

—Westminster Shorter Catechism—
Lesson 7—The Doctrine of Creation, Q. 9 (cf. WCF 4)

- I. God stands at the beginning of Scripture. He is the Eternal One and there is none else (Ps 90.2; Isa 40.21, 28; 43.10), and He is the Creator of all things visible and invisible (Col 1.17; Jn 1.1-3). He is the origin of all things and all things belong to Him and are subject to Him. *This truth is the foundation of ALL knowledge.*
 - A. Berkhof, “This is the beginning and basis of all revelation, and also the foundation of all ethical and religious life,” namely, *that* God is (and that He is the Eternal, Self-Existent One, the Sovereign), *that* God is the Creator of all things, *that* God’s creation is therefore a self-revelation (Ps 19.1), *and that* it’s therefore the bounden duty of all creation to worship, love, and obey God.
 - B. Van Dixhoorn, “Although this creation does not provide the good news of the gospel, it does provide us with material for preaching repentance to those who ignore God’s testimony, and for defending the faith against those who deny His existence.”
- II. Creation is (Berkhof): “that work of God by which He produces the world and all that is in it, partly without the use of pre-existent materials, and partly out of created material that is by its nature unfit for the manifestation of His glory.” Creation is (Whyte): “the divine act of bringing all things beyond the Divine Nature (visible and invisible) into existence,” Gen 1.1; Col 1.17
 - A. Creation is the work of the one and only, living and true God.
 - 1. This is one of the peculiar glories and proofs of His deity to the exclusion of all other ‘gods’ as idols of men’s imaginations, Isa 37.16; 42.5; 44.24; 45.12
 - 2. Scripture teaches that no part of creation is self-existent, but everything that is was made by God, Isa 45.18; Neh 9.6; Rom 11.36; Col 1.16; Rev 4.11
 - 3. Creation therefore has a distinct existence. It’s not God nor any part of God (*contra* pantheism), but something absolutely distinct from God and created by God, Isa 40.12, 22, 25-26. Yet the world is ever dependent upon God, who stands above it as Creator and within it as Provider and Sustainer, Ps 145.15; Eph 4.6 (*contra* deism).
 - B. Creation is attributed by Scripture:
 - 1. to God absolutely, Gen 1.1; 26; 2.4; Ps 102.25; 115.15; Jer 10.10-12; 32.17; Mk 13.19
 - 2. to the Father, 1Cor 8.6
 - 3. to the Father through the Son, Heb 1.2
 - 4. to the Father through the Spirit, Ps 104.30
 - 5. to the Son, Jn 1.2-3
 - 6. to the Spirit, Gen 1.2; Job 26.13; 33.4; Isa 40.12-13
 - C. “We must not, therefore, suppose that in creation the Father is the principal agent, and the Son and the Holy Ghost [are] inferior agents, or mere instruments. In all external works of Deity, each of the persons of the Godhead equally concur.” (Shaw)
 - D. “The second and third persons [of the Trinity] are not dependent powers or mere intermediaries, but independent authors together with the Father. The work was not divided among the three persons, but the whole work, though from different aspects, is ascribed to each one of the persons. All things are at once *out of* the Father, *through* the Son, and *in* the Holy Spirit.” (Berkhof)
 - E. Those who reject the biblical view of creation resort to one of three theories to explain the world.
 - 1. Matter is eternal.
 - 2. God and the world are essentially one.
 - 3. Evolution. Kline: “The creation week was a definite, closed period of time within which God created and produced all the significant varieties of life-forms He desired. There is no cosmic principle of evolution at work on its own, outside the bounds of the creation week producing new kinds.”

III. Given the different views of creation which fall within the boundaries of orthodoxy (even in our own denomination), this catechism answer helpfully affirms *a four-fold view of creation* that's necessary for a biblical view of creation. *The work of creation is God's:*

A. *making all things of nothing,*

1. The most fundamental maxim of all reason, science, and philosophy is that “out of nothing, nothing comes.” If there was ever a time when there was *nothing* then there couldn't possibly be *something* now, because *nothing comes out of nothing*. Which leaves us with only one option. There *has to* have always been *something*—something that had the very power of Being within itself, *to create* all that now exists. There's nothing more elementary than that. And according to Gen 1.1 and Neh 9.6, that something is *God*.
2. The phrase “out of nothing” is vital in defining the creative act of God. It's directed against those who argue that matter was eternal. “Creation out of nothing” is not found in the Bible (it's actually found in 2Macc. 7.28); but it clearly captures the teaching of Gen 1.1; Ps 33.9, 148.5; Rom 4.7; Heb 11.3
3. Goodwin, “Not so much as a first matter was existing to His hands.” “All things were once nothing... the whole creation is built upon a quagmire of nothing, and is continually ready to sink into it, and to be swallowed up by it,” were it not sustained and upheld by its Creator.
4. God created the world *in the beginning* (Gen 1.1), i.e. at the beginning of all temporal things God created the heaven and the earth. Back of this beginning lies a timeless eternity. There was “a time” (*an unbounded eternity*) when creation was not and God existed alone, Ps 90.2; Jn 17.5, 24
5. The angels would have been created alongside the rest of creation, but the Bible is silent as to when. What we do know is:
 - a) They rejoiced in the creation of God, Job 38.4-7
 - b) The fall of Satan and his cohorts happened before the fall of Adam, Jn 8.44; Rev 12.7-9
 - c) Van Mastricht: “It is certain that they were not created before the first day of creation since before that there was nothing but eternity...and it is equally certain that they were not created after man, whom they seduced.”

