

Genesis 1 (Revised Standard Version)

1. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
2. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.
3. And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.
4. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.
5. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.
6. And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."
7. And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so.
8. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.
9. And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so.
10. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.
11. And God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth." And it was so.
12. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.
13. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.
14. And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years,
15. And let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so.
16. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also.
17. And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth,
18. to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.
19. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.
20. And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens."

21. So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.
22. And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."
23. And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.
24. And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so.
25. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.
26. Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."
27. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
28. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."
29. And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.
30. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.
31. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

Genesis 2

1. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.
2. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done.
3. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.
4. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,
5. when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up--for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground;

6. but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground--
7. then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.
8. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.
9. And out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
10. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.
11. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;
12. and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there.
13. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Cush.
14. And the name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.
15. The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.
16. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;
17. but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."
18. Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."
19. So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.
20. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him.
21. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh;
22. and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.
23. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."
24. Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.
25. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Genesis 3

1. Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'?"
2. And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden;
3. but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"
4. But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die.
5. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
6. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate.
7. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.
8. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.
9. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"
10. And he said, "I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."
11. He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"
12. The man said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."
13. Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate."
14. The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.
15. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."
16. To the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."
17. And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
18. thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.
19. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you

were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

20. The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.
21. And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them.
22. Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever" --
23. therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken.
24. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

St. Augustine

Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis

Introductory admonitions

1. The obscure mysteries of the natural order, which we perceive to have been made by God the almighty craftsman, should rather be discussed by asking questions than by making affirmations. This is supremely the case with the books which have been entrusted to us by divine authority, because the rash assertion of one's uncertain and dubious opinions in dealing with them can scarcely avoid the charge of sacrilege. On the other hand the doubts and hesitations implied by asking questions must not exceed the bounds of Catholic faith. Many heretics, after all, have been in the habit of twisting their exposition of the divine scriptures to fit their way of thinking, which is quite at odds with the faith learned by Catholics. So before we undertake the study of this book of Genesis, we must briefly set out the Catholic faith.

2. Here then it is: that God the almighty Father made and established the whole of creation through his only-begotten Son, that is, through his wisdom and power² consubstantial and co-eternal with himself, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, who is also consubstantial and co-eternal. So Catholic teaching bids us believe that this Trinity is called one God, and that he made and created all things that are, insofar as they are, to the effect that all creatures, whether intellectual or corporeal,³ or what more briefly according to the words of the divine scriptures can be called invisible or visible, are not born of God,⁴ but made by God out of nothing, and that there is nothing among them which belongs to the Trinity, except what the Trinity created-this nature was created.⁵ For this reason it is not lawful to say or believe that the whole creation is consubstantial or co-eternal with God.

3. Again, that all things that God made, however, *are very good* (Gn 1:31), while evil things are not part of nature, but everything that is called evil is either sin or the punishment of sin, and sin is nothing but the twisted consent of the free will, when we stoop to things forbidden by justice which it is true freedom to abstain from. That is, sin consists not in the things themselves, but in the unlawful use of them. Now the use of things is lawful when the soul remains within the bounds of God's law and subject to the one God in unqualified love, and regulates other things that are subject to it without greed or lust, that is, in accordance with God's commandments. It is in this way, you see, that it will exercise control over them without any trouble or distress, and with the greatest ease and felicity.

The punishment though of sin is when the soul is tormented by created things themselves not being at its service, seeing that it declines to be itself at the service of God; this creation was

once upon a time compliant to the soul, when the soul was compliant to God.⁶ And so there is nothing evil about fire, since it is a creature of God; but all the same we in our frailty get burned by it as our sins justly deserve.

Again, that there are sins, however, which are said to be natural, because we cannot help committing them before God's mercy comes to the rescue, after we have fallen into this condition of life through the sin committed by free will.

