

Lesson 8: 2LCF Chapter 4: Of Creation

Paragraphs 1-3

O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. ² Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. ³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? ⁵ Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶ You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, ⁷ all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, ⁸ the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. ⁹ O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Psalm 8:1-9

In many respects, chapter four of the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith is a relatively simple chapter that requires very little explanation or defence. Nevertheless, due to the attack upon the doctrine of creation in the last two centuries, a defence and counter-offensive must be offered.

Earl M: Blackburn, in his exposition of chapter four, reminds us of the stakes:

Perhaps no time in human history has the doctrine of creation been so important and needed as now. The advancements of modern science, the rejection of the once prominent Christian worldview in western civilization, and the militant anti-Christian atheism, pluralism, relativism, and scepticism of twenty-first century culture combined to war against the biblical teaching of the origins of the earth and universe... Seeds have been so cleverly and insidiously sown into the modern mind via technology, attempting to overthrow what Almighty God has authoritative, lead, declared and clear the revealed. Many have been duped by these wily schemes, thinking these strategies are harmless and innocent.⁷⁵

These attacks are, however, far from harmless or innocent. They not only undermine the veracity of Scripture, but they seek to nullify the gospel and rob God of the glory that He is due. Thankfully, the confession offers a ready defence of this doctrine.

The following outline has been offered Chapter 4 of the confession.

I. The Overview of Creation (Paragraph 1)

1. The time of creation: 'In the beginning'
2. The author of creation: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit'
3. The purpose of creation: for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom and goodness'
4. The extent (or Object or Scope) of creation: 'the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible'
5. The duration of creation: 'in the space of six days'

⁷⁵ Earl M. Blackburn, "Chapter Four: Of Creation," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 97-98.

6. The result of creation: 'all very good'

II. The Apex of Creation (Paragraph 2)

1. The constitution of man
2. The identity of man
3. The integrity of man

III. The fulcrum of creation (Paragraph 3)⁷⁶

Paragraph 1.

In the beginning it pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, to create or make the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.

John 1:2,3; Heb. 1:2; Job 26:13; Rom. 1:20; Col. 1:16; Gen. 1:31

Exposition

In this paragraphs, the following aspects of creation are addressed:

Time: In the beginning

Author: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Purpose: for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom and goodness

Extent: the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible

Duration: in the space of six days

Result: all very good

After acknowledging the time of creation, the confession recognizes the creative work of the Triune God in the work of creation.

This can be seen several places in Scripture. The texts below offer the most basic proof of this:

Genesis 1:1 - In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 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.

John 1:1-4 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Edward Leigh, a member of the Westminster Assembly, commented on the work of the Trinity in creation and the “power, wisdom, and goodness” of God’s creative work. His comments offer an inner look at the minds of our Puritan forefathers as they drafted the confession. It is of interest to note that the wording of the 2LCF and WCF are virtually the same in chapter 4 and paragraph 1.

⁷⁶ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 5th ed. (Welwyn Garden City, UK: EP Books, 2016), 88.

Three Attributes especially manifest themselves in this work of Creation, Gods power, wisdom, goodness; his power in that he made all things by a word, and of nothing, Isa. 40. 16. his wisdom is seen in the order and variety of his works, Psal. 136. 5. and their exceeding wonderful and particular uses; his goodness, in that he would communicate being to the creatures.⁷⁷

Here Leigh recognizes an important reality concerning creation. God created the world “ex nihilo” — “from/out of nothing.” This demonstrates God’s creativity and supreme power, further complementing this demonstration of his wisdom and goodness.

Hebrews 11:3 - 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.

The Confession also offers a view of creation that insists upon a literal 6-day creation, noting that all things were made “in the space of six days.” Many theories and attempts have arisen to undermine this fact.

A brief survey may be helpful:

- **Theistic Evolution:** The theory that God used the process of evolution to create all living things.
 - “Answers in Genesis describes TE this way: “Theistic evolution is the idea that God started or directed evolutionary processes. This view makes God a bumbling, incompetent Creator and the author of death and suffering as it puts them before mankind’s sin. It calls into question the truth of God’s Word and his character as an all-powerful, loving God.”⁷⁸
- **Day-age Theory:** This theory interprets the days of Genesis as extended periods of time, rather than literal 24-hour days.
- **Framework Hypothesis:** This theory views the creation account as a literary framework that emphasizes God’s creation and ordering of the cosmos. The creation account is not to be interpreted as a chronological account.

