



Ecumenical Christian Ministries  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

***Evolution and Christianity: A response to the Kansas State Board of Education from the Ecumenical Christian Ministries at the University of Kansas***

The University of Kansas Ecumenical Christian Ministries (ECM) board represents diversity within the Christian faith. The board members are people from many denominations, professions, and places in life united by the mission and purpose of ECM. We write to unanimously oppose the proposal to define intellectual design or creationism as a "science" by the Kansas Board of Education. This decision offends us as a Christian community. Factual analysis leads us to the conclusion that this decision represents a frontal attack on the teaching of modern scientific principles in the State of Kansas.

We at ECM differ theologically and politically on many issues, but we put aside those differences on any occasion where such differences may impede our objective of serving, teaching, and learning at The University of Kansas. It is in this spirit that we respond to the recent State of Kansas School Board proposals concerning the teaching of evolution, Big Bang theory and other scientific principles dealing with the origins and progression of our universe.

The specific right central to this issue of teaching evolution is the right to practice religious beliefs without interference from the government. This includes the right to an education that is not unduly influenced by any religious system. Although rhetorically inclusive, the only intent of such a decision would be the removal of accepted scientific principles from Kansas educational standards. The decision to de-emphasize evolution is based solely on a perceived threat to one religious viewpoint, not on any properly conducted and peer-reviewed scientific process. Science curriculum must be based on scientific principles, not religious dogma. Most particularly, it should not be modified for the sole purpose of consistency with one highly sectarian interpretation of the Genesis story, particularly when that interpretation claims literal truth.

Any changes to the State of Kansas educational practices must be based on national and international scientific standards. Most troubling to us is the statement implicit in the debate that young people must choose between scientific inquiry and Christianity (or any other religious tradition) - that somehow, scientifically understanding the physics of light refraction through water or the biology of disease diminishes the beauty of a rainbow or the miracle of a medical procedure.

Defining causality and characterization in the physical world is the role of science. Providing meaning and purpose in life is one of the roles of religion. For a practicing scientist and layperson, each day is an adventure in discovering the beauties in the universe. Each day is an

opportunity to see a Creator God revealed in the intricacies of the functioning of ourselves, our societies, our planet, solar system and universe. There is poetry in mathematics, music in science, and a sense of awe in understanding our world.

The tragedy in this debate is the denial of such joys to young people in our state who are just beginning their great journey of discovery. The Christian tragedy is the use of Christ's message to implicitly exile young people whose gifts lie in scientific inquiry. All this is just a selfish attempt to make ourselves the center of God's creation. We should not forget the lesson of Galileo whose heresy was to suggest that the Earth was not the center of creation.

ECM is first and foremost a Christian organization that strives to understand its own faith and be Christ's representatives with students, faculty and staff at the University of Kansas and others in Lawrence.

Our faith and commitment compel us to work for a just society free from oppression from the state, the church or any other organization. We believe the message of Jesus to be inclusive and based on principles of compassion and love for fellow women and men as sisters and brothers in our time on Earth. As such, we affirm the basic rights of all people in our society, particularly those who find themselves in the minority. We also believe that the Bill of Rights provides basic individual protections that cannot be taken by any majority.

Ecumenical Christian Ministries is a campus ministry of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker), the Church of the Brethren denominations along with the First Presbyterian Church, West Side Presbyterian Church, Plymouth Congregational, and Oread Society of Friends congregations of Lawrence, St. Paul's United Church of Christ of Eudora, Kansas, and the Lone Star Church of the Brethren.

This statement was adopted by unanimous consent, April 12, 2005.

Respectfully Submitted,



The Rev. Thad Holcombe  
Campus Minister for ECM  
and on behalf of the ECM Board