4. Again, that humanity was made new once more through our Lord Jesus Christ, when God's inexpressible and changeable Wisdom herself deigned to take on full and complete humanity and to be born of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, to be crucified, to be buried and rise again and ascend into heaven, which has all happened already; and to come to judge the living and the dead at the end of the age and the resurrection of the dead in the flesh, which is proclaimed as being yet to come; that the Holy Spirit has been given to those who believe in him, that mother Church has been established by him, which is called Catholic insofar as it has been in all respects perfected and is in no way defective and has spread through the whole wide world; that their previous sins have been forgiven to those who are repentant; and in eternal life and the promise of the kingdom of heaven.⁷

History, allegory, analogy, and aetiology

2, 5. We must now consider the things that can be asked about and discussed in this book, in accordance with this faith. *In the beginning God made heaven and earth* (Gn 1:1). Four ways of expounding the law have been laid down by some scripture commentators, which can be named in words derived from the Greek, while they need further definition and explanation in plain Latin; they are the way of history, the way of allegory, the way of analogy, the way of aetiology. History is when things done by God or man are recounted; allegory when they are understood as being said figuratively; analogy, when the harmony of the old and new covenants is being demonstrated; aetiology, when the causes of the things that have been said and done are presented.

Various historical ways of interpreting Gn 1:1

3, 6. So about these words, *In the beginning God made heaven and earth*, one may inquire whether they are only to be taken in an historical sense, or whether they also have some figurative meaning, and how they agree with the gospel, and what the cause is of this book's beginning in this way. As regards the historical sense, we ask what *in the beginning means*; that is, whether it is in the beginning of time, or in the beginning, in the very Wisdom of God,

because the Son of God actually called himself the beginning when he was asked *Who are you, then?* and he said, *The beginning,*⁸ *as which I am also speaking to you* (Jn 8:25). There is, you see, a beginning without beginning, and there is a beginning with another beginning. The beginning without beginning only the Father is; and that is why we believe that all things come from one beginning. The Son however is the beginning in such a way that he is from the Father.

...

7. Or is the reason it says *In the beginning* that this was the first thing made? Or is it impossible for heaven and earth to have been the first thing to have been made in creation, if the angels and all the intellectual powers were made first, because we have to believe that the angels too are God's creation and were made by him? For the prophet had also mentioned angels in Psalm 148 when he said, *It was he that gave orders, and they were made, he that commanded, and they were created* (Ps 148:5.2).

But if the angels were the first thing to be made, one can ask whether they were made in time, or before all time, or at the actual start of time. If in time, time was already there before the angels were made; and since time also is itself something created, we are on the point of being obliged to accept that something was made before the angels. If however we say that they were made at the start of time, so that time began with them, then we have to rule out as false what some people maintain, that time began with heaven and earth.¹²

8. If, though, the angels were made before time, the question arises how it can be said in the following passage, *And God said, Let lights be made in the firmament of heaven, to shine upon the earth, and to divide between day and night; and let them be for signs and for times and for days and for years* (Gn 1:14). Here, after all, it may seem that that was when time began, when the heavens and the lights of heaven began to run their regular courses. But if that is the case, how could there be days before there was time, if time started with the courses of the lights of heaven, which are said to have been made on the fourth day? Or were these days arranged in this order as a help to human frailty, and to suggest sublime things to lowly people in a lowly manner by following the basic rule of story-telling, which requires the story teller's tale to have a beginning, a middle and an end?

...

But however this may be—it is, after all, a most abstruse matter, quite impenetrable to human guesswork—this assuredly has to be accepted in faith, even if it exceeds our habits of thought, that everything created has a beginning and that time itself is something created, and thus itself also has a beginning, and is not co-eternal with the creator.

