

Growing Churches Demand a Strict¹ Diet of Worms

Every document of mine referenced below can be accessed at my website: www.christianityontheoffense.com

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) has posted, “*Unless there is compelling reason on the basis of the biblical texts themselves...we are to believe God created the world in six 24-hour days.*”²

This challenge baits a reply. While every one of us at the table holds that Genesis 1 is God’s revealed Word (2 Tim. 3:16), we also distinguish between the concepts of *inspiration* and *interpretation*. At the same time that I embrace Gen. 1 as inspired Scripture, I also judge by the above criterion that the young-earth creationist (YEC) *interpretation* can’t be reconciled with that text. Furthermore, our Synod’s refusal to discuss this matter is inconsistent with its official posture on refereeing doctrinal disputes.

If could be proven that YEC is *exegetically*³ correct, it then thirdly becomes manifestly impossible to reconcile the Bible with the events it describes since the former conflicts with unassailable facts that indicate that creation has existed for billions of years. Since every assertion *must* always harmonize with the phenomena it claims to describe,⁴ the denegation of science **under** Scripture violates the rational *law of non-contradiction*.⁵ In order to avoid this error, YECs must either dismiss *scientists* as naive for insisting that the cosmos is old; or they must reject science altogether as *inherently* deceptive; a posture which contradicts their use of scientific facts whenever they are deemed to be useful to YEC.

Further, whenever YECs reject facts that conflict with their position, they are nullifying the same body of evidence that the Bible employs to establish its own truth claims. E.g., *observational* evidence attests that the cosmos came into existence out of nothing by a cause **science cannot explain**, as even atheist Richard Dawkins grants. How ironic it is that he rejects *God* as the causer solely by his assertion that such a proposition only raises the further question: “*Who designed the designer?*”⁶ Notice that Dawkins’ commission of a double standard here could easily be exposed as the fallacy it is, if only evidence of a kind that Psalm 19:1 highlights, is applied. Yet tragically the YEC posture stands in the way.

In contrast to the exploding *growth* of the early Church (Acts 2:37-41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7),⁷ our Synod is steeply declining in membership today. Why? One reason many are walking away from the faith of their youth is that they find this disconnect between the Bible and reality to be untenable. As for times past, even prior to Darwin’s day observations from nature compelled scientists to reject both YEC and (needlessly) the Gospel too. Darwin prevailed in his day in part because the Church in his time imposed a reading of Genesis that the text doesn’t require.⁸ Yet since it can to the contrary be demonstrated that Gen. 1 easily harmonizes with science, then the prospect of reaching skeptics with the Gospel becomes greatly enhanced!⁹

Shortly after I was received into the LCMS by colloquy in 2007, I took up our Synod’s gauntlet (top) by writing my first major essay, “*The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look: Ten Exegetical Reasons the Creation Days of Genesis are Non 24-Hour.*” On July 24, 2008 I sent it to former 2nd Vice President of the LCMS, Dr. Paul Maier together with my question whether the contents of my paper indicate I should withdraw from the LCMS. He replied, “*Hello, Gary! No question but that we are kindred souls. I read*

¹ It isn’t enough to casually laud Scripture as the highest authority in a *symbolic* sense. Every passage must be brought to bear on this question.

² <https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/faqs/the-bible>

³ “Exegesis” considers the details of the text under consideration in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and context.

⁴ LCMS scientist, Dr. John Klotz writes correctly that our faith “*cannot go contrary to science and reason and observation...There must be a basic unity between [scientific] facts and truth as it is given to us in revelation.*” (*Modern Science and the Christian Life*, (Concordia, 1962), p. 79.

⁵ Yet the Bible **never** demands that we pit our Christian beliefs against observational facts. “See my paper, “Truth is Never Less than One.”

⁶ William Lane Craig. *Reasonable Faith*, 3rd ed. (Crossway, 2008), p.170. How ironic it is that YECs refuse to assign the cause of the BB to God.

⁷ See my paper, “Why Did the Early Church Grow?”

⁸ Rabbi Hillel Goldberg. *Genesis, Cosmology, and Evolution*. <http://www.ou.org.s3.amazonaws.com/publications/ja5760summer/genesis.pdf>

⁹ See my paper, “The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look: Ten exegetical Reasons the Creation Days of Genesis are 24-Hour.”

your paper and found it EXCELLENT! ... Is there room for you in the LCMS? You bet there is, and we need more of your kind..."¹⁰ He also wrote a recommendation for the title page of another essay of mine.¹¹

On the other hand my reception from other LCMS leaders has been far from positive. I submitted the same paper to Dr. Jack Preus, son of former LCMS President Dr. J.A.O. Preus, and Drs. David Adams, and Reed Lessing, both of whom as Professors teach Old Testament and Exegesis at Concordia Seminaries. It was because Preus' central goal as the keynote speaker to the LCMS 2011 *All-Workers' Conference* was to encourage us to repeatedly return to the Word in all our theological reflections, that I gained courage to give him my paper. Yet sadly, he never replied. Lessing oddly declined to critique my paper because, as he said of **himself**, "*This is above my pay grade.*" Adams was very condescending toward me, apparently because my paper challenged his position. Likewise, both the *Lutheran Witness* and *Issues Etc.* have declined to print or air my ideas.¹² Also, when assigned to lead a discussion at my circuit meeting on a topic of my choice, the other pastors insisted that I stop the presentation of my paper mid-point! Please understand that in **none** of these cases was the rejection of my position ever based on knowledge of my evidence. It is apparent that my paper was rarely, if ever, read by anyone.

