

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT ON ORIGINS

Bethel University – Indiana

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Though a very small part of a college's curriculum, the topic of origins has become a prominent theological conversation and an important pedagogical point of clarification for evangelical Christian institutions of higher education, including Bethel University.

Bethel faculty and students come from various Christian denominations, and Bethel's Academic Freedom Policy values a wide range of scholarship projects. On Origins, while Bethel's affiliation with the Missionary Church supports freedom to investigate and teach a variety of scientifically legitimate theories on Origins, it sets boundaries on the doctrine of the special creation of Adam by God, which should be advocated as the official, meritorious, and theologically responsible position of the University, without disparagement.

1. The Missionary Church's Position Paper on Educational Philosophy upholds that the Bible (Special Revelation) reveals truth about God, humanity, and the universe which cannot be discovered from any other source, and that General Revelation about humanity and the universe comes from observation. By observing, categorizing and experimenting with the created order, knowledge is gathered about God, others and the world. Therefore, the study of every facet of the universe (including humanity as related to it and responsible as stewards of it), is not only a permissible pursuit, but strongly encouraged by the Bible itself (Proverbs 25:2; Exodus 31:1-5; Psalm 19:1-6), affirmed by the Missionary Church, and necessary for skilled Christian discipleship.

Therefore, Bethel faculty are affirmed to investigate everything appropriate to a Christian liberal arts college as a function of Christian discipleship (Mark 12:30; Colossians 1:16-18; II Corinthians 10:5).

Further, Bethel University faculty are affirmed to teach any and all matters relevant to developing wisdom and Christian maturity in students, including viewpoints which the university may not hold but which students may face in the future.

2. The Article of Faith on Creation states, "We believe that the first man, Adam, was created by an immediate act of God and not by a process of evolution." While faculty are supported to investigate and teach all viewpoints on Origins, this doctrine is a corporate commitment on Adam and all humanity. This affirmation is essential to distinguish humanity from animals, as made in God's image (Gen. 1:27; 2:7) to account for the work of Christ to atone for the representative sin of humanity through Adam (I Cor. 15:45), respect the genealogy of Luke 3, account for New Testament references to Adam by Paul (Rom. 5:12-17), and others. Macro-evolution among animals is not addressed here.

3. Bethel University faculty members affirm through contracts each year that they believe:

- God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and the Author of Salvation.
- The Bible is the divinely inspired, only infallible, authoritative Word of God, and the unchanging rule of faith and practice.
- Humanity's relationship to God, which was lost through sin, is restored through faith in the redeeming work of Christ, God's divine Son.
- The Church comprises people who are born of the Spirit and empowered by him to live a holy life devoted to the fulfillment of the Church's Great Commission.
- The personal return of Christ will bring about the end of the present age, the judgment and the beginning of the glorious age to come.

In summary, Bethel University faculty will respectfully teach its denominational doctrine on the distinctive creation of humanity, while answering that denomination's call to investigate everything appropriate to a Christian liberal arts college. This policy does not intend to suppress faculty opinions about Origins, but prevent public contradiction or disparagement of this corporate commitment. This permits faculty to participate in academic communities which might be at variance with the Position Statement in order to learn from that community, but faculty are not to advocate for, nor hold leadership positions for, nor sustain a contractual relationship with an academic community which may be at variance with the Statement.