9. It can also be reasonably supposed that “heaven and earth” are put here for the whole of creation, so that both this visible firmament of ether¹³ is called heaven, and so too is that

invisible creation of the higher powers; and again that “earth” means the whole lower part of the universe, together with the animals that occupy it. Or else, is “heaven” what the whole sublime and invisible creation is called, while “earth” means the whole visible world, so that in this way too what is said here, *In the beginning God made heaven and earth*, can be understood to include the whole of creation? May one suggest, perhaps, that it is not inappropriate for everything visible to be called “earth” in comparison with the invisible creation, so that this alone is given the name of “heaven,” since the soul too, which is invisible, was called earth when it started being swollen with love of visible things, and preening itself on their acquisition, as it is written, *What have earth and ashes to be proud of?* (Sir 10:9)

10. But the question also arises, whether it was all things already sorted out and put together that he called heaven and earth, or whether it was on the originally formless matter of the universe, which was distributed into all these formed and specific and beautiful¹⁴ natures at God’s wordless command, that he bestowed the name of heaven and earth. For although we have read the text, *You that made the world from formless matter* (Wis 11:17), still we cannot say that such matter itself, whatever sort of thing it may be, was not made by him, from whom we confess and believe that all things derive their being. So what we would have then, is that the ordering and arrangement of the things, all and sundry, which have been formed and sorted out is called “world,” or “universe,” while the basic material itself was named “heaven and earth,” as being the seed, so to say, of heaven and earth, as being heaven and earth all mixed up and thrown in together by the craftsman, God, ready for receiving those forms.¹⁵

Up to this point we have been inquiring about the meaning of the text, *In the beginning God made heaven and earth*; it would have been impossible, after all, to make any definite assertions about these matters without incurring the charge of rashness.

Genesis 1:2; the earth invisible and shapeless; darkness over the abyss

4, 11. *Now the earth was invisible and shapeless, and there was darkness over the abyss; and the Spirit of God was being borne over the water* (Gn 1:2). The heretics who reject the Old Testament¹⁶ are in the habit of pointing the finger at this passage, and saying, “How can God have made heaven and earth in the beginning, if the earth was already there?” They fail to understand that this verse was added to explain what the earth was like, about which it had already said, *God made heaven and earth*. So this is how we have to take it: *In the beginning God made heaven and earth*; but this earth, which God made, was invisible and shapeless, until it was sorted out by the same God and from its original mishmash established in a definite order of distinct things.

Or is it better to understand it like this, that in this execution of God's design the same material of the world was again being presented as had been first named heaven and earth, so that this would be the sense here: "In the beginning God made heaven and earth; but this that is called heaven and earth was the invisible and shapeless earth, with darkness over the abyss; that is, what was called heaven and earth was a kind of mixed-up material out of which the world (which consists of two chief parts, namely heaven and earth) would be fashioned by the sorting out of its elements and the bestowal on them of shape and form?" This mixed-up material could best be suggested to the comprehension of the common man if it was called earth that was invisible and shapeless, or unordered and unfurnished and darkness over the abyss, that is, over the vast deep; and this deep in turn was perhaps given this name because owing to its formlessness nobody's mind could fathom it.

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Genesis 1:2; the meaning of the spirit of God

16. *And the Spirit of God was being borne over the water* (Gn 1:2); not like oil over water or water over earth, that is, as though being borne up by it; but if we must take examples from visible things, as this light of the sun or the moon is borne over these bodies which it illuminates on the earth. This is not, you see, being borne up by them, but while being borne up together with the sky or heaven, it is being borne over these things.

Again we must beware of supposing that the Spirit of God was being borne over the basic material as though covering a spatial distance, but rather as exercising a skill in making and fashioning things, in the way that the intention of a craftsman is "borne over" the wood or whatever it is he is working on, or even over the parts of his body, which he applies to the work. And while this comparison is much better than one with any bodily thing, still it is scarcely worth anything at all for understanding how the Spirit of God is borne over the material of the world to work on it. But we cannot find any clearer comparison, or any that is closer to the matter we are talking about in things that people can grasp in any way at all. For this reason the best thing to do in this kind of reflection will be to hold on to the injunction, where it is written: *When you praise the Lord, exalt him as much as you can; he will still be beyond you* (Sir 43:30). This however is said if "the spirit of God" in this place is taken to be the Holy Spirit, whom we venerate in the inexpressible and unchangeable Trinity.

