

The 1689 Confession of Faith, Chapter 4 – “Of Creation”, Session # 1 – “In the Beginning”, presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 4th, 2018, in the Adult Sunday School.

Paragraph 1 – “In the beginning it pleased God the Father, a) Son, and Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of b) his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, to create or make the world, and all things therein, c) whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.”

a) John 1: 2-3; Hebrews 1: 2; Job 26: 13; b) Romans 1: 20; c) Colossians 1: 16; Genesis 1: 31

Genesis 1: 1 – “In the beginning God created the heavens and earth.” The earth was without form and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.” “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

1. Creation is an act of God which began time for all that He created.

In the beginning means that there was a certain point where time began. Time has not always existed. God has always existed. He has no beginning or any end, and thus His creation of the physical heavens and the earth was something that He did, completely outside of Himself. God spoke in creating the heavens and the earth, but nothing changed in God when He spoke, and created these things. God had no beginning, but all created things that do have a beginning were made by Him. God stands outside of time, but is intimately involved in everything that takes place in time, but this does not change His being in His involvement with created things or people.

Michael Horton in his systematic theology – The Christian Faith, says – “The Hebrew verb (bara, “create) used in Genesis 1: 1 is a technical term that is reserved for God act of creating, occurring nearly 50 times in the Old Testament – and always with God as the subject.”

Wilhemus A’Brakel in the Christian’s Reasonable Service, Vol. 1, P.265 says that the verb –“to create” has various meanings.” 1) It can refer to God’s common government of things.” “I form the light and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil.” (Isaiah 45: 7) 2) It can refer to extraordinary acts of God.” “For the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man.” (Jeremiah 31: 22) 3) It can refer to regeneration and renewal of heart in conversion.” “Create in me a clean heart, O God.” (Psalm 51: 10) And 4th, he says – “Generally we understand the verb “to create” to refer to the generation of matters, either out of nothing as was the case on the first day, or out of formless matter created on the first day, the latter being the method by which God created on the five succeeding days.”

It is the appropriate place to begin in speaking about the Creation to speak about God Himself in regard to His great Being, and His great purpose in creating the world and all things in it. According to the Bible, God has always existed; there never was a time when God was not. He is, from everlasting to everlasting, God. At the beginning of the Bible, there is not a long treatise trying to prove God’s existence; simply a statement – “In the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The creation, our Confession states, took place according to His pleasure. And all three Persons of the Divine Trinity were involved in the creation of the world and all things in it.

2. The Creation is one of God’s extrinsic works; done by all three Persons of the Godhead.

The Creation is one of God's extrinsic works. As A'Brakel says – "Since God is one in essence, and the three Persons are the one God, their will and power are one and the same. "All God's extrinsic works are common to the three Persons, being the work of a Triune God." Nevertheless, each of these extrinsic works is attributed to individual Persons according to the relationship which each Person has to the particular work." "Consequently, creation is attributed to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit." "In doing so, however, the other Persons are not excluded but expressly included in the same work, so that any extrinsic work attributed to one of the Persons, is also attributed to the other Persons." "Thus creation is attributed not only to the Father, but also to the Son and to the Holy Spirit."

We can verify this by looking at several verses –

John 1: 1-3 – "In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "He was in the beginning with God." "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

The Word, or the Logos of God, is another term for the 2nd Person of the Divine Trinity, called – the Son in other places. This Word already was in the beginning, when the world was created; He was "with" the other two Persons of the Divine Trinity; subsisting as One of the Three, and one Essence with them. And John further states that all things were made through Him; that is the Father's purpose in creating all things was to create them in relation to His Son, and all of His work would be done through the Word, and so because the three Persons are of one essence in the Godhead, and because of this purpose, nothing was made that was made. It says here in the 1st paragraph of our Confession that it was for the manifestation of the glory of God's eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, that God would create or make the world, and all things therein. This is the main reason why the world was made.

If there be any doubt that the Son was co-creating the world and all things in it, let us read –

Colossians 1: 16 – "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

So, we see here that in creating that "He did not simply assist, nor did it occur through Him as a means, but He is the moving cause Himself, for the word "by" refers to the original cause." (A'Brakel)

You might ask – But what about Colossians 1: 15, the verse right before this? It says "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Doesn't that mean that the Son was created? No, most certainly it does not. He was not the first creation, or the first creature God created, for all things were created by Him and therefore He cannot be a creature. But He is the firstborn in the sense that He is the first parent or first creator; He is God's firstborn, he is heir of all things, and the right to govern all that He has created belongs to Him. He is the highest of the kings of the earth, or the angels in heaven, being the Creator and upholder of all that He has created. This is confirmed for us if we look at –

Hebrews 1: 1 and 2 – “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power.

The Holy Spirit also created the world and all things in it.

Genesis 1: 2 – “The Spirit of God was hovering, or moving, over the face of the waters.” This Hebrew word for “moving” or “hovering” (Merachepeth) means that He moved in a forming or creating way. He was fully united with and carrying out the joint will of all of the Persons of the Godhead.

Psalms 33: 6-9 – “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” “He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses.” “Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.” “For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.”

You can see here that it is by the breath or the “spirit” of the Lord’s mouth that the heavens and earth were made and all the host of them; all the angels. We should understand this of the Holy Spirit of God, the third Person of the Divine Trinity, for the name breath is very descriptive of God’s work. The Scriptures are theopneustos, (2nd Timothy 3: 16); they are God-breathed, men being moved by the Spirit of God to write them by direct inspiration of God. But in the creation it was by the breath of God’s mouth, by His Word, and by greatness of His Divine power, according to infinite wisdom that all things were created. This surely included the Holy Spirit working with the Father and the Son, they creating all things together, and united entirely in their purposes.

Job 26: 13 – “By His Spirit He adorned the heavens; His hand pierced the fleeing serpent.” “Indeed these are the mere edges of His ways, and how small a whisper we hear of Him!”

3. All Things were created out of nothing.

Hebrews 11: 3 – “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”

I hope that you can see and understand this wonderful truth; that it is not by man’s fallen reasoning power, or his strength of intellect, which will convince him that God created the heavens the earth and all things in it. It is by faith that understand it. This does not mean that there is not a place for apologetics, or a reasoned defense of God’s creation. But faith will always believe God’s word and all His simple and direct statements concerning the creation of the world and all things in. The things which we see in the creation around us, which we perceive in relation to all people, animals, and every living thing; these things were created by God, and they were created in the beginning out of nothing.

Psalms 19: 1-4 – “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” “Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge.” “There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.” “Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”

Michael Horton says on P. 332 of his Systematic – The Christian Faith – “The Father who eternally speaks forth His hypostatic Word in the Spirit also spoke the world into existence through the Son and the Spirit.” “Nevertheless, the two acts of speaking are qualitatively distinct.” “The word that God speaks in bringing forth creation is an act of His energies, while the Hypostatic Word is God in His essence.” “God is free to speak or not to speak His words of creation, redemption, and consummation, but the Son is the eternally begotten and eternally necessary Word of the Father.”