

## THE CREATION AND FALL OF ANGELS IN AUGUSTINE'S INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS 1

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### **Abstract**

*The origin of all beings, their efficient and final cause have been the baffling question spanning through all ages and this includes the origin of angels. One of those who proffered a solution to this question was the Manicheans, but Augustine disproved of the Manicheans' cosmogony of two coeternal Principles being the efficient and final causes of created beings including the angels. This work analyses Augustine's works on the creation of angels and the fall of the evil angels in the light of his interpretation of Genesis 1.*

**Keywords:** Angels, Creation, God, Augustine, Manicheans, Heaven, Light, Goodness, Darkness

### **Introduction**

One of the most important discussions in Early Church took place between orthodox view and the Gnostics, these discussions lasted even up to the fifth century A.D. and Augustine was also confronted with the Gnostics teachings which were contrary to orthodox doctrine. One of those opposing teachings is on creation and the Manicheans' cosmogony was at this time one of the most popular heterodox view. The Manichaeans' creation account is established upon metaphysical dualism. This dualistic view of nature is properly expressed in the following terms: "[...] a conception of two principles [...] whose founding activity or causality is characterized by a [...] disparity of value between the two principles themselves, as well as ... between the respective realms which come into existence through them" (Bianchi 1985).

Manichaeism stated that primordial Principles of Light and Darkness were in existence before the creation of this tangible world or universe. Mani's cosmogony exhibits what might be regarded as a "radical dualism." This is the absolute eternal opposition of two coeternal Principles (1985). These two Principles though they are ontologically eternal, they are completely distinct in their natures (Asmussen 1965).

The *Liber Scholiorum* characterizes Manichaeism in two main Principles: the Good Principle and the Evil Principle, which existed before the creation of heaven, earth, and everything else in reality, include the angels (Jackson 1932). The *Fihrist* sees these two Principles as responsible for the very origin of the world and everything in it (Dodge 1970). Theodore and an-Nadim argued that these two Principles necessitated the conditions that provided grounds for the subsequent emergence of two realms; the celestial realm and the terrestrial realm. For an-Nadim intends these Principles be interpreted strictly as causal forces, and not anything in temporary sense. Both Principles Good and Evil are the origin and ultimate sources of heaven and earth.

Augustine in his spiritual and intellectual journey read the text of Genesis (Confessions III, v, 9) and the genesis' account of creation led to his refutation of the Manicheans' claim that there are two coeternal Principles responsible for the creation of the world: The Good Principle created the good things and the Evil Principle created the evil things, and they also claim that the literal and the allegorical meanings of Genesis make no sense (Hill 2002). The reasons mentioned above are what motivated St Augustine to extensively study and write on Genesis and by extension on the creation of the angels because they too are part of God's creation. The Manicheans had taught that the good angels were created by the Good Principle and the evil angels were created by the Evil Principle. To show better the complexity and perfection of the work of God, the creation of angels must be included. Augustine in the *Literal Meaning of Genesis* argued that angels do not have a different way of being created or sets of rules or blessedness or sin different from those of humans (Wiebe 2015). He also argued that the angels are not coeternal but are created beings, and all angels, good and bad were created by God from nothing (*ex nihilo*) (Torchia 1999). Augustine refuted the Manicheans cosmogony by teaching the creation account of Genesis, but in this article, we will limit our focus to the creation of angels and not the entirety of creation.

In his refutation of the Manichean's the Bishop of Hippo argues that, there is no other eternal being beside the Trinity, only the Persons of the Trinity exist in totally timeless fashion. God is the only creator and He has made all things good, even bad angels (De civitate Dei, XI, 26). There is no other coeternal being responsible for the creation of evil or the creation of the fallen angels. Lucifer and the other fallen angels became evil of their own will and not that they were intrinsically created evil by another coeternal evil being (Ibid.). All the angels are unequivocally of the status of creatures and they relate to God as their creator and to humans as

their fellow creatures of God. The angels are our neighbours and fellow citizens of heaven.

