

International Apologetics Project [IAP] – Canada [ON]
Meeting Notes – May 1, 2009

The following schools were represented: Guido de Bres, Heritage, Providence Collegiate, CCRTC. Emmanuel, Fergus was absent with notification
F. G. Oosterhoff, H. Harsevoort, and H. Alkema were also present .

1. H. vanDooren led the meeting through a review of the meeting notes of January 19, 2009 and the revised Enduring Understandings of Reformed Education. No new matters arose from this review. The Enduring Understandings are not intended to be a final product but will be left in their present form for the time being. Schools are encouraged to use this document in their local curriculum work.
2. Presentation by Steve Foster: Darwinism – Atheistic or Religious? (See * Point 6 below)
In his presentation, SF traced the developments in the debate/antithesis between “Darwinism and Christianity”. Patterns in the developments include the following:
 - a. Darwinism considers religion a dangerous notion and an error of thought and lifestyle. God or the supernatural are no longer necessary to explain origins.
 - b. Adherents of Darwinism tend to regard the theory of materialism as absolute and are unwilling to look at the evidence from the perspective of any other presuppositions.
 - c. Evolutionism has become a secular religion whose main doctrine is committed to naturalism. The battle for the schools (i.e., the minds of the young) has intensified to the level of indoctrination. Science must be taught without religion.
 - d. The attitude toward Christianity has become more openly hostile. God is considered a delusion (Dawkins) and man has not been created in the image of God (Gould).
 - e. The Anglican and Roman Catholic churches see no essential conflict between evolution and church doctrine as long as a possibility for a creative act of God remains open.
 - f. Reformers such as Calvin and Luther distanced themselves from Augustine’s view. The former held to a 24h day creation although they recognized problems with the order of creation. Augustine saw the 6 creation days only as a framework for God’s single creative act. He concluded that the days of creation in Scripture were similar only in name and number to the days we know.
 - g. Kuyper, Bavinck and Schilder all wrestled with the problems posed by the creation account in Scripture and illustrate that debates about the length of the creation days, for example, are not confessional issues to which we can bind each other. Schilder’s 3 rules or principles provide a helpful set of guidelines.
3. Discussion items:
 - a. The discussion about how to interpret God’s creating act is taking place both outside Reformed circles and within it. Presbyterians, for example, are freely discussing it.
 - b. A false dilemma is created when people who accept idea of a creation day being other than a 24h period are labeled as evolutionists. Either you accept that God created the universe or that it evolved naturally without God.
 - c. The Roman Catholic position is theistic evolution which accepts a materialistic view of methodology, but not of origins.
 - d. The Biblical word for “day” can be interpreted differently. The first 3 days of creation were different from the second 3 days and the Sabbath day. The Hebrew language is much more limited in vocabulary than is the English language. A single Hebrew word, therefore, has different interpretations.
 - e. Reformers of 100 years ago emphasized the historicity of the creation event. For them the surface meaning (e.g., length of a creation day) was not the central issue.
 - f. A debate about the length of the creation days can deflect our attention away for what we ought to amaze us: God spoke creation into existence! It is also true, however, that answers

