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## Creation and Cedarville

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## Creation and Cedarville

In the early decades of the fundamentalist movement that gave birth to Cedarville University, there was little discussion of creation. When it became a Baptist school in 1953, the doctrinal statement of Cedarville College included 14 specific articles, but only one concerned the creation of man: “We believe that man was created in the image of God ...” The basic theology textbook at Cedarville and other Baptist fundamentalist schools was Emery Bancroft’s *Elementary Theology*, which stated “the scriptures clearly and emphatically show that man is the result of the immediate, special, creative, and formative acts of God.”

At the time, there were three acceptable interpretations: the Gap Theory (God created in six literal days, but there was a “gap” of undetermined length between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2), the Day-Age Theory (the word *yom* in the Hebrew could refer to a 24-hour-day or an extended period of thousands of years), and the Literal 24-Hour-Day Theory. Cedarville faculty members could hold any of these three positions as long as they recognized creation as the direct and instantaneous act of God. However, there was significant concern the Day-Age Theory could lead to theistic evolution.

By 1967, the Doctrinal Statement had been expanded: “We believe in the literal account of creation and that the Scriptures clearly and distinctly teach that the creation of man lies in the special, immediate, and formative acts of God,” mirroring Bancroft’s language. But by the mid-60s, many conservatives challenged the Day-Age Theory. The debate at Cedarville surrounded a pamphlet written by a Bible department professor contending the days in Genesis had to be six literal 24-hour days, not “ages” as the Day-Age Theory asserted.

The debate raged on campus until the Trustees decided to study the issue. Most of the Cedarville faculty held the literal 24-hour-day position, some the Gap Theory, and a very few the Day-Age position. Faculty who preferred to maintain the three options

feared the implications for the pursuit of regional accreditation, along with the potential loss of faculty and students.

The Board of Trustees acted on January 18, 1967, and then-President James T. Jeremiah circulated a letter to the college family announcing the Trustees’ decision “that the days of creation were solar or literal days.” Concerned faculty members were invited to a special meeting with the Trustees in Columbus, Ohio. While their concerns were heard, the decision stood, and Cedarville became a 24-hour-day school.

Now the Cedarville University Doctrinal Statement reads:

*We believe that the Scriptures provide a literal and historical account of God’s creation of all things. The climax of the six days of creation was the special, immediate, and personal creation of human life. The first humans, Adam and Eve, were directly created, not evolved from previous life forms. God created humans, male and female, in His image. Human life, sexual identity and roles are aspects of God’s creative design. From creation, marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman that should be marked by sexual purity, by sacrificial male leadership and by recognizing the divine blessing of children, including preborn children.*

When Thomas White became President of Cedarville University in 2013, he made a point of publicly signing the University Doctrinal Statement. He committed himself, and the entire faculty, to hold true to that statement and the requisite clarifications as we continue to stand boldly for the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus Christ.



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