

Westminster Confession of Faith,
Chapter 4:

Of Creation

All Saints Reformed Presbyterian Church
February 20, 2022



Goals:

- How did God create the **Universe?**
- How did God create **Humanity?**

The lesson of theological liberalism is clear - **embarrassment** is the gateway drug for theological accommodation and denial.

- *Al Mohler*

Westminster Confession of Faith

3.1

1. God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and **unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass**: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

Ephesians 1:3-10

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as **he chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he **predestined** us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ... 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, **according to his purpose**, which he set forth in Christ 10 as **a plan for the fullness of time**, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Westminster Larger Catechism

Q.14

Q. 14. How doth God execute his decrees?

A. God executeth his decrees **in the works of creation** and **providence**, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will.

How did God create the
Universe?

Westminster Confession of Faith:

4.1

1. It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the **manifestation of the glory** of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or **make of nothing**, the world, and **all things therein** whether **visible** or **invisible**, **in the space of six days**; and **all very good**.

Manifestation of glory: Creation as the work and glory of the triune God

Rom. 11:36. *For* of him, and *through* him, and *to* him, *are all things*: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

1 Cor. 8:6. But to us there is but one God, the Father, **of whom are all things**, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom are all things*, and we by him.

Manifestation of glory: Creation as the work and glory of the triune God

Heb. 1:2. but in these last days [God] has spoken to us **by his Son**, whom he appointed the heir of all things, *through whom also he created the world.*

John 1:2–3. He was in the beginning with God. *All things were made through him*, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Manifestation of glory: Creation as the work and glory of the triune God

Gen. 1:2. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And **the Spirit of God** was hovering over the face of the waters.

Job 33:4. The **Spirit of God** has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Manifestation of power, wisdom, and goodness

Rom. 1:20. For his **invisible** attributes, namely, his **eternal power** and **divine nature**, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Jer. 10:12. It is he who made the earth **by his power**, who established the world **by his wisdom**, and **by his understanding** stretched out the heavens.

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In saying that God created the world ‘of nothing’, the authors of this confession are not forgetting the creation of human beings, where created material was used. Rather, they are echoing the wonder of Genesis 1, where we are told repeatedly that God simply spoke. ... **It is not by observation**, but, as the writer of Hebrews tells us, **it is “by faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God**, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible” (Heb 11:3).

Chad Vandixhoorn

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Common interpretations of the days of creation:

1. **Literal, or twenty-four-hour view:** The Bible teaches that God created out of nothing all things in six days, by which Moses meant six calendar days.
2. **Day-Age:** The six 'days' of creation are best understood in the sense of an indefinite period of time as opposed to a 24-hour period (cf. Isaiah 11:10-11)

Common interpretations of the days of creation:

3. Framework View: That God's work of creation is historical, but the exact timing is left unspecified. The events of creation are grouped into two triads of days: 1-3 (creation's kingdoms) are paralleled by 4-6 (creation's kings).

Common interpretations of the days of creation:

4. Analogical Days: God’s “work days” are analogous, but not identical, to our work days. The “six days” of creation refer to periods of God’s creating activity, and are broadly consecutive, though not definite periods of time.

All these views have their own strengths and weaknesses when compared to the text of Scripture, and **the PCA has allowed for varying views.**

First, the Westminster Standards were written, as were all of the Reformation confessions, as **consensus documents**, and **the Divines often expressed themselves in language that could be understood in different legitimate senses.**

... confessions have a two-fold function: they establish both *unity* in the faith and *diversity* in the faith.

Confessions are not designed to solve all theological disputes; instead, **they are intentionally crafted to leave some questions unanswered.** Rightly understood, Confessions encourage theological creativity **by establishing the conditions under which exegetical and theological investigation can take place.**

Report of the Committee to Study the Views of Creation Presented to the Seventy-first (2004) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

“We believe that the Scriptures, and hence Genesis 1-3, are the inerrant word of God. **We affirm that Genesis 1-3 is a coherent account from the hand of Moses.** We believe that **history, not myth, is the proper category for describing these chapters;** and furthermore that their history is true. In these chapters we find the record of God’s creation of the heavens and the earth **ex nihilo;** of the **special creation of Adam and Eve** as actual human beings, **the parents of all humanity** (hence they are not the products of evolution from lower forms of life).”

PCA Creation Study Committee Report, 1999

“We further find the account of an **historical fall**, that brought all humanity into an estate of sin and misery, and of God’s sure promise of a Redeemer. Because the Bible is the word of the Creator and Governor of all there is, **it is right for us to find it speaking authoritatively to matters studied by historical and scientific research.** We also believe that acceptance of, say, non-geocentric astronomy is consistent with full submission to Biblical authority. **We recognize that a naturalistic worldview and true Christian faith are impossible to reconcile, and gladly take our stand with Biblical supernaturalism.”**

PCA Creation Study Committee Report, 1999

Microevolution, as a measure of genetic change over time which creates variance within certain limits in regards to “kinds,” **is consistent** with the teachings of Scripture.

Macroevolution postulates a history of these changes as an explanation of all the diversity of life on earth: “The diversity of life on earth is the outcome of evolution: an unpredictable and natural process of temporal descent with genetic modification that is affected by natural selection, chance, historical contingencies and changing environments” (National Association of Biology Teachers). **This is not consistent with the teaching of Scripture, ruling out “any supernatural activity of God in the origin and development of life and of humans, and hence makes a naturalistic metaphysic the basis of science.”**

PCA Creation Study Committee Report, 1999

Questions?

How did God create the
Humanity?

Westminster Confession of Faith: 4.2

2. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, **male and female**, with **reasonable and immortal souls**, ...

Westminster Confession of Faith: 4.2 continued

2. ... endued with *knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image; ...*

The Image of God

Gen. 1:26. 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 heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

The Image of God

Col. 3:10. and [you] have put on the new self, which is being *renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator*.

Eph. 4:24. ... and to put on the new self, *created after the likeness of God* in true righteousness and holiness.

Westminster Confession of Faith: 4.2 continued

... having **the law of God written in their hearts**, and **power to fulfill it**: and yet under a possibility of transgressing, **being left to the liberty of their own will**, which was subject unto change. ...

The Law of our hearts

Rom. 2:14-15. For when **Gentiles**, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that **the work of the law is written on their hearts**, while **their conscience also bears witness**, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

Westminster Confession of Faith: 4.2 continued

... **Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command**, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; **which while they kept**, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures.

Questions?