

July 24, 2008

Dr. Paul Maier,
2nd Vice-President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Dear Dr. Maier,

I ask you for insight on a matter that weighs very heavily on my heart. I came into the LCMS from the ELCA through colloquy in June of 2007. In my own mind I belong in this synod. With full conviction I satisfy the theological and biblical stances of the LCMS according to our church constitution. I am an eager and energetic evangelist/apologist-pastor. But in one aspect I do not know whether I will be permitted to remain.

Conversations I had had with certain LCMS pastors prior to colloquy prepared me for being in the minority on this issue, but I was told the matter should be fine. Yet when I moved beyond the constitution and began to more closely examine the LCMS documents specifically pertaining to creation, I came to the realization that I am at odds with some of the *official* stances of the LCMS. To lay my cards on the table, I believe God created the earth and the universe through the Big Bang. I am convinced biblically that my position is legitimate, and I wrote a well-documented paper to back up my stance. I am enclosing a copy of that essay

Although I have so far kept silent regarding my position on creation I cannot continue to do so. What I am seeking instead is the blessing of our synod to proclaim the powerful case for the God of the Bible as the Creator, the Designer, and the Sustainer of the universe. God has guided and gifted me as an apologist, just as He has done for you (I love your books!). I desire to be very public as an evangelist. But I don't want to fear that I will lose my position as an LCMS pastor by using this very effective apologetic tool. Would you please consider reading the enclosed paper? I believe it will clarify my passion on declaring the glory of God by His creation through the Big Bang.

It has been said that the LCMS is a "sleeping giant." I am convinced of this. I am in the LCMS because I am convinced of the truth and the power of the Gospel. Yet in this one aspect of ministry I feel that the LCMS is not up to either the challenge or the opportunity we meet from the flimsy claims of secular culture. While we could be proclaiming the truth of Holy Scripture with authority—namely that nature demonstrates the Creator and Designer of the universe as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our synod instead encourages flight from the facts of science. This is my conviction. Is there room for me to remain in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod?

In the risen Christ,

Gary Wayne Jensen, Pastor,
Zion Lutheran Church
Snohomish, Washington

P.S. I had coffee with Bruce Biesenthal this morning. Although we talked about this issue, I am writing this to you entirely on my own.

Re: Is there room for me?
From: **Paul L Maier** (paul.maier@wmich.edu)
Sent: Fri 8/01/08 6:56 AM
To: Gary Jensen (gjensen549@hotmail.com)

Hello, Gary!

No question but that we are kindred souls. I read your paper and found it EXCELLENT.! [The paper Paul references is my article, "**The biblical Demand to Take Another Look: Ten Exegetical Reasons the Creation Days of Genesis are Non-24-Hour,**" and can be accessed at my website, www.christianityontheoffense.com).] I've long said that the Big Bang is the Bible's best scientific friend. Please check out the last chapter in my book for kids from CPH: THE REAL STORY OF THE CREATION, and you will see that we're on the same wave-length.

Is there room for you in the LCMS? You bet there is, and we need more of your kind. To be sure, some brothers with limited vision or intellect may cavil at your approach, but please ignore them. We just have to get out of the young earth--24-hours-for-Yom creation straight-jacket.

Do let me know if you run into any kind of trouble.

Bravo, Gary!

Cheers,

Paul M.

Dear Dr. Maier,

I am honored that you took the time to read my essay. Your e-mail response has greatly encouraged me. Thank you so very much for your words.

I have no intention to take much of your time. But I must ask, Is there something I can do to encourage and promote thinking in the LCMS about creation through the Big Bang? Is there an organization within the LCMS, or loosely associated with our synod, whose purpose is to advance these goals? Is there someone I can talk with further about these matters? I am very eager, under God, to play such a role.

May God continue to bless and guide you

Gary Wayne Jensen, Pastor
Zion Lutheran Church
Snohomish, Washington 98290

Re: RE: Is there room for me?
From: **Paul L Maier** (paul.maier@wmich.edu)
Sent: Sun 8/10/08 7:13 PM
To: Gary Jensen (gjensen549@hotmail.com)
Dear Gary,

Yes, there are several groups in the LCMS who eagerly support your position on the Big Bang. In terms of the internet, there's the Daystar group, which includes many of the best thinkers in the LCMS. An even more prominent group that is also active in opening Synodical windows would be the JESUS FIRST group, which publishes a newsletter with that name. You've doubtless heard of them.

You'd be in good company!

Blessings!

Paul M.

Re: update

From: **Paul L Maier** (paul.maier@wmich.edu)
Sent: Tue 11/25/08 2:48 PM
To: Gary Jensen (gjensen549@hotmail.com)
Hello, Gary!

The re-edited text is even better! This is SUCH good material! Couldn't it be published in booklet form? It would be great to hand this out to college kids who are having to struggle between an artificial "war between science and religion."

The only mistake I found was in Pelikan's first name (in a footnote): it should be "Jaroslav" Pelikan. BTW, I was honored to be included in your text as well!

Blessings!

Paul M.

Regarding my paper, "The 'Elephant' Standing Between Secularists and their Receptivity to the Gospel:"

"The so-called "war between science and religion" need not be prolonged unnecessarily since there can be but one truth. You've raised some very important points in your essay, Gary, which ought to spark serious discussion in our church -- and far beyond. You made very clear the fact that belief in an older earth does not necessarily carry with it belief in organic evolution."

(Dr. Paul Maier, recent LCMS 3rd Vice President, author, and retired Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University)