### **The Creation of Heaven and Earth by God in the Beginning (Genesis 1:1)**

Augustine, in trying to interpret the creation story in the light of Genesis, began with the phrase *in the beginning* in Genesis 1:1 which means that there was no other beginning before this *beginning* described in Genesis 1:1. It also follows that there was nothing God had created prior to this *beginning* and there is nothing that had a beginning before this *beginning*. Therefore Genesis 1:1 marks the beginning of all beginnings. This statement leads Augustine to the conclusion that God the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit are without beginning and God created heaven and earth not in time, but simultaneously with time. The *beginning* Genesis 1:1 means time and Augustine holds time as a product of God's creation whose function is to measure the changes in other products of God's creation (including the angels). Before this *beginning* there were no beings that existed besides the members of the Holy Trinity. This means that there were no angels; no material creatures, no existence of matter at all, no space, no place and, as already stated above, there was no time prior to the *beginning* mentioned in Genesis 1:1 (Ibid. 6). For Augustine God created everything in heaven (including the angels) and on earth *ex nihilo* and this creative act of God extends even to change and motion, therefore change and motion are themselves products of God's creation. This *beginning* marks the beginning of motion itself because before this *beginning* there was absolutely no movement of anything bodily or spiritual outside of God since nothing beside God existed and God is Himself eternal and without motion (De Genesi ad litteram V, 5).

As we can see, Augustine in his discussion on the creation of angels used the opportunity to offer a contrary argument to the opinion that the angels are either eternal beings like God or were created not in the beginning of the *beginning* (the beginning of time) in Genesis 1:1, but before the beginning of the *beginning* (the beginning of time). Augustine understood the *beginning* in two ways: firstly, the *beginning* meant the divine Wisdom, the Divine Word of God, He is the Beginning, as Jesus tells us in Gospel of John (8:25), when He had responded to the question *who are you?* - (*I am*) *the Beginning*, in other words in the context of this discussion the *beginning* means the Author of creation (Ibid I, 5). Augustine then viewed the *beginning* this way primarily because as he said, "it gives me the liveliest satisfaction to find the Trinity celebrated in the very beginning of the Book of Genesis" (De civitate Dei, XI, 32). Secondly, for Augustine the *beginning* was

understood as time itself. The angels are not without a beginning and they were not created outside of time or prior to the *beginning* in Genesis 1:1 but they were created simultaneously with time (Ibid. 26).

In the *City of God*, the words *heaven and earth* of Genesis 1:1 meant for Augustine though indecisively, the entirety of creation, spiritual and material. Creation as a whole is divided into two giant parts the spiritual and the material and the use of the words *heaven and earth* signifies the sum of all created things whether in heaven or on earth. Augustine is arguing that everything was created in Genesis 1:1, everything in heaven and everything on earth and the following mystical days listed in subsequent verses in Genesis 1 are a detailed enumeration of the various parts of what God had created in the Genesis 1:1 (Ibid. 33). Augustine is stating that the angels were created in Genesis 1:1 under the name *heaven*. Heaven and its entirety were created in Genesis 1:1 and since the angels are in heaven, they were created in Genesis 1:1. When Augustine speaks of angels, he is not separating the good angels from the bad ones. Though there are good and bad angels, He created all angels good and as at the time in Genesis 1:1, all the angels were good. There is no coeternal being responsible for the creation of evil or the creation of the fallen angels. Lucifer and the other fallen angels became evil of their own volition and not that they were intrinsically created evil by another coeternal evil being (Ibid. 3).

The creation of angels was not in successive series of events; that is God did not create the angels one after the other like He created Adam before creating Eve but He created all the angels in one moment, not in time but *in the beginning* that is simultaneously with time. Augustine said "Therefore, it is not true that He wills one thing [an angel] at one moment and another thing [angel] at another moment, but once for all, and all at once, and always, does He will all things [angels] He wills (Confession XII, xv , 18). Time is a measure of change or motion, a relation among changing things. All creatures are changing or moving towards the fullness of perfection which is God. The angels are in some measure moving from potency to actuality as we shall see later when we discuss the knowledge of the angels in relation to the mystical days enumerated in Genesis 1 (De Genesi ad litteram, VI, 6).