Genesis 1:3: With what kind of voice did God speak?

5, 19. *And God said. Let light be made, and light was made* (Gn 1:3). We are bound to agree that it was not with a voice issuing from lungs and tongue and teeth that God said "Let light be

made.” Such ideas are literal-minded and of the flesh; and to think according to the flesh is death.²⁴ No, he said *Let light be made* in a way that defies expression. Whether, though, what was said here was said to the only-begotten Son, or whether what was said here is the only-begotten Son, and on being spoken is called *the Word of God through which all things were made* (Jn 1:1.3), is a question that can be properly asked, provided, however, that we set aside the impious assumption that the Word of God, the only-begotten Son, is like a sound uttered in the way that happens with us. The Word of God, on the contrary, through which all things were made, neither began to be nor will cease to be; but being born without any beginning, he is co-eternal with the Father.

That’s why, if the saying of “Let light be made” both began and stopped, we must conclude that this word was said to the Son rather than being the Son. Even so, however, it was said in a manner that defies expression. So let no materialist, fleshly image creep into the soul and disturb the godly, spiritual understanding, because for anything to begin or cease in the nature of God, if taken literally, is a rash and headstrong opinion. Still, this way of thinking is to be permitted out of sheer humanity to the little ones and the fleshly minded, not though for them to remain stuck in it, but for them to rise up from it in due course. Whatever, you see, God is said to begin or to stop doing is in no way to be understood as happening in his own nature, but in his creation, which submits to him in all its wonderful ways.

What sort of light was made

20. *And God said: Let light be made.* Is that light meant which spreads itself out before these eyes of flesh, or some hidden kind which it is not given us to see by means of this body? And if a hidden sort, is it of a bodily nature, extending perhaps through the higher parts of the universe in outer space, or is it incorporeal, of the kind to be found in the soul, to which the senses of the body refer for a judgment on whether to shun things or seek them? This is a light that is not lacking even in the souls of animals. Or is it that higher light which reveals itself in the power or reasoning, from which everything that has been created has its beginning?²⁵

But whichever kind of light is being signified, we are still, surely, obliged to take it as something made and created, and not the light which shines in God’s own Wisdom, which was born, not created—in case it should be assumed that God was without any light before he instituted this sort that we are now dealing with. Of this sort, after all, as the very words indicate clearly enough, it is stated that it was made. *And he said*, the text goes, *Let light be made, and light was made.* Light born of God is one thing, light which God made quite another. Light born of God is God’s very own wisdom, while light that has been made is any kind that is subject to change, whether it be incorporeal or corporeal.

21. People often wonder, though, how there could be any corporeal light before the sky or the heavens existed, and the lamps in the sky, which are set out after this light here, as though the human mind could easily grasp, or grasp at all, whether there is any light in addition to the heavens, which nonetheless is distinguished and spread out through space and embraces the universe. But since we are permitted here to understand an incorporeal light, if we say that in this book it is not only the visible creation but the entire creation that is being set before us, what need is there to linger over this argument? And the question people ask, when were the angels made?—well perhaps they are being indicated here, very briefly indeed, but still most aptly and suitably.

Genesis 1:4: the goodness of the light

22. *And God saw the light, that it was good* (Gn 1:4). This statement should be understood as signifying, not joy at some unexpected good, but approval of the work done. What, after all, could be said more aptly about God, insofar as anything can be said about him among human beings, than to put “he said,” “it was made,” “he approved” in such a way that in “he said” his command is to be understood, in “it was made” his power, in “he approved” his benevolence? The inexpressible, after all, was rightly expressed to human beings through human agency in such a way as to profit them all.

...And so he said, *Let light be made, and light was made*; he did not say, “Let darkness be made, and darkness was made.” Of these two, then, he made one, not the other, while all the same he regulated and arranged for each of them, when “God divided between the light and the darkness.” Thus there is beauty in every single thing, with him making it, and with him arranging them in regular order there is beauty in all things together.

