus of darkness and night, i.e., morning.

Alternatively, according to Chrysostom, evening is mentioned first in order to signify that a natural day ends in the morning and not in the evening.

Reply to objection 7: It says ‘one day’ on the first establishment of a day in order to signify that a period of twenty-four hours pertains to a single day. Hence, by saying “one day” it fixes the measure of a natural day.

An alternative reply is that it says “one day” in order to signify that the day is consummated by the return of the sun to one and the same point.

Yet another reply is that it says “one day” because once the seven days have been completed, there will be a return to the first day, which is one with the eighth day.

These are the three reasons that Basil gives.