This begs the question, “How should we interpret Genesis?” Waldron suggests that there are several reasons why we should interpret Genesis literally:

- 1) Genesis itself does not permit a figurative interpretation. Waldron notes: “If Gen. 12 is historical narrative, then it cannot be doubted that Gen. 1-11 is intended as such. The genealogies of Gen. 10 and 11 conclude with the family background of Abraham. The genealogy of Gen. 11:10-32 is, furthermore, identical in structure to that found in Gen. 5, but Gen. 5 begins with Adam and Seth. A seamless literary structure and genre, thus, ties Abraham to Adam. If Gen. 1-11 is not intended to be taken literally, the constant impression of historicity is baffling.”
- 2) The rest of Scripture does not permit a figurative interpretation. Waldron continues: “The continued reference to the creation week does not permit it (Exodus 20:8-11; Exodus 31:15-17; Mark 2:27-28). Other literal interpretations do not permit it (Matt. 19:4-6; 24:37-39; Mark 2:27, 28; 10:6; Luke 3:23-38; 17:26ff.; John 8:44; Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 11:7-12; 15:21, 22, 44-49; Eph. 2:3; 5:31; 1 Tim. 2:13, 14; Heb. 11:3-7; James 3:9; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5; 3:5, 6; 1 John 3:8, 12; Jude 14, 15).”

⁷⁷ Edward Leigh, *A System or Body of Divinity*, 226.

⁷⁸ Answers in Genesis, *Theistic Evolution*, <https://answersingenesis.org/theistic-evolution/?srsltid=AfmBOoqOTByrrqQsJgemzMdbhIYH4qo7LC1fDT5d2AJfnMxYuxkxhqNr>.

Paragraph 2.

After God had made all other creatures, He created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, rendering them fit unto that life to God for which they were created; being made after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; 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 to change.

Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:7; Eccles. 7:29; Gen. 1:26; Rom. 2:14,15; Gen. 3:6

Paragraph 3.

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

Gen. 2:17; Gen. 1:26,28

Commenting on this paragraph, James Renihan writes:

The creation of man was the culmination of the creative process. This points to the fact that man was the crown of creation. He was not an afterthought, but in many ways all of creation was prepared for him. The reason for this is found in the purpose statement below. The act itself is plainly expressed: God created man. The language of the Confession is committed to a doctrine of direct and special creation. There is no place here for theistic evolution, or any other form of evolutionary theory. The presence of the phrase *reasonable* and *immortal* souls is significant.⁷⁹

What does it mean that man is created in the image and likeness of God?

Image: תְּצַלֵּם *tselem* (853d); from an unused word; *an image*:—form(1), image(5), images(6), likenesses(3), phantom(1).⁸⁰

Image often refers to a statue, idol, or replica, speaking to man's task to image God before the world.

John Owen adds this:

We may consider the moral State and Condition of Man, with the Furniture of his Mind and Soul in reference unto his Obedience to God and his enjoyment of him. This was the principal part of that Image of God wherein he was created. Three things were required to

⁷⁹ James M. Renihan, *To the Judicious and Impartial Reader: A Contextual-Historical Exposition of the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith*, Baptist Symbolics 2 (Cape Coral: Founders Press, 2022), 137.

⁸⁰ Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries : Updated Edition* (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998).

render Man idoneous or fit unto that Life to God for which he was made. First, An ability to discern the Mind and Will of God, with respect unto all the Duty and Obedience that God required of him; as also so far to know the Nature and Properties of God, as to believe him the only proper Object of all Acts and Duties of Religious Obedience, and an all-sufficient Satisfaction and Reward in this World and to Eternity. Secondly, A free uncontrolled untangled disposition to every Duty of the Law of his Creation in order unto living unto God. Thirdly, An ability of Mind and Will, with a readiness of compliance in his Affections, for a due regular performance of all Duties and abstinence from all Sin. These things belonged unto the integrity of his Nature, with the uprightness of the State and Condition wherein he was made.⁸¹

Application:

Old English translation of Maister John Calvin's exposition of the one-hundred and nineteenth Psalm:

Let us prostrate our selves before the majestie of our good God, in acknowledging our offences: Beseeching him that it woulde please him too take from us the wicked affections whiche might turne us away from him, and from his service: and that wee might forget all whatsoever might turne us from the right way of salvation, that we desire nothing but that wee may attaine too that everlasting life, which we looke for in heaven. That it would please him not too suffer us to live here like brute beasts, not knowing to what end we were created in this world: but that we might acknowledge him to be our Creator, our Father and Saviour, that wee might subject our selves unto him as his creatures, and obey him as true and faithfull Children, until such time as hee shall take us out of this world to make us partakers of that everlasting blisse, & immortall inheritance, which he hath prepared in Heaven, and which is purchased for us by our Lorde Jesus Christe."⁸²

⁸¹ John Owen, *A Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit*, (London: Nathaniel Ponder, 1674), 76.

⁸² *Two and Twenty Sermons of Maister John Calvin on the Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm* (London: John Harrison, 1580), 80.