

The Theology of the Westminster Standards
WCF 4.2 – The Creation of Man (Part 1)

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’” – Genesis 1:26

I. Review

- 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
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| 1. Who is the Author of Creation? | 5. What did God create? |
| 2. Why did God create all things? | 6. How long did God take to create? |
| 3. “When” did God create? | 7. What was God’s assessment? |
| 4. How did God create? | |

“Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.” – John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, I.1.1

“[T]he question ‘What is man?’ must be answered by a sentence that has a reference to God in it. When, in the pursuit of the project of the self, we exclude the person of God, we not only cut ourselves off from knowing him, but also from knowing ourselves. The project ends in frustration.”
 – Sinclair Ferguson, *Zeal for Godliness*, 17

II. WCF Chapter 4.2 – The Creation of Man, Male and Female

After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image; 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. 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. – WCF 4.2

- A. *“... male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls ...”*
- B. *“... endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image ...”*
1. **Col 3:9–10** – *“Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self/man, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”*
 2. **Eph 4:24** – *“But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him ... ²² to put off your old self/man ... ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self/man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”*
 - a. **Eccl 7:29** – *“God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.”*

- C. Does this mean that fallen human beings who are not “in Christ” are not the image of God?
1. **Gen 9:6** – *“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.”*
 2. **James 3:9** – *“With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.”*

“In connection with the question, whether the image of God belongs to the very essence of man, Reformed theology does not hesitate to say that it constitutes the essence of man. It distinguishes, however, between those elements in the image of God which man cannot lose without ceasing to be man, consisting in the essential qualities and powers of the human soul; and those elements which man can lose and still remain man, namely, the good ethical qualities of the soul and its powers.”
 – Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 207

III. Implications?

- A. How does the Bible’s teaching on human beings as “image of God” save us from both pride and despair, and grant us both dignity and humility?
1. *“I am here to free you from the shackles of superstition, religion, and morality that your parents forced on you . . . I am here to give you the freedom to make your own way through life, unhindered by your parents and undaunted by God . . . I will help you become your own god.”¹*
 2. *“That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms . . . that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system . . . all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul’s habitation henceforth be safely built.”²*
- B. How should your identity as the image of God affect your ethical outlook? Your worship?

“You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” – Augustine of Hippo

¹ Richard L. Pratt, Jr., *Designed for Dignity: What God has Made it Possible for You to Be* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1993), 11.

² Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 107.

Genesis 1:1–27

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The 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.

³**And God said,** “*Let there be light,*” and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶**And God said,** “*Let there be an expanse* in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” ⁷And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the 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. ¹⁰God 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 sprout vegetation,* plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. ¹²The 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. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴**And God said,** “*Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens* to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰**And God said,** “*Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures,* and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.” ²¹So God created the great sea creatures 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. ²²And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” ²³And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴**And God said,** “*Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds*—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” And it was so. ²⁵And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on 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 heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on 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.