- to “side” questions (e.g., old/young earth) categorizes people on the basis of where they stand on larger issues (e.g., Did God create or did creation evolve naturally?)
- g. What are the implications of the creation issues for the rest of Scripture (e.g., Was Adam a literal man?)? Issues are part of apologetics (e.g., Synod of Assen, 1926, dealt with issues posed by Dr. Geelkerken’s view of Genesis 1-3).
 - h. Neither God nor creation can lie. Changing scientific theories (e.g., heliocentric universe) may cause us to re-examine/change our interpretation of Scripture passages (e.g., Joshua: the sun stood still account). However, we do well to remember Schilder’s principle: Science cannot be the binding standard for the interpretation of Scripture. We know that science can be wrong; we are perhaps less aware of the possibility that our interpretation of Scripture can also be wrong. Possibilities have to be examined critically and with humility.
 - i. Is it considered heretical to question the young earth/24h day interpretation of Genesis 1, 2? We want to honour Scripture. Anything new makes people uncomfortable.
 - j. We have to recognize the antithesis in the debate between viewing creation as God’s act and viewing it from the standpoint of materialism/naturalism. However, by promoting positions, we often close the door to dialogue. Our students have to know where they stand, on the one hand; on the other, they should be able to defend themselves in dialogue with others in the recognition that we do not have all the answers.
 - k. We should not be afraid of the issues. We need each other as brothers and sisters to support each other in confronting the issues.
 - l. The profoundly anti-religious stance of today’s world is very real and our students have to be made aware of this reality. In confronting the issues with students, teachers must be sensitive to the age-appropriateness of the items under discussion.
4. Presentation by Dave Dykstra: Reformed Apologetics and Evolution (see *Point 6 below)
 - a. The issuing of new science curriculum guidelines in September, 2009 provide a good occasion for secondary science teachers to examine the fundamentals of Reformed education in the context of their teaching. The Guido science department, for example, has prepared a handout (see “Christian Perspective Topics and our Curriculum – Science meeting Feb. 4) that assigns perspective topics to specific courses and course areas.
 - b. Students need to know what the key perspective questions are. For example:
 - i. Why do we study science?
 - ii. How is science limited?
 - iii. Is evolution science?
 - iv. How does bias affect methodology, ethics, treatment of the earth?
 - v. Can there be a compromise between Christian and secular perspectives?
 - c. Students also need to know and understand
 - i. that there are valid reasons for teaching and studying evolution (e.g., knowing the enemy, strengthening faith, making core issues clear)
 - ii. that the term “evolution: includes both microevolution and macroevolution.
 - iii. that evolution is a faith
 - iv. that evolution is not a new theory
 - v. that evolution makes a lot of sense and the best available option without God
 - vi. that the evidence or icons of evolution include observable natural selection processes, mutations, and the fossil record
 - vii. that the interpretation and analysis of results are dependent on worldview
 - viii. that the interpretation and analysis of results impact ethics (e.g., Hitler’s super race)
 5. Discussion items
 - a. We need these discussions to prepare our students for the onslaught. How are we doing?
 - i. It comes up in senior biology.
 - ii. It could be done by means of comparison (evolution vs. Christianity).

- iii. Students have to know the strengths of evolution, too. Evolution is a very strong enemy and the evidence can be compelling. If we focus only on the weaknesses, students won't take evolution seriously. We have to convince them that this is serious business.
 - iv. Sometimes we as teachers don't know how. This brings us back to the Bible.
 - v. Students have to learn critical thinking and understand the importance of faith.
 - vi. We are doing a better job of it in science than we did in the past.
 - vii. We need to bring in ethics. This area needs to be developed.
- b. Evolution has so many meanings (e.g., Julian Huxley: change over time in a closed system). The confusion of terms is deliberate – you can't get a one-liner from evolutionists. Theistic evolution is a confusing term (e.g., Gould vs. Dawkins). All makes it hard for us to nail evolution down for our students.
 - c. The university experience compels students to make a decision concerning evolution. Their secondary school education has to prepare them.
 - d. Religion is not a default position for those who claim they can't understand science. As teachers we have to be aware of anti-intellectualism in We have to be able to articulate our position. We can't "prove" our position because it is a faith position.
 - e. This topic is just as important in the social sciences (anthropology, psychology, ethics) as it is to the other sciences. The question of origins is at the heart of the debate.
 - f. The film, *Expelled*, puts evolutionists on the hot seat.
 - g. Are we confusing students with our broad use of the word "faith"? We confess that the Holy Spirit works faith (that addresses both head and heart); we also call other beliefs "faiths."
 - h. Science is not the enemy – it is the study of God's creation. The spirit of darkness is the enemy. Who is giving our students the idea that science is the enemy? We have to choose our language carefully.
 - i. We are speaking here to kindred spirits. Students want answers and reassurance – not philosophy. Don't undermine their child-like faith; help them cling to it. Be sensitive to the age and maturity of the students.
6. Where do we go from here? Should we keep meeting or work locally for a year?
- Suggestions:
- Have schools work locally to implement ideas and share their work in a year or two. Keep in touch with other schools in the meantime.
 - Use the work we did in science as a model for other disciplines. Teachers have to work through the process themselves. This is what will make them compelling instructors. Each generation of teachers has to wrestle with the questions.
 - We should have a combined meeting to apply this "model" to other disciplines. Ideas for the timing of such a meeting should be sent to Christine van Halen-Faber. E-mail: cvanhalen@covenantteacherscollege.com

*Powerpoint presentations will be posted on the CCRTC web-site:

<http://www.covenantteacherscollege.com>

7. Closing

- a. Next meeting: May 7, 2010 from 1-3:30 p.m.
- b. H. van Dooren thanked the presenters.
- c. H. Harsevoort closed the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer.

For the meeting,
Judy Kingma