Genesis 1:5; God needs no period of time in which to effect his works

7, 28. *And there was made evening and there was made morning, one day* (Gn 1:5). The word “day” is not now being used in the same way as when it said *and God called the light day*, but in the same way as when we say, for example, there are thirty days in a month. Here, you see, we are including nights in the term “day,” whereas in the previous verse day was being distinguished from night. And so after introducing God’s work as achieved by the making of light, it goes on to say that there came about evening and there came about morning, one day, meaning one day from the start of day to the start of day, that is, from morning to morning, in the way we talk about days, as I said, to include nights.

But how was there made evening and morning? Or did God take as long to make the light and divide between the light and the darkness as it takes for a day of daylight to last, that is, excluding the night? What, in that case, of the text, *For the power to act is available to you whenever you will* (Wis 12:18)? Or were all things in fact completed by God as in a craftsman's thought-out design, not in a stretch of time, but in that very power which made to abide in a timeless state even those things that we perceive as not abiding, but passing away in time?³⁵ Even with our own speech, after all, when our words pass away to be succeeded by other words, it is not to be supposed that the same thing is happening with the thought that gives rise to the finished utterance. So then, although it is without any stretch of time being involved that God makes things, having "the power to act available to him whenever he will," all the same the time-bound natures made by him go through their temporal movements in time.

So then, perhaps it said *And there was made evening and there was made morning, one day* in the sort of way in which one foresees that something can or ought to be done, and not in the way in which it actually is done in a certain stretch of time. After all, it was in its essential nature that God's creative work³⁶ was observed in the Holy Spirit by the author who said, *The one who abides for ever created all things simultaneously* (Sir 18:1). But in this book of Genesis the story of the things made by God most appropriately sets them out as it were through intervals of time; by this arrangement of the account in an orderly sequence, the divine plan itself, which cannot be directly and timelessly contemplated by our weaker intellects, is presented, so to say, as a spectacle for our very eyes to gaze on.

The Literal Meaning of Genesis

Why it is only in the creation of man that God says "Let us make, etc."

19, 29. *And God said, Let us make man to our image and likeness; and let him lord it over the fishes of the sea and the flying things of heaven and all cattle and all the earth and all reptiles crawling over the earth. And God made man to the image of God; he made him male and female, he made them and blessed them,²⁸ saying: increase and multiply and fill the earth and lord it over it, and prince it²⁹ over the fishes of the sea and the flying things of heaven and all cattle and all the earth and all reptiles crawling over the earth. And God said: Behold, I have given you every seed-bearing fodder seeding seed, which is on all the earth, and every tree which has in it fruit of seed-bearing seed—it shall be for you as food and for all beasts of the earth and all flying things of heaven and every reptile crawling on the earth, which has in it the breath of*

life—and every green fodder as food. And it was made thus. And God saw all the things that he had made, and behold they were very good. And there was made evening and there was made morning, the sixth day (Gn 1:26-31).

There will be more fruitful passages time and again later on for a more thorough reflection on the nature of man. Now however, to conclude our examination and discussion of the works of the six days, I must briefly insist in the first place that the following point is not to be passed over lightly: that while with the other works it says, *God said: Let it be made*, here on the other hand we have, *God said: Let us make man to our image and likeness*, to insinuate, that is, a plurality of persons, if I may so put it,³⁰ on account of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. He immediately advises us, however, of the unity to be understood in the godhead by saying, *and God made man to the image of God*; not as though the Father made to the image of the Son, or the Son to the image of the Father—otherwise it would not be true to say “to our image,” if man were made to the image of the Father alone or of the Son alone—but it is put like this: “God made to the image of God,” as much as to say, “God made to his image.”

When it now says *to the image of God*, after saying above *to our image*, it is giving a clear signal that that plurality of persons is not leading us to say or to believe or to understand gods in the plural, but to take Father and Son and Holy Spirit—the trinity on whose account it says *to our image*—as being one God, on whose account it says, *to the image of God*.

