

ETHICAL ISSUES WITH TEACHING SCIENCE BASED ON CREATIONISM: A PROPOSAL

To: Dr. T. Powell

From: T. Reardon **TR**

Subject: Report on Teaching Science Based on Creationism in A Beka Books

Date: 30 Oct. 2012

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this document is to discuss why teaching science based on creationism is an ethical issue and to present solutions to the problem.

PRESENT STATUS OF THE PROBLEM:

A Beka Book is a homeschooling company that teaches from a Christian perspective. They teach all of their subjects with a creationist background, including science. According the description of “Science: Earth and Space” on the A Beka website, it “investigates fields such as geography, oceanography, meteorology, astronomy, and environmental science with the goal of discovering the thoughts of the Creator through the ingenious structure and orderly function of His creation (Psa. 19:1).” The description goes on to specifically say that it “rejects the unproven hypothesis of evolution, recognizing special creation as the only reasonable explanation for the origin of the universe” (“Science”).

The ethical issue here is that Creationism has no scientific evidence to back it, which means that the connections between science and “the Creator” have no truth behind them. It breaks the ethical issue of honesty.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE:

I plan to start my paper with a brief history of how A Beka began and how it has grown since then using an article on the history of fundamentalist education. Beginning with the meeting between educators to argue over the correct way of teaching down to the current position of differences in teaching styles between schools of the same category (Laats).

I ordered a book from A Beka, but it has not arrived yet. I used the online description of it as a basis for what the book is about and what its approach to science is. “Science: Earth and Space” bases its subcategories on the basis that “God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe,” and then it follows up by tying scientific aspects in to recognize “God’s command for man to have dominion over creation (Gen. 1:28-30)” (“Science”).

After I decided which book I would use, I started looking through Galileo for potential sources on ethics, science, creationism, and A Beka. Using an abstract of an article on teaching creationism in public school, I found that “the most important predictor of support for the teaching of creationism-only education in public schools was low educational attainment, which yielded a stronger magnitude of effect than did belief in God or importance of religion” (Hemovich). I’ll use this to explain why it is important to stick to the facts, because when parents pay for an education they expect the highest attainment in their children rather than just knowledge of good moral values.

According to a book review of *Shades of Gray*, a book on ethics in technical writing, the authors of the book “define ethics simply as ‘doing what is right to achieve what is good’” (Kynell). I’d like to find another source that defines “good” and “honesty” so that I can tie them together; I have not found a source for this yet.

While researching this, I discovered that my 10-year-old brother is currently in the A Beka homeschooling program, so I decided to talk to my stepmother (his teacher) about it. “I have no complaints about A Beka Academy. It’s home schooling option is extremely easy to use. A Beka provides all learning/educational tools, such as textbooks, tests/quizzes, reading books and DVDs. One of the things I personally love about A Beka is that they provide the home school teacher with a curriculum and lesson plan. They call it a Video Manual, but it is a daily lesson plan for all 170 lessons. It lays out what is needed each day in each class and what is being taught” (Reardon). When speaking on the religious aspect of the program, she spoke only of Cameron (my little brother)’s Bible class. “We do this 2+ times a week. I do not give him the tests or make him memorize Bible versus. I only ask him to listen and enjoy. We want Cam to know, and understand the Christian religion. I have always believe religion instills good moral values if followed” (Reardon). I plan to use the information given to me from my stepmother to give an insight to what being in the program is actually like, and give an opposing opinion if applicable.

TENTATIVE OUTLINE:

- I. The A Beka Case: Ethical Issues
 - a. Case history
 - b. List of prevention strategies
- II. Criteria
 - a. Must be as honest as possible
 - b. Must not take away the right to learn creationism
 - c. Must give alternate option for learning creationism
- III. Possible Solutions

- a. Pass laws that state that creationism must be taught in religion classes rather than science
 - b. Establish consequences for teaching creationism in the wrong context
 - c. Establish a clear guideline for what is fact and what is theory in science
- IV. Applying the Solutions to the Criteria
- a. Pass laws that state that creationism must be taught in religion classes rather than science
 - i. Must be as honest as possible
 - ii. Must not take away the right to learn creationism
 - iii. Must give alternate option for learning creationism
 - b. Establish consequences for teaching creationism in the wrong context
 - i. Must be as honest as possible
 - ii. Must not take away the right to learn creationism
 - iii. Must give alternate option for learning creationism
 - c. Establish a clear guideline for what is fact and what is theory in science
 - i. Must be as honest as possible
 - ii. Must not take away the right to learn creationism
 - iii. Must give alternate option for learning creationism

PROJECTED CONCLUSION:

I expect to find that the best solution to the problem is to begin by establishing a clear guideline for what is considered fact and what is considered theory in science. I would go on to explain that if that does not work, we should take legal action—pass laws and establish consequences.

PROJECTED RECOMMENDATIONS:

To prevent A Beka and other creationism-teaching schools from placing creationism in the wrong subjects and therefore being dishonest, I recommend the following solutions:

1. Provide guidelines for what is considered fact and what is considered theory in science
2. Pass laws stating that creationism cannot be taught in science or in any other subject that might cause the information to be dishonest
3. Establish consequences for not following these laws

WORKS CITED

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- Laats, Adam. "Forging a Fundamentalist 'One Best System': Struggles Over Curriculum and Educational Philosophy for Christian Day Schools, 1970-1989." *History of Education Quarterly*. Web. 30 Oct. 2012.
- Science Earth and Space—New Edition*. A Beka Books. Print.
- Reardon, Erica. Personal interview. 30 Oct. 2012.

