

Three Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod statements on creation

Point-by-point responses **found in the footnotes** which were composed by Pastor Gary Jensen

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Statement 1

Q. What is the LCMS position regarding the age of the earth? Must we accept literally the creation account that points in the direction of a relatively young earth, given the amount of scientific evidence that concludes the earth's age to be billions of years?

A. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod does not have an official position on the precise “age of the earth,” since the Bible does not tell us how old the earth is.¹ Nor is it the Synod’s position that everything in the Bible is to be understood “literally.” There is much in the Bible that clearly purports not to be understood literally – but this must be determined by the Bible itself, not by science or human reason.² There is nothing in the Bible itself to suggest that the creation account is not meant to be taken literally.³

The Synod has affirmed the belief therefore, based on the Scripture’s account of creation in the book of Genesis and other clear passages of Scripture, that “God by the almighty power of his Word created all things in six days by a series of creative acts,” that “Adam and Eve were real, historical beings,⁴ the first two people in the world,” and that “we must confess what St. Paul says in Romans 5:12” about the origin of sin through Adam as described in Genesis 3 (1967 Synodical Resolution 2-31). The Synod has also, therefore, stated that it rejects “all those world views, philosophical theories, exegetical interpretations and other hypotheses which pervert these biblical teachings and thus obscure the Gospel” (1967 Synodical Resolution 2-31).

At the same time, the Synod firmly believes that there can be no actual contradiction between genuine scientific truth and the Bible. When it comes to the issue of the age of the earth, several possibilities exist for “harmonizing” Biblical teachings with scientific studies (e.g. God created the world in an already “mature” state so that scientific “data” leads one to the conclusion that it is older than it actually is).⁵

¹ This observation is correct.

² In the context of Genesis 1, the choice is not between clear and unambiguous Scripture and tentative speculation in cosmology. It is rather between language that is ambiguous (Martin Luther wrote that Genesis 1 “*is difficult*” (Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. Martin Luther’s “Lectures on Genesis.” Luther’s Works, v. 1). (Concordia, 1958), p. 3), on the one hand, and an array of scientific evidence that has been rigorously cross-examined.

³ Thus far the document merely makes an assertion about the nature of the Genesis account. Reason demands that the assertion be scrutinized by an actual examination of the text of Genesis.

⁴ The “day-age” position on the days of Genesis does not deny the history of creation. Neither does it deny the historicity of Adam and Eve. Nor does it deny the historicity of Adam and Eve’s “fall” in the Garden. I affirm the historicity of all three.

⁵ Believing as I do in the inerrancy of Scripture, I agree that “there can be no actual contradiction between genuine scientific truth and the Bible.” Yet this paragraph, taken as a whole, commits the self-contradiction of accepting the legitimacy of scientific data while denying its trustworthiness even as it runs directly counter to Rom. 1:18-20. Four implications logically follow from St. Paul’s words.

1. Nature testifies to a creator.
2. Nature is not deceptive, but to the contrary tells the truth about God’s power.
3. Humans are held accountable for conclusions they draw from nature concerning God’s existence.

Numerous books are available that discuss these issues in more detail. One of these is “Studies in Creation” by John Klotz.⁶

Source: <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=2207>

Statement 2

Q. *A person, because of his study of science, does not believe that the universe was created in six-literal 24-hour periods. Does this fact, by itself, render this person ineligible for membership in the LCMS?*

A. A person’s private views regarding this question do not automatically disqualify a person from becoming a member of the congregation. It is possible, of course, that someone holding to a given theory about the “six days” of the creation accounts also holds to views about the Bible that would be troublesome and perhaps in some cases detrimental to saving faith.

But judgments in this regard belong to the realm of individual pastoral care, and are not a matter of hard and fast rules so that someone’s personal opinions in this area would become in effect a kind of litmus test for membership.

It has generally been taught that unless there is compelling reason, on account of the biblical texts themselves, to understand that the six days of the Genesis accounts as anything other than normal 24-hour days,⁷ we are to believe that God created the world in six 24-hour days (See Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation,⁸ Question 97 [CPH, 1986, p. 106]).