In what respect man was made to the image of God; and why it does not say after the creation of man, “And thus it was made”

20, 30. Here we must not neglect that other point either, that after saying, *to our image*, he immediately added, *and let him have authority over the fishes of the sea and the flying things of heaven* and of the other animals which lack reason, giving us to understand, evidently, that it was in the very factor in which he surpasses non-rational animate beings that man was made to God’s image. That, of course, is reason itself, or mind or intelligence or whatever other word it may more suitably be named by. That is why the apostle too says: *Be renewed in the spirit of your minds and put on the new man, who is being renewed for the recognition of God according to the image of him who created him* (Eph 4:23-24; Col 3:10), where he makes it plain enough just in what part man was created to God’s image—that it was not in the features of the body but in a certain form of the illuminated mind.

Why it does not say individually about the human creature “And God saw that it was good”

24, 36. Now he did not say individually about the human creature, as in the other cases, *And God saw that it was good*, but after the man was made and given rights, whether to rule or to eat, he concluded about them all: *And God saw all the things that he had made, and behold they were very good*. This is certainly a point that deserves investigation. The man could, after all, have been paid individually the same respect as had been paid individually to the other things that had been made before, and then finally it could have been said of all the things God made, *behold they were very good*. Perhaps because all the works were completed on the sixth day, is that the reason why it had to be said about them all, *And God saw all the things that he had made, and behold they were very good*? But then why was it said about the cattle and the beasts and the reptiles of the earth, which also belong to the same sixth day? Unless, of course, they were entitled to be called good both individually in their own kind and generally with all the other things, while the man, made to the image of God, was only entitled to be called this generally with the rest! Or was it because he was not yet completed, because not yet established in paradise—as if this that was left out here was said later on after he had been put there!

37. So what are we to say then? Was it that God foreknew the man was going to sin, and not to remain in the perfection of his image, and so did not wish to call him good individually, but only together with the rest, as though hinting at what was going to happen? Because when the things that have been made remain as what they were made, to the extent they received it, like those things that have not sinned or those that cannot sin, they are both good individually, and in the totality they are all very good. It was not for nothing, you see, that “very” was added, because the parts of the body too, if they are beautiful even by themselves, are all still much more beautiful in the total structure of the body. Thus the eye, for example causes pleasure and admiration; but still, if we saw one separate from the body, we would not call it as beautiful as we do when we observe it fitted into its proper place, in relation with the other parts, in the whole body.

Those things, however, which lose their proper comeliness by sinning, do not in the least for all that bring it about that they too are not good when rightly coordinated with the whole, with the universe. The man therefore before sin and in his own kind was of course good; but scripture forbore to say this, in order to say instead something that would foreshadow something yet to come. What was said about him, you see, was not untrue, because while someone who is good as an individual is clearly better when taken together with all the others, it does not follow that when he is good taken together with all the others he must also be good as an individual. And so it was arranged that something should be said which would be both true in the present and would signify foreknowledge of the future. God, after all, while being the best creator of natural things, is also the most just co-ordinator of sinners; so that even if things individually become deformed by transgressing, nonetheless the totality together with them in it remains beautiful. But now let us leave what follows to be dealt with in the next volume.

On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees

The meaning of their encounter with God in Paradise

16, 24. And so when God was strolling in Paradise at evening—that is, he was strolling in Paradise when he was already coming to pass judgment on them even before their punishment³⁴—they heard his voice, and hid themselves from his sight. Who are the ones who hide themselves from the sight of God, but those who have turned their backs on him and are beginning to love what is their very own? You see, they already had a covering for their falsehood, and anyone who utters falsehood *is speaking from what is his own* (Jn 8:44). And that is why they are said to have hidden themselves at the tree which was in the middle of paradise, that is, at themselves, ranged as they were in the middle of things, below God and above bodies.