Who does not see that time would not have existed had not some creature been made, which by some motion would bring about change, and that since the various parts of this motion and change cannot exist together (*simul*), when one passes away and another succeeds it in shorter or longer intervals of duration, time would be the result. (De civitate Dei, XI, 6)?

The creation of the angels happened in one instance. There is no duration of how long it took God to create the angels, it was not in time and needed no temporary duration of time but the creation was simultaneous with time (De Genesi ad litteram, V, 3).

In *the Letter of Genesis* Augustine explained further that the words *heaven and earth* in Genesis 1:1 mean the whole of creation (Ibid.). The word *heaven* in this instance does not denote the physical or material heaven of outer space, rather the immaterial heaven of the angelic spirits, who are situated above the bodily heavens, by situated it does not mean by a higher physical location in space but by sublimity of nature or the gloriousness of their nature (Ibid. I, 17). The word *heaven* in this verse he understands to mean the angels fully formed in their nature, and the word *earth* he understands as "the invisible, unstructured, and abysmally dark incompleteness of the bodily mass from which things existing in time were to come" (Ibid. I, 8).

There is no explicit mention of angels in the Genesis creation account and Augustine admits this fact, but he understands that this is implicitly under the name *heaven* in verse one of Genesis 1 and *light* in verse three of Genesis 1. Even though angels were not explicitly mentioned but they are implied, he does not entertain the idea that their creation was completely omitted. To support his argument that angels were created by God, he referred to other parts of the Scriptures with concrete mention of the creation of the angels (Dan 3:58; Ps 148:2-4; Job 38:7). In *The City of God*, Augustine asserts that, "if the angels are included in the works of God during these six days, they are that light which was called *day*" (De civitate Dei, XI, 9). And in *The Letter of Genesis* Augustine proposed in a lengthy fashion to this theory of his that, prior to the first day, the angels were created in their natural being under the name of *heaven* in Gen 1:1 and the *light* of the six days stands for the degrees of the supernatural illumination of the angels in the grace of the beatific vision (De Genesi ad litteram, I, 17; VII, 5.4).

### **The Creation of Light (Genesis 1:3)**

As we have seen above Augustine tried to show that creation of angels is included in the description of the six days of creation. He attempted several times to find a plausible explanation of the chronological details of the six days in the creation story in Genesis 1 while he was working on his intellectual interpretation of the literal meaning of these six days. This attempt was prompted by a question why God who is almighty needed six days to effect creation. It seems logical that since

God is all powerful, he does not need any period of time to produce any effect even such as great as creation of heaven and earth. Therefore, for Augustine, the only possible answer is to conclude that God created heaven and earth simultaneously and instantaneously.

In his effort to give a sound explanation to the use of the word *day* by the author of Genesis, he first puzzled over the creation of *light* on the first day of creation in Genesis 1:3 and the creation of *light* again: the sun, the moon, and the stars on the fourth day of creation. Could this be an unnecessary repetition? The *light* on the first day must in some way be different from the *light* on the fourth day. He wondered if the *light* on day one was the unformed *light* and the *light* on day four was formed *light*. How would such an unformed light-source be, and how could unformed light be encircling a formless, unsolidified earth for two days (day two and day three) and was able to cast the shadow of night (Ibid. V, 5)? Not finding an answer good enough to this question, led him to consider the possibility that the *light* created on the first day was an immaterial light, which should be understood as the angels. The mornings of the days (day 1-6) which are bright represent the knowledge of the angels about themselves and other created things as they are in the mind of God through beatific revelation. The preceding evenings which are dark are the knowledge of the angels about themselves as they are and the knowledge of other created things as they are in themselves. The angels' minds were enlightened and formed by their Creator from the supernaturally unformed state of their natural knowledge, so that the natural knowledge of their own nature is referred to as *evening* of the first day, and the elevation of that knowledge to the vision and praise of the Light which is God Himself is referred to as *morning* of the first day (Ibid. IV, 21).