Official members of the LCMS (congregations, pastors, rostered church-workers), of course, pledge to honor and uphold the official position of the Synod on doctrinal issues, including its official position on creation.⁹

Source: <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=2210>

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4. The suggestion that the facts of nature are unreliable diminishes human culpability in its rejection of God.

⁶ Dr. Klotz agrees with the above synodical statement (closing paragraph). Yet he fails to submit his interpretation of Scripture to the undisputable scientific observations that are indicated by cosmologists. It must be underscored that the nature of the evidence supporting the Big Bang is far more clear and certain than are Klotz’s compilation of conjectures that Darwinists’ marshal in support of their empty theory.

⁷ There are indeed “compelling reasons” that the “days” of Genesis 1 are to be interpreted as long periods of time. See my papers, “The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look,” or its abbreviated version, “The Bible Literally Says and Teaches the Following:” at my website, <http://www.christianityontheoffense.com>.

⁸ Nothing whatsoever in the Lutheran Confessions, including Martin Luther’s *Small* or *Large Catechisms* addresses the interpretation of any biblical creation text, including Genesis 1-3.

⁹ 2nd Vice President Paul Maier of the LCMS said in an interview on *Issues Etc.* that there “*is nothing wrong with the Big Bang intrinsically*” (July 11, 2007—<http://www.issuesetcarchive.org>). He also wrote *The Real Story of Creation* (Concordia, 2007), where he states in the Epilogue that “creation by God is essentially the same as the Big Bang.”

Statement 3 (Of Creation)

We teach that God has created heaven and earth, and that in the manner and in the space of time recorded in the Holy Scriptures, especially Gen. 1 and 2, namely, by His almighty creative word, and in six days. We reject every doctrine which denies or limits the work of creation as taught in Scripture. In our days it is denied or limited by those who assert, ostensibly in deference to science, that the world came into existence through a process of evolution;¹⁰ that is, that it has, in immense periods of time, developed more or less of itself.¹¹ Since no man was present¹² when it pleased God to create the world, we must look for a reliable account of creation to God's own record, found in God's own book, the Bible. We accept God's record with full confidence and confess with Luther's Catechism, "I believe that God has created me and all creatures."

Source: <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=565> (adopted 1932)¹³

¹⁰ Although both evolution and Big Bang cosmology entail scientific aspects to ground their positions on origins, they are completely distinct with respect to the weight of the evidence that supports their respective positions. While it is true that Darwinists generally accept the scientific consensus that the Big Bang (BB) is true, many who embrace the Big Bang reject evolution as false. It is to Darwinism, and not the Genesis account, that the Big Bang has thrown its death blow for the reason that the BB removes the infinity of time that Darwinism requires for life to have developed from "amoeba to man." As atheist (at that time) Arthur Eddington put it in protest of the BB, "Philosophically the notion of a beginning of the present order of nature [the BB] is repugnant...I should like to find a genuine loophole. We [must] allow evolution an infinite time to get started" (cited in Hugh Ross. Creator and the Cosmos. (NavPress, 2001), p. 177).

¹¹ The BB is not an atheistic position *per se* for the reason that it is not the *cause* of the beginning of the universe out of nothing, but instead an effect from that beginning that requires a sufficient (namely a transcendent) cause, which atheism cannot supply. Only the opening verse of the Bible (Genesis 1:1) gives an adequate accounting of the existence of the universe, that is, all of matter/energy, space, and time.

¹² While this statement is technically true, for the reason that the properties of light, whose speed is finite, scientists have the capacity to look back onto virtually the entire history of the unfolding of the cosmos (see Biblical Demand. Op.cit. (7), pp. 13-14).

¹³ In all fairness, at the time that this statement was adopted, the Big Bang was a virtually brand new hypothesis. The supporting scientific data that scientists acknowledge today, and which continues to mount, was only to come later with respect to this document. In our day the confirmatory evidence in its favor is so extensive that competing cosmological models (the oscillating, and the steady-state universe models) have been discarded. This situation is similar to Copernicus' initial rejection in Luther's own time.