

Confessions - Book Xii - Chapter Xiii

by St. Augustine

Transcript

16. Meanwhile this is what I understand, O my God, when I hear thy Scripture saying, "In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth, but the earth was invisible and unformed, and darkness was over the abyss." It does not say on what day thou didst create these things. Thus, for the time being I understand that "heaven of heavens" to mean the intelligible heaven, where to understand is to know all at once--not "in part," not "darkly," not "through a glass"--but as a simultaneous whole, in full sight, "face to face."^[472] It is not this thing now and then another thing, but (as we said) knowledge all at once without any temporal change. And by the invisible and unformed earth, I understand that which suffers no temporal vicissitude. Temporal change customarily means having one thing now and another later; but where there is no form there can be no distinction between this or that. It is, then, by means of these two--one thing well formed in the beginning and another thing wholly unformed, the one heaven (that is, the heaven of heavens) and the other one earth (but the earth invisible and unformed)--it is by means of these two notions that I am able to understand why thy Scripture said, without mention of days, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." For it immediately indicated which earth it was speaking about. When, on the second day, the firmament is recorded as having been created and called heaven, this suggests to us which heaven it was that he was speaking about earlier, without specifying a day.

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