

The Theology of the Westminster Standards
WCF 4.1 – Of Creation (Part 2)

“For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.” – Psalm 33:9

I. Review From Last Week

- A. The Context of WCF 4: Ch .1 (*Of the Holy Scripture*), Ch. 2 (*Of God, and of the Holy Trinity*), Ch. 3 (*Of God’s Decree*), Ch. 4 (*Of Creation*), Ch. 5 (*Of Providence*)
- B. The Content of WCF 4.1
1. Who is the Author of Creation?
 2. Why did God create all things?
 3. “When” did God create?
 4. How did God create all things?

II. WCF Chapter 4.1 – The Purpose of Creation

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. – WCF 4.1

- A. What did God create?
1. **Gen 1:1** – *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”*
 - a. Question: Is Gen 1:1 a summary of Gen 1:2–31 (i.e., with the universe already organized) OR does it refer to the initial event of creation?
 2. **Col 1:15–16** – *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.”*
 - a. Cf. Nicene Creed – *“I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible . . .”*; see also Job 38:4, 7; Ps 115:16.

“The Bible tells us of the existence of a realm our mortal eyes cannot see.” – Meredith Kline

- B. How long did God create the visible world and all it contains? (“in the space of six days”).
1. Various Interpretations
 - a. **“Calendar Day” View** = Six ordinary, 24-hour calendar days arranged in chronological order, followed by a 24-hour Sabbath for man.
 - (1) Pros: The Hebrew form is historical narrative, use of “first day, second day,” “morning and evening,” etc.; best fits Exodus 20:8–11; likely the meaning of WCF 4.1 (“in the space of”).
 - (2) Cons: May not take reliable conclusions of mainstream science seriously (most common objection); the assumption of “mature creation” (e.g., new trees with rings).

- b. **“Day-Age” View** = Six sequential, long periods of time (i.e., long geological ages in chronological order)
- (1) Pros: Hebrew word for “day” (*yôm*) can refer to long periods of time or a period of indefinite length (cf. Gen 2:4); God’s days are not like our days (Ps 90:4); purports to better fit geological evidence.
 - (2) Cons: Textually implausible use of Hebrew “day”; introduces death before the fall; strains to accommodate scientific consensus (e.g., overlapping “days”).
- c. **“Literary Framework” View** = Six topics or headings in a “literary framework,” not a chronologically ordered account of history.
- (1) Pros: Recognizes literary artistry in the Gen 1 account of creation; avoids an *overt* clash with mainstream scientific observations.

Creation Kingdoms	Creature Kings
<i>Day 1</i> — Light	<i>Day 4</i> — Luminaries
<i>Day 2</i> — Sky, waters below/above	<i>Day 5</i> — Winged/sea creatures
<i>Day 3</i> — Dry land, vegetation, seas	<i>Day 6</i> — Land animals, man

- (2) Cons: Artistic and literary features are not incompatible with chronological historical description; runs into problems with Ex 20:8–11.
- d. **“Analogical Days” View** = Six divine days of work and rest that are “analogous” to human days
- (1) Pros: No position on the exact meaning of Hebrew “day”; acknowledges analogical relation between heaven and earth, God and man, etc.
 - (2) Cons: Unclear on whether the “days” of Genesis 1 are chronologically sequential periods of time; may not do justice to the link between God’s work and human work in Ex 20:11.

2. What do we do?

- a. The 71st General Assembly of the OPC: *Does the candidate affirm the following and can he articulate what he understands by them:*
- (a) *creation ex nihilo, the covenant headship of Adam, the covenant of works, the doctrine of the Sabbath, the sufficiency and perspicuity of Scripture, the historicity of the creation account?*
 - (2) *Does the candidate understand and affirm the priority of Scripture in the relationship between special and general revelation?*
 - (3) *Is the candidate able to address and refute the errors of the theory of evolution both exegetically and theologically?*

c. What was God’s assessment concerning His creative product? (“very good”).

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.’” (Rev 21:1–4)