

3-2017

Creation in the Classroom

Thomas S. Mach

Cedarville University, macht@cedarville.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/administration_publications

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mach, Thomas S., "Creation in the Classroom" (2017). *Administrative Personnel Publications*. 230.
https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/administration_publications/230

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Cedarville, a service of the Centennial Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in Administrative Personnel Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Cedarville. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@cedarville.edu.

CREATION IN THE CURRICULUM

by Thomas Mach '88

At Cedarville University, we believe that God exists, and we hold to the “inerrant, infallible, and reliable” Word of God as authoritative “over the Church and the Christian’s life and thought.” To borrow from Francis Schaeffer, God “is there, and He is not silent.” His Word explains the origins of the universe, including the earth and all that inhabits it. We hold to a “literal and historical account of God’s creation of all things,” and that radically impacts the way we teach in every academic program. Below are just a few examples of how all Cedarville programs incorporate a creation perspective into their curriculum.

SCIENCE

At Cedarville, our science professors start with the foundation that God created the universe and all life on planet earth. The earth was not a piece of debris produced by a “big bang”; life did not evolve from a primordial soup of chemicals. In the field of biology, Darwinian evolution has become accepted fact. It is

believed with a fervor rivaling religion. This is because Darwin asserted that “conflict facilitated natural selection,” and, as such, presupposed “a teleology, an end or goal in mind.” Teleology has to do with the way circumstances will work out, but it assumes a designer. Darwin assumed a teleology based on the strongest and best winning out, or survival of the fittest. Nature would determine the outcome of species based on their ability to survive and thrive. But in taking this position, Darwin substituted the creation for the Creator, making nature the grand designer, not God.

Cedarville professors recognize the limitations of science to prove the origins of man. While science can corroborate the truth of Scripture, how the universe began will never be proven by scientific method. At Cedarville, we start with the foundation of Scripture as God’s truth and critique the theory of evolution on two fronts: epistemically (pertaining to the process by which knowledge is obtained) and methodologically (pertaining to an orderly process of investigation). Epistemically, we start with Proverbs 1:7, which



provides the proper foundation for all knowledge: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” 1 Corinthians 1:20–25 tells us that man’s wisdom is foolishness to God, putting our ability to reason in proper perspective. As a result, Cedarville’s biologists begin with a distinctive foundation that most scientists do not recognize.

Cedarville professors also critique evolution methodologically by teaching students the scientific method of pursuing knowledge within the framework of revealed truth in God’s Word. The presupposition of the Divine Designer helps scientists because they are much less likely to explain things they find, but do not understand, as “junk” or “relics of evolution.” Rather, when they start with the idea that there is a purpose to everything in nature, they are unlikely to dismiss what they do not

While science can corroborate the truth of Scripture, how the universe began will never be proven by scientific method.

understand. Starting with the right presuppositions and asking the right questions allow students to critically analyze what is conveyed as “truth” in a textbook or scientific article.

More importantly, students recognize how scientific research itself provides much evidence against evolution. Emphasizing the proper starting place for all knowledge — Scripture and the proper limitations of science — and that the scientific method cannot prove origins, allows students to gain a more comprehensive education at Cedarville than schools that do not believe in a literal, six-day creation.

HISTORY

In the study of history, professors at Cedarville also start from the foundation that God exists and that He created man in His image. Secular philosophers of history have long grappled with the meaning of history, and their conclusions are really quite sad. Some throw up their hands and decide there is no meaning. They study the past because they find it interesting, or they use it to support a political argument. These approaches are not always bad, but if they are the only purpose for studying history, then humans simply become pawns for larger and more powerful forces, rather than meaningful beings engaged in purposes governed by a loving and wise Sovereign.

If man evolved in a chance system like evolution, there can be no meaning for his existence. He is the product of chance, or “dumb luck” in today’s vernacular. Whether he lives or dies is of no eternal, cosmic importance. But in God’s economy, man was created in His image. The very act of creation endows man with meaning. If there was any question about that, it is more than addressed by the love He expressed toward us in sending His Son to die for our sins.

