Outline Notes for a Teaching Block on Engaging with creationist worldviews in the classroom and congregation

Length: 3 contact hours

Level: 5
Resources include: teaching notes, video clips, assessment suggestions, reading lists.
Aim: To help students engage with creationist worldviews, whether expressed in the classroom or congregation

Source: Professor Michael Reiss, Professor of Science Education at UCL Institute of Education

Objectives: By the end of the block students will be able to:

a) Understand the positions of both creationists and those who are not creationists
b) Appreciate how creationism might be addressed in schools in both science lessons and religious education lessons
c) Deal, whether in sermons or conversations, with issues raised by creationism.

Session 1: Creationist arguments and the scientific and theological response

Pre-session viewing:

- Watch the ‘What’s the Best “Proof” of Creation?’ video (3 min 37 s) featuring Ken Ham, President/CEO of Answers in Genesis available at https://answersingenesis.org/creationism/. You might also like to look at some of the other material on the Answers in Genesis website.
- Watch the ‘Top Ten Creationist Arguments’ (7 min 55 s) video from The Thinking Atheist available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSxgnu3Hww8.
Issues for discussion in the session:

- What did you think of the Answers in Genesis video? Are the arguments Ken Ham uses scientific, theological or other?
- What did you think of The Thinking Atheist video? Are the arguments it uses scientific, theological or other?
- Can someone be a scientist and a creationist?
- How convincing are the scientific arguments against creationism?
- Can someone be theologically informed and a creationist?

Post-session reading:


Post-session viewing:

- Watch the Denis Alexander ‘On the Barriers to Traditional Creation Theology’ video (2 min 48 s) on the BioLogos website at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwxlrN9ICnE.

Session 2: Engaging with creationism in the classroom

Pre-session reading:


Issues for discussion in the session:

- What do you think of the suggested year 9 scheme of work (for 13-14 year-olds) from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority?
- Should the approach to engaging with creationism in the science and religious education classroom be consistent or is it acceptable for there to be differences?
What should be the aims of teaching about creationism in secondary science education and in secondary religious education?

Imagine you are a head teacher or chair of governors at a secondary school. You are interviewing for the post of secondary biology teacher. The strongest applicant on paper is someone whom you are fairly sure holds creationist views. Can you / should you bring this up at interview and if you do, what difference would the answers make?

Post-session reading:


- See the resources at http://www.faradayschools.com.

Session 3: Engaging with creationism in the congregation

Pre-session reading:


Issues for discussion in the session:

- Did any of the findings in the Theos publication surprise you?

- The youth group in your Church has been revitalised over the last year, thanks largely to the time and effort of a young husband-and-wife team, Seth and Sara. One of the teenagers in the youth group who is studying science ‘A’ levels tells you that she is a bit concerned because Seth and Sara seem to be advocating a literal reading of the early chapters of Genesis. What should you do?

- How would you react to the suggestion that the rise of science has made it more difficult to have a traditional religious faith than was once the case?

- How might you respond if a member of the congregation asks you what we are supposed to conclude from the Genesis account of the Garden of Eden?

Assessment ideas

- Essay: How might creationism be addressed in the primary classroom where the clear-cut distinction in secondary schools between science lessons and religious education lessons, nearly always taught by different individuals, does not hold?
- Essay: How can congregations examine creationism in a way that is true to modern science without denigrating creationists?

- Practical/liturgical task: Write a prayer suitable for the Sunday nearest the birthday of Charles Darwin (February 12, 1809).

- Practical/liturgical task: Write a sermon that addresses issues connected with the scriptural account of the Fall, given the rise of evolutionary biology.

References