
In the beginning the triune God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, by the power of his word, in six days according to Scripture (Genesis 1:1–2:3; Hebrews 11:3). God created everything good and perfect for the glory of his own name (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; Psalm 104:31; Romans 11:36). God created mankind, male and female, in his own image (Genesis 1:26–27). The whole human race is descended from Adam and Eve, the first man and woman (Genesis 1:28; Acts 17:26).

(Sola 5 Confession 3.1)

It may surprise you—or perhaps it won’t—that Bible interpreters have never fully agreed on one interpretation of the creation story in Genesis 1–2.

Some of the early church fathers (e.g. Victorinus, Lactantius, Basil the Great, Ambrose of Milan, and John Damascene) explicitly taught that God created in six, 24-hour days. On the other hand, Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyon, leaning on Psalm 90:4, argued that each of the “days” of Genesis 1 was a thousand years, so that creation took place over the course of six thousand years. Augustine took a completely different approach, understanding the days to be an order of priority, of sorts, but asserting that God created everything—formed and filled—in an instant rather than over a period of time.

This varied approach to the interpretation of the creation account helps us to understand that, while we want to work hard to interpret the text correctly, and while it is absolutely acceptable to have our own, very defined and settled views, Christian orthodoxy has always allowed for diversity on this important subject. There are hills to die on in Genesis 1–2, and there are hills to avoid.

The Confession begins by affirming: **In the beginning the triune God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, by the power of his word, in six days according to Scripture.**

This opening sentence is packed with important truth about origins. As demonstrated above, there has not always been—nor is there now—unanimous agreement on how the creation account should be interpreted. Give your own understanding of each of the following elements of the affirmation.

In the beginning: _____

The triune God created the heavens and the earth: _____

Out of nothing: _____

By the power of his word: _____

In six days according to Scripture: _____

If church history is anything to go by, the answers provided above may vary rather radically within the congregation. Those who understand the Bible to teach creation out of nothing in six, 24-hour days might be puzzled as to how anyone might reach a different conclusion. Can you explain how that might happen?

How should you think about those who profess faith in Christ but hold to a form of theistic evolution, or some other creative framework that rejects an understanding of creation in six, 24-hour days? _____

Note: BBC’s historic understanding, and the “official” position of the church to this day, is that Genesis 1 gives us a historic narrative of God’s creative acts in six, 24-hour days.

God created everything good and perfect for the glory of his own name.

It has been claimed by some—even some professing Christians, believe it or not—that God is not “narcissistic” enough to do things for his own glory. How would you respond to that? Consult the texts supplied in the Confession to help you formulate your answer. Can you think of any other Scriptures that would support this affirmation? _____

How would you answer those who deny that **God created everything good** because of all the calamity that exists around us? _____

The Confession makes an important claim for the day and age in which we live: **God created mankind, male and female, in his own image.** Why is this affirmation so important to recognise? _____

The concept of gender fluidity is popular and strongly promoted today. Some have claimed that just as God’s creation of “dry land” and “sea” doesn’t rule out the creation of lakes and dams and marshes, so God’s creation of “male” and “female” doesn’t necessarily rule out the possibility of an array of gender identities between these binary sexes. How would you respond to that? _____

The whole human race is descended from Adam and Eve, the first man and woman. This is more than a theological curiosity, but has deep, practical implications. What are some of those implications? _____