The first three days were without sun; the sun, the moon and the stars were created on the fourth day. It is clear that light was made by the Word of God, and God separated the light from the darkness, and called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. If at this point of creating light and separating it from darkness the sun and the moon and the stars have not been created, what kind of light was described by the author of Genesis? By what periodic movement were evening and morning measured? The answers to these questions are beyond the reach of our senses; how can we understand them, and yet we must unhesitatingly believe them? Augustine proffered some solutions to the questions raised above. Firstly, he said that the light must be some material light which is proceeding from the upper parts of the world, far beyond the reach of our sight. But what kind of light would that be and what would be the purpose of such light, this answer is not

good enough and unsatisfactory. Secondly, he said it must be from this light the sun was enkindled again this answer also falls short. Finally, he said this light is used by the author of Genesis to mean the holy city of God, the city of Light, this light means the city of the angel, this light means the angels and all the blessed spirits, this is the city which the Apostle says, '(that) Jerusalem which is above is our eternal mother in heaven' (Galatians 4:26); and in another place, 'For ye are all the children of the light and the children of the day' (1 Thessalonians 5:5) (De civitate Dei, XI, 7).

Augustine commented the God's command: *Be light made*, saying "But if the light which first was ordered to be made and was made is also to be understood as holding the pre-eminent place in creation, this must be intellectual life [the angels], which have turn to the Creator in order to be enlightened, would fluctuate formlessly" (De Genesi ad litteram, I, 9). He continued by saying that this spiritual light which are the angels and blessed spirits were created by God and should not by their spiritual nature to be understood as the "true Light who is coeternal with the Father [the eternal Wisdom of God]," but as the "wisdom that was created before all [other things were created]." This command *Be light made* is the passage of eternal wisdom from God into the sanctified souls of rational creatures (the angels), provided also that it was the creation of spirits that is spoken of under the name of *heaven* where it is written (Gen 1:1), *In the beginning God created heaven and earth*, and that it was not the physical heaven (Ibid I, 17).

In *The City of God*, Augustine states that the creation of the angels though not categorically mentioned in the creation account, cannot be conceived to have been completely omitted in the account but is hinted under the name of *heaven* in verse one "and under the name of *light*" in verse 3 (De civitate Dei, XI, 9). Again, in *The Letter of Genesis* he asserts that the creation of the angels is intended with the use of the word *heaven* in verse 1 and the enlightenment of the angels by divine grace is hinted under the name of *light* in verse 3. Augustine came to this conclusion after overcoming the struggle of finding a plausible and logical explanation to the creation of light twice in the creation account and then putting the six days of creation into a reasonable historical succession (Hill 2002). In *The Letter of Genesis*, Augustine understood the *light* mentioned in Genesis 1:3 as implying the divine enlightenment of the angelic hosts by the beatific vision. He said: "And messengers in Greek are called 'angels', by which generic title is named that whole city on high which we think was created on the first day" (De Genesi ad litteram, V, 19). A logical conclusion that can be arrived at would be that Augustine saw the creation and the elevation of the angels through the divine enlightenment in the narrative

of Genesis 1, occurring in this manner: the divine illumination of the good angels in the beatific vision is subtly hinted under the name *light* in verse three, and the creation of the angels is most likely highlighted under the name of *heaven* in verse one. He went further to explain even if *heaven* is not convincing enough, angels are tacitly intended under the name of *light* in verse three, which expressly narrates their elevation by grace. But it must be added that he never excluded the possibility that material light is what is literally intended under the creation of light in verse three.