B. *by the word of His power,*

1. Creation was the result of a word of God's creative power, Ps 33.6-9. He spoke and it came to be, Isa 40.26, because with God, speaking and doing are the same thing, Num 23.19
 - a) *Contra* the evolution of species, God created everything according to its kind, Gen 1.11, 22, 28, creating everything with age and maturity (the sun's light already on the earth, trees mature with fruit, animals and humans mature with eggs).
2. But more than simply the creation of the visible and invisible universe is meant here.
 - a) God names as He creates, Gen 1.5, 10, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26. This is important because it gives both existence and meaning together. This means every part of the world comes into existence fully interpreted. *Contra* the identity crisis and man's search for meaning in the universe, there are no brute, uninterpreted facts for man to interpret and explain autonomously!!
 - b) Even when man names woman in Gen 2.23, he does so, before the fall, as an echo of God's naming of the woman, v.22
3. Thus, *the beginning of wisdom* for man (i.e. the way to have an accurate knowledge of the truth and of the meaning of life and all creation) *is to fear the Lord* (Job 28.38), i.e. to reverently and believingly and confessedly bow to the revelation of the names and meaning meaning which He's already given to all things.

C. *in the space of six days,*

1. Here the wording of the Catechism, taken from Gen 1, is refutes two errors: 1) the teaching of evolution (*contra* Darwin), 2) the teaching of creation as a single instantaneous act (*contra* Augustine).

2. The teaching of Gen 1-2 is that God created all things in six distinct periods of time, or days, and rested on the seventh day. In Ex 20.11, God Himself declares to us that His creation week serves as the basis for both our time-keeping and Sabbath-keeping. Our 6-1 week is structured analogously to God's. In the creation week, and alongside it, God both created time and revealed to us how to keep it. When we follow His pattern, we glorify Him; when we don't, we both rob Him of His glory and work counterproductively to our own good and happiness.
3. The Catechism intentionally does not define *the length* of the six days of creation. It was not a significant issue for them. Their interest is much more theological. Their chief interest is what they *affirm* rather than *deny*, and they affirm the progressive rather than instantaneous character of creation as well as creation being the work of God.
4. There has always been a lot of discussion in Christ's church about the length of the days and while the 24 hr view is the historical view, three other views have been recognized by the OPC as within the boundaries of confessional and biblical orthodoxy:
 - a) the days are ages or epochs of time.
 - b) the days are "divine time" analogical to our normal solar days. God is establishing a pattern of rhythm (6-1) and not of hours.
 - c) the days are unknown periods of time used as a literary framework used by God to teach the historical fact of creation, the theological fact of its origination with Him as Creator, and the practical fact of how God's creatures are to keep time to His glory (6-1).

D. *and all very good.*

1. This affirms (*contra* Manichaeism, Yin-Yang, etc.) that all sin and evil is the consequence of man's rebellious act and not a part of God's good creation. Thus this also affirms that sin is not God's fault and that there is not a manufacturer's flaw in man that resulted in his fall or sinfulness. Sin arose from the heart of God's free-will creatures, first the angels and then man.
2. Everything is good because it's created and paired and enabled to reproduce, all according to its kind.
 - a) This is *contra* macro-evolution in which one species evolves into another (although there is a place for micro-evolution or adaptation within a species).
 - b) This is also *contra* the identity crisis of our day in which "a woman can be trapped in a man's body" *and* the marriage crisis of our day in which "the body of a man or a woman can be sexually united to a body of the same sex." Everything was created in male/female pairs to be with and reproduce with its own kind. God did this, saw this, and declared that it was *very good*, Gen 1.31. It was a perfect, created-reflection of His glory as Creator.

Questions:

1. Was creation a free or necessary act of God?
2. Is any part of matter (visible, invisible, subatomic) eternal?
3. Did God use any raw materials in the creation of the universe?
4. Is there any significance to God naming His creation?
5. What does it teach us that God made everything in male/female pairs?
6. If the theology of creation (*out of nothing*) and the theology of God's sovereignty (*by the word of His power*) and goodness (*and all very good*) displayed in creation are maintained, is anything lost or gained theologically by a dogmatic interpretation of the length of the days of creation?
7. Was there a flaw in the creation that resulted in the fall of man and subsequent curse upon the ground?
8. Memorize WSC 9 along with Gen 1.1; Phil 33.6; Ps 19.1-2; Neh 9.6