***A NOTE ON THE CITATIONS FOR (LAATS)- THIS IS THE ONE THAT YOU SENT ME, SO I DID NOT HAVE A DATABASE TO PUT DOWN OR A VOLUME NUMBER.**

***A NOTE ON THE CITATION FOR (SCIENCE)- BECAUSE THE BOOK I ORDERED HAS NOT COME IN YET, I DON'T HAVE ALL OF THE COPYRIGHT INFORMATION. I TRIED TO FIND IT ONLINE BUT COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING ON THE WEBSITE EXCEPT THE ABSTRACT.**

APPENDIX A

Email from: Erica Reardon

I have no complaints about A Beka Academy. It's home schooling option is extremely easy to use. A Beka provides all learning/educational tools, such as text books, tests/quizzes, reading books and DVDs. One of the things I personally love about A Beka is that they provide the home school teacher with a curriculum and lesson plan. They call it a Video Manual, but it is a daily lesson plan for all 170 lessons. It lays out what is needed each day in each class, and what is being taught.

This is Cameron's second year of home schooling and using A Beka. We decided to home school due to the fact that our state is ranked very low for education. Our move to Chatham made us realize that public school is not an option. We wanted to place Cameron in a private School, Savannah Christian Prep. To be honest his education level was way beneath the other students there, so A Beka is helping to change that. I can honestly say Cameron is learning more than he would in his old public school in Paulding County. I have a friend who's son was in school with Cam and they were in the same classes from kindergarten through 2nd together. I asked her to email me work sheets that her son was doing for 3rd grade, I wanted to make sure I was keeping up with this school. I was shocked to see how behind they actually were compared to what Cam was learning. They were two months into school and only doing 2 digit addition and subtraction problems. They were also reviewing basic multiplication. Cameron was multiplying 2 to 3 digit numbers and also adding/ subtracting higher numbers. Cam was starting on equations too.

Last year for 3rd grade I went by "the book", and followed all DVDs daily. Our days were long

but, Cameron was learning a lot. This year for 4th, I am more lenient and not turning the DVD on for all classes. I will list out his normal day for you.....

Bible class: We do this 2+ times a week. I do not give him the tests or make him memorize the Bible versus. I only ask him to listen and enjoy. We want Cam to know, and understand the Christian religion. I have always believe religion instills good moral values if followed.

Math: I turn on the DVD when learning something new or new to me:) I want to make sure this is taught properly and he gets the full benefit of this class. When the DVD is turned plus his work sheets added in this class can easily last 2 hours. He has speed drills, quizzes, tests and exams.

Reading: we turn the DVD on for every day. Some days are normal reading from books. Other days are speed reading quizzes and tests, or oral reading grading.

Language: I usually turn this class on. I have personally forgotten all the rules for commas, semi colons etc... I want Cam to understand what is being taught, and his teacher on the DVD is better than myself at language. He dislikes this class the most due to the book reports and creative writings. To be honest I get over whelmed due to how much is being taught, and it is hard to remember all the rules of language. He has quizzes, tests and exams in this class also.

Penmanship: I refuse to turn this class on, but have made up my own version. A Beka students are way more advance in cursive writing than Cam is. Public schools are not teaching cursive so

he had no idea what the basic letters were last year. We do daily penmanship by writing our spelling words. For the test I make up my own, which are More on his level. The A Beka students write paragraphs in cursive and only write in cursive for all classes. Cam is just now able to write full sentences in cursive neatly. He can read what the teacher writes in cursive on the board during the classes, which is a major thing for someone never taught in public schooling. This is one of the reasons he was not ready for private school last year.

Spelling: Again I went by the book last year, but have adapted it to my liking this year. Some schools such as Fairfax County Va. do not even teach spelling in 4th grade. Schools have decided to move on with the time of technology. I have Cam write half his 30 word list on Monday and Tuesday. We then take part one of the spelling test. He then writes the other half on Wednesday and Thursday followed with the 2nd half of the test. I read the poetry portion of this class. I do not even turn on the spelling portion of the DVD.

History: We turn on the DVD daily for this class, he is learning so much and is very interested in it. We have quizzes, test and exams. He also has a map work sheet booklet that we use weekly not daily. The maps are world, USA, bodies of water, and even the 13 colonies. There might be more, but I have not looked ahead.

Science: This is Cameron's favorite class and we always turn it on. He has a regular reading textbook and a workbook. He takes quizzes, tests, exams and we do experiments.

Art: I do not do this weekly but a very nice art book with projects is included in the program.

PE: We have joined sports at the Y for this. He has practice twice a Week for 1-2 hours and games weekly. He will be signing up for basketball in December to continue his PE class.

After Christmas we will be done with Science and starting Health. It will have the same as the other classes when it comes to tests and quizzes.

We are also adding in a language, which is between German and Italian. We are planning a trip to Italy so I am leaning towards Italian, but Dave travels to Austria yearly and needs to learn German for work. Hoping to incorporate both languages!

I enjoy teaching Cameron one on one, and feel he gets a better education this way. I also like having a flexible schedule so if we want to travel around we can. The only thing I dislike about home schooling is the lack of friendships. Joining the YMCA has helped with this matter.

Hope this helps.

Love ya!!!!