### **The Goodness of the Light (Genesis 1:4)**

Augustine also discussed the goodness that is in the nature of the angels. He attempted to demonstrate that we can find the trace of the hand of all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity in the work of creation. Augustine hesitantly identified goodness as pointing to the Holy Spirit in the creation account. The Holy Spirit is the holiness and goodness of the Blessed Trinity; He is the substantial holiness of the Blessed Trinity, of same and equal substance with the Father and the Son. Creation as a whole reveal to us the entire community of the Blessed Trinity, not only visible creatures but also invisible creatures as in the enlightenment, the blessedness of the Holy City which is above among the angels. God has created, illumined, and blessed this city of the angels and blessed spirits. "In God's eternity is its life; in God's truth its light; in God's goodness its joy" (De civitate Dei, XI, 24). The light that God saw and said that it was good is the good angels (bad angels not included) who have received the supernatural illumination through the Holy Spirit in their beatific vision. The angels with the reception of the supernatural illumination have been made perfect intellectual creatures by their knowledge and love for God in His Three Persons. The goodness of the species of all other creatures should be understood as reflecting the goodness of the Holy Trinity in their own measure in accordance with their nature. This is how the three divine Persons are thus represented in the description of creation: the Word of God is God the Son and the Begetter of the Word is God the Father, so when it says *God said* God is the Father and the *said* is the Son. The Holy Spirit is the goodness seen in the light (angels) in Whom God is pleased (De Genesi ad litteram, I, 6). The goodness of the thing is "the approval of the work in its design, which is the Wisdom of God" (De civitate Dei, XI, 21). God made the world good (Gen 1:31). "In this creation, had no one sinned, the world would have been filled and beautified with natures good without exception." (Ibid. XI, 23).



### **The Division of Light from Darkness (Genesis 1:4)**

In *The City of God*, Augustine maintains that, understanding the creation of light in verse 3 of Genesis 1 as the creation of the angels should be followed by the understanding that they are partakers in the true Light which is eternal. This true and eternal Light is the Wisdom and only-begotten Son of God. The angels are participating in the unchanging eternal Light and the true Day which is the Word of God. The Word of God is "the true light which enlightened every man that cometh into this world" (Jn. 1:9). The angels can be called day and light, although they are day and light; they are not day and light in themselves, but in God. The evil angels became evil by turning to themselves and away from the true Light of the Wisdom of God, "they are no longer light in the Lord, but darkness themselves, having been deprived of participation in [the] eternal Light." (Ibid. XI, 9). Peter, in 2 Peter 2:4 declared that 'certain angels sinned and were thrust down to the lowest parts of this world; they are called 'darkness.'

Wherefore, though light and darkness are to be taken in their literal meaning in these passages of Genesis, [...] yet, for our part, we understand these two societies of angels, [...] the one dwelling in the heaven of heavens, the other cast thence and raging through the lower regions of the air. [...] For, though it is the material works of God that are spoken of, they have certainly a resemblance to the spiritual (Ibid. 33).

In *The City of God*, Augustine explained that the devil and all the bad angels' fall took place on day two of the creation narrative:

To me it does not seem incongruous with the working of God, if we understand that the angels were created when that first light was made, and that a separation was made between the holy and the unclean angels, when, as it is said "God divided the light from the darkness; and God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night (Ibid. 19).

For Augustine, the division of light from darkness paints a descriptive picture of the fall of the bad angels because God never said the darkness was good. By darkness, Augustine suggests that the author of Genesis is telling us that God passed divine judgment on the bad angels and yet He was not the cause of their fall (Ibid. 20). This view of Augustine helps to answer a question most likely to arise from his treatment of *day* as the angels, having in mind that time, as we know it, was not created until day four. So, what could night probably mean? The naming of light as day and darkness as night indicates a distinction which God was making between good and bad angels rather than the creation of time as we

know it (Ibid. 19-20). Augustine also highlighted the omission of night in the movement of one morning to another morning in the course of the six days of creation. The movements of angelic knowledge which is *day* starts from morning and endings in evening and morning begins again the following day with no mention of night (De civitate Dei, XI, 7 and De Genesi ad litteram, IV, 42). Night for Augustine implies infatuation of the bad angels with themselves, because “night never falls when the creator is not forsaken through love of the creature” (De civitate Dei, XI, 7). It is impossible for bad angels to experience *morning* in their minds because *morning* is only experienced when the angels turn to God but since the bad angels are proud, their pride will not allow them to stop referring to their own being and return back to God, they are destined to remain in eternal darkness.