As a historian studying the past, I know the historical endeavor matters because the human actors were valued by God. As a Christian historian, when I evaluate the actions of humans in the past, I do so

recognizing that while they carry meaning because of their created nature, they are also sinful and, by nature, reject the truth. Students studying history at Cedarville leave the classroom with an understanding that ultimate meaning in history is found not in the events or role players, but beyond the actual events themselves within the counsel of a Creator who causes all history to flow toward His intended purposes.

PSYCHOLOGY

Most of the underlying assumptions in the field of history, though naturalistic, do not directly oppose biblical truth. The underlying assumptions and prevailing theories about mankind within the field of psychology, however, are often antithetical to biblical teaching. Nonetheless, given the field's intent — to understand human thinking and behavior — Christians can find a meaningful vocation, while bringing biblical truth to bear. Similar to biology, Cedarville psychology professors teach the theoretical foundations for psychological practice to their students, while analyzing those assumptions from a rigorous biblical perspective. The psychology profession contains both blatantly humanistic theories, which Cedarville psychology faculty members critique biblically, as well as scientific endeavors with control/experimental groups, in which Cedarville psychology faculty members actively participate with their students.

Secular psychology can fall prey to sheer political forces. For instance, in 1973, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* included homosexuality until cultural pressure forced its removal. In such instances, Cedarville's faculty members help students to "think biblically," since a biblical understanding of creation provides the only proper foundation for the marriage relationship. Cedarville's faculty members use God's Word to frame all life dimensions, and the Genesis creation account is a key touch point for rightly understanding human behavior and cognition.

BUSINESS

In Genesis 1:28, God gave man dominion over the earth. Genesis 2:15 notes that God told Adam to work the garden and "keep it." He then placed boundaries on what man should do. The ethical principles that apply to the business world from these brief passages are seemingly endless. Business professors at Cedarville have the joy of teaching students that as created beings, in the image of God, they are His representatives in this world to reflect Him. Our students learn that God gave work as a gift to man. It was not part of the fall. Yes, work became more difficult because of the fall, but man was created to work. Work allows mankind to reflect God through obedience to Him.

Business is sometimes viewed by Christians negatively because of the human potential to make an idol of money, allowing greed to drive work. Some say capitalism makes people greedier. These are worthy cautions, but Cedarville's economics and business

professors help students sort through these issues. Capitalism, and business as we know it in America, provides an environment for humans to thrive: the opportunity to create wealth, provide for families, support the church, interact with others for mutual benefit, and fulfill our calling — in short, flourish (1 Tim. 5:8; 2 Cor. 9:7).

Just as in the Garden of Eden, laborers in America's economic system must be limited by the dictates of God. Adam and Eve were forbidden from eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the same way, Christians must recognize that work is good, but it must be limited by moral boundaries such as acting ethically, trusting God not money, and rejecting greed as a motivation.

These biblical emphases mean that Cedarville teaches students how to evaluate the underlying assumptions of any economic system, exhorts them to reflect God in the work He has called them to through ethical conduct, and encourages them to steward their tasks responsibly.

FOUNDATION FOR ALL FIELDS

At Cedarville, we teach that all knowledge starts within the framework of truth found in the Creator God. In science, we can study God's created order recognizing that He holds it all together and has provided a method of discovery for humans. At Cedarville, when science and faith collide, we rely on Scripture. In history, the study of the past is valuable because we can discern how humans have done good or evil in their actions and learn from them. In psychology, we can know the surest basis for mental health and healthy functioning is man and woman's proper understanding of themselves in relation to a Creator, not as independent agents attempting to create meaning in a moral vacuum. Finally, the creation story provides the basis for work, not only that it is a God-ordained positive good, but also how it should be undertaken.

Cedarville's commitment to the Genesis account of creation results in a distinctive integration of biblical truth and learning in every classroom across campus, producing students who have a complete understanding of who they are and the vital role of being on mission to a broken, sinful world, wherever they work and live.

Thomas Mach '88 is Assistant Vice President for Academics and Professor of History at Cedarville. He has been at Cedarville since 2000. He earned his Ph.D. in history from the University of Akron.