In the midst of this bleakness one glimmer of light began to appear when I sought the opinion of former LCMS President, Rev. Dr. Gerald Kieschnick. On his behalf, his Assistant urged me to submit my paper to the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to critique. Consequently on June 3, 2009 I wrote to the CTCR with two goals. Firstly I inquired whether my embracing the Big Bang (BB) endangered my status as an LCMS Pastor. Secondly, I sought an official critique of "*The Biblical Demand.*" On July 9, Executive Director, Dr. Joel Lehenbauer (Dr. L.) replied by stating in part, "*It is important to note...that responses to FAQs found in the Synod's website **do not**, as such, **constitute 'the official position of the Synod.'** Nor does the FAQ assert that the Synod has spoken officially on the question of the precise length of the days of creation. Another FAQ on the Synod's website...makes it clear that the **LCMS 'does not have an official position on the precise age of the earth.'**" He also stated, "*I would encourage you to continue to study this issue and discuss it with as many of your peers as possible...Ultimately, if you continue to believe that it would be helpful for the CTCR to address this issue, you might consider encouraging your congregation to submit an overture to the next synodical convention or offer this as a suggestion at an upcoming pastors' conference in your district*" (boldface mine).¹³ Significantly, my own Circuit denied my request to hold such a circuit-wide public debate on this matter.*

Our current Synod President, Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison has reacted in a more ominous tone. When I sent him my essay, "*Should Tradition Trump Scripture?*," he replied, "*Gary, Grace and peace. I'm curious as to why you came into the LCMS...knowing you so sincerely reject one of its significant teachings?*" I replied, "*I had vainly hoped for a hearing from you...But your reply gives me virtually no indication that you have bothered to examine my documents at all.*" He then closed our exchange by inquiring, "*Again, why did you join the Synod while knowingly rejecting its teaching on creation?*"

What is astonishing about his reaction to me is that it both utterly ignores the contents of my paper and disregards our Synod's official posture toward doctrinal disputes, which instead states:

*"Because Scripture always stands as the final judge and norm...every member of the Synod has the **right and responsibility** to test...adopted resolutions and statements, lest the Synod become guilty of 'teaching as doctrines the commandments of men'" (boldface mine).¹⁴*

¹⁰ Although I have these interchanges on file, for personal reasons the entirety of his letters cannot be disclosed to the public.

¹¹ See my paper, "The Elephant Standing Between Secularists and their Receptivity to the Good News of Christ."

¹² The former refused to reprint my rebuttal of two articles that attacked the Big Bang, despite their printing other points of view over the course of several months. See my paper, "My Rebuttal of the Lutheran Witness Critique of the Big Bang."

¹³ See my paper, "CTCR Challenge and Response."

¹⁴ *Introduction. This We Believe: Selected Topics of Faith and Practice in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, p. vii.

This statement is premised on the LCMS Constitution Article II, which specifies that *“The Synod and every member of the Synod accepts without reservation”* the Holy Bible as *“God’s written Word”* and *“only rule and norm of faith and practice.”*¹⁵ By logical implication it is clear that *“adopted resolutions and statements”* lie **under** the authority of both Scripture and the Confessions. This includes deceased pastors who bore the same obligation in their own time as I do today, to submit our positions to the Bible alone. As Martin Luther, under threat of death, stated before the Diet of Worms,

*“Unless I am convinced by the teachings of Holy Scripture or by sound reasoning—for I do not believe either the pope or councils alone, since they have often made mistakes and have said the exact opposite about the same point – I am tied to the Scriptures I have quoted, and by my conscience I cannot or will not recant anything. Here I stand.”*¹⁶

On September 1, 2017 I again petitioned the CTCR, this time to hold a Synod-wide debate on the same theme, with myself affirming the “old-earth creation” (OEC) position in challenge of the YEC stance. Our entire correspondence on this matter (covering several months) with Dr. L. is contained in the file, “Debate Challenge.” This final interchange has made it entirely clear to me that the LCMS has no intention at all to discuss these matters. For this reason, On November 9, I closed my final letter (as of today’s date) to Dr. Lehenbauer with the following statement of my personal commitments:

“Since our Synod indicates absolutely no intention to engage sincere challengers in our common endeavor to ensure that our position on Genesis 1 is correct in light of the entirety of evidence, and additionally since I am convinced that my position is wholly compatible with the inspired and inerrant text of Genesis 1, I have reached the following two conclusions:

- A. *I am morally entitled to speak out about our Synod’s refusal to submit its views on creation to the scrutiny of either the Bible (Acts 17:11) or the facts of nature (Rom. 1:18-20) in view of the standards of authority specified above in the document, ‘This We Believe.’*
- B. *As an LCMS Pastor I also judge that I am constitutionally entitled in good conscience to employ legitimate scientific apologetic arguments (including the Big Bang and the standard age of the universe, since neither contradict the Bible) in order to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to the end that all the lost (including the oft-neglected academically-minded) might be redeemed in His Name (2 Corinthians 10:5).”*

In no uncertain terms I judge *“on the basis of the biblical texts themselves”* (above) that the LCMS position is **not correct**. To the entirely reasonable question whether I am right on this matter, I reply that any fair-minded¹⁷ review of the *entire* array of evidence can clarify the answer to that dispute (Acts 17:11). Why then their silence? For my part, besides my paper, “The Biblical Demand,” I have also critiqued the YEC movie, “Genesis: Paradise Lost” (see “Glaring Biblical Errors”). Both essays in their unique ways argue that the OEC view is comprehensively *more*¹⁸ true to the Bible than is YEC. Also my essay, “The Bible Expressly Forbids Suppressing the Testimony of Nature,” substantiates how our Synod defies Romans 1:18-20 by its chronic hapless denigration¹⁹ of science. My paper, “Genesis 1:1 Anticipates Big Bang Cosmology,” clarifies just how easily that passage fits with the BB, while YEC by contrast is **not** compatible with Gen. 1:1. On a different front, a paper for my *Science and Religion* (SR) M.A. degree, “Was the Big Bang the Big Beginning?,” indicates how the BB is an exceedingly strong

¹⁵ <file:///C:/Users/gjens/Downloads/LCMS-2016-Handbook-February-2017-Electronic-Edition-Updated-02-21-2017.pdf> (boldface mine).

¹⁶ See my papers, “A Diet of Worms and Two Plates on the Table Today” and “By Which Authority are Theological Positions to be Addressed?”

¹⁷ Since LCMS leaders interact only with each other within heavily-proscribed parameters, fresh insight must be infused from outside the “club.”

¹⁸ Neither YEC nor OEC can fully prove its respective position. We must instead seek which position *most* effectively embraces *all* the data.

¹⁹ The LCMS refuses science its authority to speak to matters of origins and cosmological and geological processes. See also Op.cit. (5).

scientific pointer to the truth of Gen. 1:1, as Ps. 19:1 implies *should* indeed be the case.²⁰ As the CTCR acknowledges,²¹ the BB points to the rational necessity of God as the causer of the cosmos (Gen.1:1). Another SR paper, “Why Information in the Cell is Fatal to Darwinism,” argues that the existence of DNA in all living cells renders atheism impossible. At both the cosmic and the cellular level, it is atheists who are evading the *scientific* evidence.²² Let’s **NOT** follow their error! Scientific knowledge must not be suppressed (Rom. 1:20), but rather *specifically* identified and *employed* for the reason that only such facts as scientists *honor*, have the potential to challenge their unbelief (Rom. 1:20).²³

The unification of the Bible and science yields the *only* valid podium for reaching academics and scientific specialists who, sadly, are too often ignored by the Church. Embracing this goal needn’t hinder our existing ministries to others not so inclined. But unless the former are reached, they will drift further from God and drag the rest of society down too, due to the fact that our culture deems science to be the highest authority in matters of truth. For this reason I now ask you [Church leaders] ...

To be continued.

In Jesus Christ our common Savior and Lord,

Pastor Gary Jensen, February 11, 2018

²⁰ See my paper, “My Rebuttal of the Lutheran Witness Critique of the Big Bang.”

²¹ The CTCR document, *The Natural Knowledge of God* (2013), states, “Advances in astronomy during the [20th] century...led to the discovery that the universe of space and time... is expanding...suggest[ing] that the universe of space and time had a beginning in the finite past” (p. 59).

²² e.g. Stephen Hawking’s argument (([The Grand Design](#) (Bantam, 2002)) against a cosmic beginning (BB creation) is based on the *hypothetical* conjecture that there are perhaps billions of other universes, that in turn is based on his *hypothetical* “M- Theory” (p. 8f). Both of these conjectures, for which there is no scientific evidence, are “rooted in the concept of scientific determinism [meaning] ...there are no miracles or exceptions to the laws of nature” (p. 34). Since much of the scientific community embraces the same invalid philosophical presumption as Hawking embraces, Darwinian research likewise is driven more by invalid assumptions than it is by strictly scientific data. Yet science has no authority whatsoever to decree the impossibility of either miracle or the existence of a deity. See my paper, “Scientism is Not Science.”

²³ See both my papers, “*The Pervasive Employment of Apologetics in the Bible*” and “*Dare We Neglect our Best Weapons?*”