### **The Naming of the Light as Day and the Darkness as Night (Genesis 1:5)**

As we already seen, the word *day*, in Genesis 1:5 for Augustine, means foremost the mystical formation of the angelic intelligence in the light of the beatific vision which happened at the beginning of time. The good angels are the light that was called *day* and whose unity the Scripture signaled by calling them *day*, not the first day, but one day. These angels are illumined by the eternal Light that gave them their being. They have become *light* and *day* themselves; this is brought about by their participation of the unchangeable Light and Day which is the Word of God (Ibid. 9). The angels are before the existence not outside of time (angelic time) but outside of time as we know it; physical time. Augustine puts forward another time that is different from the physical time and he calls it *angelic time*. This *angelic time* pertains to the time (measure of changes) the angels enjoyed only their natural knowledge and then when they had their Beatific vision of the Light and were elevated to the state of supernatural knowledge and blessedness (Ibid. 13). The blessed angels contemplate the eternity of the Word of God, and in their beatific contemplation, they saw first what God was, in physical time going to create. The knowledge of God's reasons for creating the world was impressed on the minds of the angels before physical time which is a creature itself and other creatures of the physical world were made. Augustine see this recurring phrase *and God said let there be made* as a Scriptural reference to the eternal Word of God, while the phrase, *and so it was made*, refers to the supernatural intelligence imprinted on the minds of the angels by the eternal Intelligence when they had the Beatific vision of the Light. Lastly, the recurring phrase: *God made*, refers to the products of creation themselves made in their particular kinds (De Genesi ad litteram, II, 8). The knowledge the angels possess of created things as they are in themselves by

the grace of the light of the beatific vision experienced by the angels is what Genesis 1 calls *evening*, and the knowledge the angels acquired in the *evening* of created things leading them to praise God for His design of them is what is called *morning* (Ibid. III, 25).

*Evening*, in the creation story is seen by Augustine to mean in relation to all created things, not the measure of changes in created things or in relation to time, but the finiteness of a created thing's nature way of acting (Ibid. II, 14), while morning is the passing from one product of creation to another product of creation (Ibid I, 17). In the beatific vision, the angels do not experience evening and morning in a successive manner, rather they experienced it simultaneously. The angels' knowledge of morning comes after their knowledge of evening, this is so because they knew themselves or created things first which represents evening before raising their gaze from things as they are in themselves to things as they are in glorious mind of their Creator which represents morning (Ibid. IV, 30). In the successive progression of days in the creation account, *evening*, in another meaning refers to matter of things that are in some way without their forms, while *morning* in another meaning refer to the forms of things impressed upon them (Hill 2002). Again, for Augustine, every created nature is a finite being with its particular limitations, and *evening* could also mean the expression of the limitation of that created nature, while *morning* is the beginning of a successive created nature and could also be interpreted as the elevation of the limited nature of the angels beyond its natural limits by the supernatural grace of the Beatific vision of the Light (De Genesi ad litteram, IV, 1). For Augustine, the major interpretation of evening and morning is that the blessed angels see as themselves and all creatures as they are in themselves representing evening and morning is the angels seeing themselves and all other creatures as they are in the light of God's plan. Analogically, just as the knowledge of justice as immutable reality is superior to the knowledge of justice only in a just man, so also is the knowledge of the angels of themselves and of other creatures as they are, is a twilight knowledge in comparison to the daylight knowledge they gain of themselves and other creatures as they are in the mind of God. It is as if morning dawned in the minds of the angels who contemplate creation in God (De civitate Dei, XI, 29).

