

By Which¹ Authority are Theological Positions to be Assessed?

If not the Holy Bible, is it the Lutheran Confessions? Tradition? Human Reasoning?...

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) is correctly uncompromising in its *official* ordering of authority as specified in our “*norm of faith and practice*.” Notice what our Constitution says: Article II Confession²

“*The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation:*

1. “*The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the **only rule** and norm of faith and of practice;*
2. “*All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God, to wit: the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord.*

Article III Objectives

“*The Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shall—*

1. *Conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3–6; 1 Cor. 1:10), work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy; (boldface mine).*”

Our Synod thereby *officially* affirms three modes of authority which, it specifies, are NOT equal in ranking or weight. It states that the authority of the Synod is lower in rank than are the Lutheran Confessions, which in turn lie under³ the authority of the Holy Bible. Nevertheless, in *actual* practice, with respect to certain aspects of the doctrine of creation, it is difficult to discern which standard it is that is deemed to be the highest authority, and consequently carries the greatest weight.

On the one hand the LCMS officially authorizes and even urges its members to hold our Synod accountable to the Holy Bible as the final authority in specific matters of Christian doctrine by stating, “*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.’ — Matthew 15:19*

” (boldface mine).⁴

Yet, astonishingly, with respect to specifically its **doctrine on creation**, it is clear that the ranking of authoritative weight as is specified in the Constitution is turned on its head. One LCMS Q&A column issues the challenge: “*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.*”⁵ Yet despite that challenge, LCMS leadership refuses to either reply to my concerns, or even so much as read my papers which address the

¹ My choice of the word, “which,” is intended to clarify that the proper choice must be distinguished from among alternatives of lesser rank.

² The Constitution of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. file:///C:/Users/gjens/Downloads/LCMS-2016-Handbook-February-2017-ElectronicEdition-Updated-02-21-2017.pdf

³ The LCMS uses the Latin word, *quia* (because); not *quatenus* (insofar as) **because** the Lutheran Confessions **correctly** interprets the Holy Bible.

⁴ *Introduction. This We Believe: Selected Topics of Faith and Practice in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, p. vii.

⁵ www.lcms.hughes-stl.com/pages/internal.asp?NavID=2210 (boldface mine).

gauntlet they have laid down.⁶ Stated bluntly, in contradiction to both our Constitution and simple reasoning, they fail to take even the *first* step in intellectual engagement which entails informing themselves of the substance of my positions which, I demonstrate, are entirely faithful to the Holy Bible.

This rebuff of the leadership of the LCMS to engage with my multifaceted⁷ reply to the above challenge renders as **groundless** their refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of my position. The LCMS leadership has never, to my knowledge,⁸ rebutted my position. Two steps are necessary in order for a rebuttal of my works to be legitimately deemed successful. It is required that critics both 1) become informed of the substance of my evidence and the structure of my argumentation logically and, 2) demonstrate that my assertions are either false or untenable in light of the relevant texts of Holy Scripture in the original languages. Yet, I repeat, neither of these steps have been undertaken by the leadership of the LCMS. For this reason, none of my essays which advance the “old-earth (universe) creation” position have been legitimately or validly discredited.

To the question, why the LCMS shouldn’t be free to believe as it does, I reply that our Synod is under obligation to consider my challenge for the following reasons:

1. Our Synod binds itself to adherence to the Word of God in Holy Scripture.
2. Our Synod thereby asserts that our position on creation is what the Bible teaches.
3. If our Synod’s position on Genesis 1 is incorrect, we are misrepresenting the Bible (1 Cor. 15:15).
4. Our Synod’s present position on Genesis poses a stumbling block (2 Cor. 6:3) for all who are reasonably seeking to reconcile the Bible with the testimony of nature (Rom. 1:18-20).
5. If the facts of nature truly testify to the existence of God (Rom. 1:18-20), then on the authority of the Bible, our Synod is not only forbidden to deny or suppress that testimony, we are, to the contrary, called to employ it in our declaration of the glory of God (Psalm 19:1f).
6. Since St. Paul warns that all people are “*without excuse*” for denying that very testimony, our Synod dare not diminish its convicting weight⁹ by suggesting that nature is untrustworthy.
7. Insofar as our Synod is in disobedience of Rom. 1:18-20, the ridicule which the world hurls at our “scientific” assertions must be conceded to be deserved (Rom. 2:24).¹⁰
8. To the extent that our Synod asserts that its biblical assertions are correct while they at the same time contradict demonstrable scientific facts, we both violate the logical “law of noncontradiction,” and sever biblical faith from the classical concept of truth, an intellectual error that Holy Scripture decries (Isaiah 48:1; 59:14, Daniel 8:12, John 3:12 and 18:37).

⁶ See my two essays, “A Diet of Worms and Two Plates on the Table today,” ** and “The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look,” p. 3, both of which can be accessed at my website, <http://www.christianityontheoffense.com>.

⁷ Consider the array of my essays which, by differing means, reconcile mainstream scientific facts on the one hand, with God’s inerrant Word on the other, at my website, (*Ibid*). By my employment of the word “facts,” I distinguish between that evidence from geological and cosmological history on the one hand which can be established scientifically, and Darwinism which, in contrast, simply cannot be established scientifically. See my paper, “Scientism is Not Science,” which can be accessed at my website, Op.cit. (6).

⁸ Were this to have occurred, I would reasonably expect to have been informed of this judgment. Indeed, I have not received any rebuttals.

⁹ “*Everything that preaches about sin and the wrath of God, no matter how or when it happens, is the proclamation of the law.*” *Formula of Concord: Solid Declaration.* Ted Tappert, ed. *The Book of Concord.* (Fortress, 1959), V – 12, p. 560. See also Rom. 3:19-20.

¹⁰ “*Now, it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn.*” Augustine. *The Literal Meaning of Genesis.* J.H. Taylor, S.J. tr. v. I. (Newman 1982), p.42f.

As long as this current posture of resistance continues, It is my judgment, on the authority of Holy Scripture, the banner theme of Luther's Reformation ("Word Alone"), the Lutheran Confessions, the Constitution of the LCMS, and the LCMS document, "This We Believe,"¹¹ that the Lutheran ChurchMissouri Synod is betraying its stated purpose of maintaining the faithfulness of its biblical pronouncements in light of its own established and acknowledged authoritative documents, as properly ranked.

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