So then they hid themselves at themselves, in order to be troubled with miserable errors after forsaking the light of truth, which they themselves were definitely not. The human soul, after all, can participate in truth, but Truth itself is God, unchanging above the soul. So then, turn away if you will from this Truth and turn to yourself, and exult in your own seemingly free movements rather than in being directed and enlightened by God; but you will be plunged in the darkness of falsehood, since whoever speaks falsehood is speaking from what is his own. And so you will be troubled in that way, and illustrate the truth of the prophet's words: *My soul is troubled at myself* (Ps 42:6).

And so Adam is now questioned by God, not because God doesn't know where he is, but in order to oblige him to confess his sin.³⁵ And he answered that when he heard his voice he hid himself, since he was naked. His very answer was already an instance of a truly miserable error—as though his being naked, as God himself had made him, could displease God! But it is the very essence of error to assume that what is displeasing to oneself also displeases God. What the Lord said in reply, though, is to be seen as really sublime: *Who told you that you are naked—unless it's that you have taken a bite from the tree from which! had told you from it alone not to take a bite?* (Gn 3:11). He had been naked, you see, of pretense, but clothed with divine light. Having turned away from this and turned to himself, which is the meaning of taking a bite from that tree, he saw his own nakedness, and was displeased with himself as not having anything he could call his very own.

Two ways of taking “Adam has become like one of us”

33. That is why the divine law mocks him from the mouth of God in the following way, mockery by which we in our turn are being advised as much as ever we can to beware of pride.

22. *Behold, Adam has become as if one of us for the knowledge of getting to know good and evil* (Gn 3:22). This ambiguous expression involves a figure of speech,⁴⁶ because “has become as if one of us” can be understood in two ways. In the first way, “one of us” as though he himself has also become God (and that is where the mockery comes in), as you can say “one of the senators,” meaning of course “a senator.” Or else it is because he would indeed have been a god, though by his creator’s generosity, not by nature, if he had been willing to remain under his authority, that it says “of us,” *ex nobis*, in the way one calls someone an *ex*-magistrate or *ex*-governor who no longer is one.

But to what end has he become as if one of us? “For the knowledge of getting to know good and evil,” so that this fellow might learn by experience what the difference is as he undergoes the evil, while God knows it by wisdom; and so that he might also learn by his punishment that there is no escaping the Almighty’s authority, which he had refused to submit to by happily consenting to it.

34. *And then, lest Adam stretch out his hand to the tree of life, and live for ever, God sent him away from paradise* (Gn 3:22-23). Notice the nice choice of words, *he sent him away*, not “he shut him out,” so that he could be seen to be as good as shoved out by the pressure of his own sins to the only place he was fit for. This is something a bad man often experiences when he begins to live among good people and refuses to change his ways for the better; it is by the pressure of his bad habits and associations that he is driven out of the company of these good people; they don’t exclude him against his will, but he is only too glad to be sent on his way by them.

As for its saying, *lest Adam stretch out his hand to the tree of life*, here too we have an ambiguous expression.⁴⁷ This is how we speak, you see, when we say: “This is why I am admonishing you, lest you should do again what you have done,” clearly wanting him not to do it; and again we can say: “This is why I am admonishing you, lest there be a chance of your being good”—that is, I am admonishing you because I don’t despair of your being able to be good. That is how the apostle is speaking when he says: *Lest there be a chance of God giving them repentance so as to come to know the truth* (2 Tm 2:25).

So then it can appear that the reason the man was sent away to the wearisome labors of this life was in order that at some time or other he might indeed stretch out his hand to the tree of life and live for ever. The stretching out of the hand, surely, is an excellent symbol of the cross, through

which eternal life is regained. Though even if we understand *lest he stretch out his hand and live for ever* in that other way, it was an entirely fair punishment that he should be barred from access to wisdom after his sin, until by God's mercy in the course of time the one who was dead might come to life again, and the one who was lost might be found.⁴⁸

So then, he was sent away from the paradise of delight to work the earth from which he had been taken, that is, to toil in this body and there if he could to save up merit and earn the right to return. He lingered, though, over against Paradise in misery, which is of course "over against" the blessed life of bliss. In my opinion, you see, the blessed life of bliss is signified by the word "paradise."