Augustine proposed that creation happened in this manner: God made all things simultaneously in their proper order (the angelic community and the visible world) and not over passing of time. God created by causal connection, so that all of creation made simultaneously might also be led to reach their perfection in a sixfold presentation known as days. And so, the unformed and formable matter,

the invisible and the visible, from which whatever was to be created would come, was the first thing created, not in the temporal order, but in the causal order (De Genesi ad litteram, V, 5). The account of creation was laid out in segmented form in Genesis for comprehension of those whose minds are less prepared (Hill 2002). "For the second day, the third, and the rest are not other days; but the same *one day* is repeated to complete the number six or seven, so that there should be knowledge both of God's works and of His rest" (De civitate Dei, XI, 9).

Augustine says that the creation account is sectioned into six days in accordance with the inner nature of numbers (De Genesi ad litteram, IV, 1). Six is the first perfect and complete number, because it is the number which is made up of the parts which exactly divide it added together (1+2+3). It is in this number of days God completed His work. Some may be unimpressed by this kind of interpretation, but we must not despise the science of numbers, which in many passages of Holy Scripture is found to be of eminent service to the careful interpreter (De Civitate Dei, XI, 30).

The first evening of the first day, the angels only contemplated all about their own created nature, and the succeeding morning they turned their gaze to God in praise and love of Him. The second evening of the second day was about their contemplation of the nature of the firmament, and the following morning was about the angels praising and loving God, prompted by the knowledge resulting from their contemplation of the firmament. The third evening of the third day was about their knowledge of all that is contained on the earth, the sea and all the things under the earth. This is also the subsequent order of the fourth, fifth and sixth days (Ibid. 7). The seventh day noted that *God rested* after creation. This does not mean that God was exhausted from the work of creation and needed rest, God does not get tired, and He is even incapable of getting tired. The number seven also means a perfect number with a different meaning from six. It means those who *rest* in Him and whom He makes to *rest* (Ibid. 8). It was not God Himself who rested but God rested the angels who rest (abide) in Him. By *rest* it means the blessed angels who did not turn to (rest in) themselves but turned to (rest in) God, and having received the grace of the beatific vision, God gave them a place with Him. The seventh day has no evening, simply because there was no creature for its object for the angels to contemplate (Ibid. 31). And because God *blessed the seventh day and sanctified it* (Genesis 2:3), "Scripture commends and the Church knows that the number seven is in some way dedicated to the Holy Spirit" (De Genesi ad litteram, V, 5).

### **The fall of Angels**

Augustine believed that the fallen angels' story is also contained in the Genesis account of creation just as this account tells the story of the angelic creation. Augustine in *The City of God* highlighted the second day of creation to have been the day the fall of the evil angels occurred:

To me it does not seem incongruous with the working of God, if we understand that the angels were created when that first light was made, and that a separation was made between the holy and the unclean angels, when, as it is said 'God divided the light from the darkness; and God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night' (De civ. Dei, XI, 19).

The suggestion that the fall of the angels happened on the second day raises certain burning questions like: what, in day two, indicates the fall of the angels? If all angels were created good, does that mean there was a time frame between their creation and their fall? Did the angels know the consequences of their action before their fall? To answer these questions, let us look at what Augustine argues. For the first question the division of light from darkness paints a descriptive picture of the fall of the bad angels because as we have seen above God never said the darkness was good. By darkness, Augustine suggests that the author of Genesis is telling us that God passed divine judgment on the bad angels and yet He was not the cause of their fall (Ibid. 20). For the second question, God created all things good including the evil angels, so they becoming evil – that change in them – indicate time. Since time is the measure of change, therefore, there may have been a time frame between their creation and their fall; this time is what Augustine refers to as *angelic time* (De Genesi ad litteram, XI, 18). Further still, Augustine began by quoting John 8:44 that calls the devil "[...] he was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (Ibid. 26-27). Referring to this passage, Augustine concludes that the evil angels fell from the beginning of their life (Wiebe 2015). From the *beginning* does not mean that God created them evil from the beginning but that from the beginning of the knowledge of themselves, they turned to themselves instead of to God who is Light and the source of Light. Turning to themselves, made them to turn away from the Light and they became darkness and evil of their own free will (De Genesi ad litteram, XI, 30). Augustine, still referring to John 8:44 said the evil angels were never in the truth from the beginning (Ibid.). It cannot be said that they sinned out of jealousy for humans (Jean 1987) pride precede jealousy, and the evil angels were already evil before the temptation in the Garden of Eden. To answer the third question, if all the angels

