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Confessing God as Creator

Adventist education cannot be separated from the command of the third angel, who calls for the worship of “Him who made heaven and earth” (Revelation 14:6, NKJV). This call is more than a reminder of our origin: It is a call to acknowledge God as Creator.

An agnostic might dismiss the Genesis account as a fable. A scientist could look to “an accidental collocation of atoms”¹ for the origin of life. A philosopher might turn to a first cause. And a poet could describe life as a “tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”² But the Christian cannot but begin with a faith affirmation, “In the beginning God created. . . .”

Why is continual affirmation of Genesis 1 so important to Christian faith and education?

1. The Ultimate Reality

First, the Christian perspective of history, time, and space finds its origin and meaning within the contours of Genesis. For the Christian student and teacher, God constitutes the ultimate reality. He is the cause and designer of life. “In him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28, KJV).

The Bible’s description of God’s involvement in the shaping of human life makes it clear that the Creator of the cosmos is not a distant, impersonal, absolute force, idea, or mind, but a Person. In saying that the Creator is a Person, we are not ranking God’s nature relative to our own. At the least, we are saying that God cannot be less than the human person, and this at once destroys human pretension to create its own god. At the most, we are saying that the incomprehensible, infinite God has revealed Himself to us through a relationship that can only be described in terms of personhood.

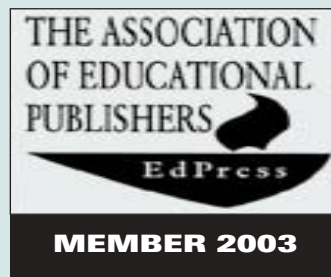
This Person, however, must be seen not in terms of the limitations inherent to humanity, but in terms of relational possibilities that involve love, fellowship, communication, and historical and existential purposes. Hence we can describe God as entirely other and still approach Him as immediately near. He is both transcendent and immanent.

2. Both Other and Near

Christian education must also remain committed to the Genesis account because only that account keeps the Creator distinctive from creation and yet relates Him to it. We thus avoid the twin temptations of identifying the Creator with creation (i.e., pantheism and Eastern mysticism) and isolating the Creator from creation (i.e., platonic metaphysics and secular humanism, which attempt to explain nature and human potential without a personal God).

Thus a biblical insistence on a creation *ex nihilo* shows that God is transcendent over and independent of His creation. At the same time, He is personal and capable of relating to His creatures. In other words, God creates and relates without depending on any pre-existent substance or external motivating force. He is entirely other, absolutely Himself. Christian education thus provides an accurate understanding of the Creator-God that forces Christian teachers and students to reflect upon their limitations, but also em-

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meet the needs of every student. (Note: It's helpful to discover your own learning style preference so that you do not teach using only that approach.)

Finally, be sure to make your classroom welcoming to students of all learning preferences. By using your learning style savvy, you will be able to respond to the Creator's edict to teach all your students "with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ" (Colossians 1:28, NIV). ☞



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at workshops on effective techniques for teaching writing and learning styles/multiple intelligences.

Suggestions for Additional Reading

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Skinner, Ellen A. *Perceived Control, Motivation, and Coping* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1995), vol. 8.

Tobias, Cynthia Ulrich. *The Way They Learn: How to Discover and Teach to Your Child's Strengths* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1996).

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1. "For Your Information": <http://www.bibleinfo.com/fyi.html>.
2. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe... A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1988), No. 13, p. 170.
3. Anita E. Woolfolk, *Educational Psychology* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), p. 135.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
5. Jack Mearns, "The Social Learning Theory of Julian B. Rotter": <http://psych.fullerton.edu/jmearns/rotter.htm>.
6. Mandy Grantz, "Do You Have the Power to Succeed?: Locus of Control and Its Impact on Education": <http://www.units.muohio.edu/psychersite/control.education.shtml>.
7. Mearns.
8. Woolfolk, p. 396.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
10. Johanna K. Lemlech, *Curriculum and Instructional Methods for the Elementary and Middle School* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill, 1998), p. 60.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
12. A Multiple Intelligences test and more ideas for strategies can be found online at the following sites: http://www.spannj.org/BasicRights/appendix_b.htm; <http://www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-2204.html>.
13. Using an Internet search engine such as Yahoo or Google, type in the words, "Learning Styles Inventories."

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powers them, through the grace of God, to reach for eternal possibilities.

3. Authentic Living

The doctrine of creation is crucial to Christian education because of its perspective on ecology and history. Genesis shows that God created this Earth good, and that we are only His stewards; the Earth is not ours to treat any way we wish.

The essential goodness of creation thus denies the concepts of both dualism on the one hand, and the meaninglessness of history, on the other. As Niebuhr points out, God's creatorship "is a revelation of His majesty and self-sufficient power." "The doctrine of creation escapes the error of the naturalists who, by regarding causality as the principle of meaning, can find no place for human freedom and are forced to reduce man to the level of nature. It escapes the error of the rationalists who make *nous* into the ultimate principle of meaning, and are thereby tempted to divide man into an essentially good reason, which participates in or is identified with the divine, and an essentially evil physical life."³

The prophet Isaiah directed despairing humanity to God's creative activity in order to discover meaning in history. "Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; who brings princes to nought, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing" (Isaiah 40:21-23, NRSV).

Adventist education today can do no less. Genesis inevitably points to Revelation. Creation moves toward consummation. Despite its chaos and disorder, its confusion and hopelessness, its wars and rumors of peace, this world is not without hope: It is moving toward an inevitable climax. The words of the angel of Revelation 14:6 provide the educational agenda for our schools: "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water" (NRSV). ☞

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1. Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* (New York: Doubleday, 1929), p. 45.
2. Shakespeare, "Macbeth," V:v:17.
3. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964) vol. 1, pp. 132, 134.