were aware beforehand, the implications of their choice of actions, it is difficult to say what course of action the ones that became evil angels would have taken, even the good angels were unsure of their actions too. It cannot also be argued that they had known about it beforehand because that would imply, they already had the grace of the Beatific vision which as Augustine has said was given only to the good angels. So, the evil angels never had the blessedness of the beatific vision which gives the kind of knowledge the good angels had after God's judgment of the angels (De Genesi ad litteram, XI, 25). The reason for the fall could not be explained by saying that the evil angels were inferior to the good ones (Ibid. 25 and 33). Lucifer was a great angel with other angels below him. All the angels were in their natural state that time (De civitate Dei, XII, 9). The fall can be explained as they sinned because they were in their natural state prone to fall and not in the state of blessedness which the good angels were given after the grace of the beatific vision (De Genesi ad litteram, XI, 25).

The evil angels never had blessedness. It is improper to think that they did not receive blessedness and lost it but rather because of the sin of pride they never had blessedness (*quam non utique acceptam fastidiuit, sed nolendo accipere deseruit et amisit*). They also did not know beforehand the consequence of their fall because wisdom is the fruit of piety (Ibid XI, 30).

Augustine traced a timeline for the fall of the evil angels. After the creation of the angels on the first day, the angels knew themselves, and this knowledge of themselves is what is called *evening*. The angels' knowledge of themselves led them to praise and love God, this act of referring of the knowledge of themselves to love God is called *morning*. On the first day of creation, all the angels turned to themselves and had knowledge of who they are. All the angels who, out of gratitude and joy, praised God for their being received the beatific vision of the Light. The angels who took pride in who they are and refused to refer the knowledge of themselves in praise and love of God became evil angels and God judged them and separated them (the *darkness*) from the good angels (the *light*). The evil angels were created good like all the good angels, but it was pride in their being (goodness) and failing to accept that they are participating in the ultimate Good or that their being has been gifted them by God, that resulted in the corruption of the good they had when they were created. The very first act all the fallen angels did with their will was to separate themselves from God through their act of pride (Ibid. XII, 2). But the corruption of the good in the evil angels resulted from the turning of their backs on God and this act, points out vividly how grievous it is to turn one's back on God (Ibid. XII, 1 and Confession XIII, 8, 9).

Augustine suggests that Ps. 73:28 “it is good to draw near to God” is true “not only of men, but primarily and principally of angels” (De civ. Dei, XII, 9).

## Conclusion

Augustine is not dogmatic in his interpretation, but he maintains that his interpretation of light, day, heaven and darkness in the Genesis 1 account, is geared towards paving a proper understanding of the creation account of the angels and not to merely present the creation account of the angels in figurative or allegorical terms. In The Letter of Genesis, Augustine did not entirely disregard the figurative and allegorical understanding of the text. He thinks that his discussion about the spiritual light, the creation of day as the angels, angelic creation story in general, angels knowing themselves and the reference of the knowledge of themselves to the praise of the unchangeable Truth, is meant to be understood, not in the fullness of the words Light and Day but figuratively, and allegorically. For where the light is brighter and more certain, there also it is more truly day. Christ is not called the Light in the same way that He is called the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-22), since the former is in the proper sense, while the latter is in a figurative sense. So also, Christ is the Light and the Day in the proper sense and the angels are light and day in a figurative sense. In concluding his argument, he said if anyone is finding another meaning to the numbering of the days in the creation account, not figuratively in prophecy, but properly in the actual creation of things, let him seek and with the help of God let him find one. “For I do not maintain this interpretation in such a way that I contend that another more preferable one cannot be found, in the way that I maintain that Sacred Scripture did not want to suggest to us that God rested, as it were, after feeling tired or worn out” (De Genesi ad litteram, V, 9).

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