

November 13, 2015

Dear fellow LCMS Pastors and Church leaders,

I have been waiting far too long for a safe and convenient time to say the following. I must speak now.

(Pastor Gary Jensen (Isaiah 59:14b)

To Matthew Harrison, Paul Linnemann, Ted Werfelmann, Al and Cheryl, and Jim and Gwen

In Christ,

(Gary Jensen, © November 13, 2015)

When LCMS Tradition Contradicts the Bible

"If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (John 3:12)

When the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) categorically rejects science as a factor in clarifying our doctrine of creation, it is out of compliance with the very Scriptures it seeks to protect. Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul warned in Romans 1:18-20 that suppressing the testimony of nature is contrary to the will of God. The foundation for his line of reasoning was that nature is a vehicle of God's revelation through which He manifests signs of His existence to all people (Psalm 19:1f). No other biblical passage can be found to moderate this assertion. Yet in contradiction to Paul's declaration, the LCMS regards scientific knowledge as inherently *untrustworthy* and subject to dismissal insofar as it conflicts with the young-earth creationist (YEC) view of Genesis. These two postures (one from Scripture; the other sourced in tradition¹) cannot be reconciled. On the one hand, Paul affirms so strongly that the witness of nature is truthful, he highlights it as one standard against which God will judge people to be "*without excuse*" in their refusal to acknowledge His lordship. On the other hand, in order for the LCMS to maintain the belief that creation happened less than ten thousand years ago, logical realities demand a dismissal of the very same body of evidence which Paul has declared to be true. Since these contradictory positions (tradition vs. Scripture) cannot both be correct, only one can legitimately stand as the final authority for informing our interpretation of Genesis chapter one. *Sola Scriptura!*

It is of course a separate question whether the text of Genesis supports an old-universe creationist (OUC) interpretation. Yet let it now be duly noted that a fundamental ploy by which YECs criticize the OUC position was just shown to clash with Scripture. Some other exegetical resolution to this question must be found. In a manner consistent with the spirit of Luther's Reformation, the most effective way to resolve this challenge is firstly to focus on the text of Genesis directly, as opposed to uncritically echoing talking points from colleagues who are subject to censure if they question the "approved" position of the Synod. It is secondly necessary, both logically and biblically, to demonstrate that an interpretation can be reconciled with the phenomena the Book of Genesis declares that God has made. Harmonizing these tasks successfully in the manner of fitting puzzle pieces together is entirely achievable.² What the process demands, however, is a determination to begin taking these steps.

These matters have an enormous bearing on our calling to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To that end, I urge your consideration of my essay, "*Should Tradition Trump Scripture?*"

Pastor Gary Jensen
Zion Lutheran Church, Snohomish, WA.
November 11, 2015

Should Tradition Trump Scripture?

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork." (Psalm 19:1)

¹ In this way YECs commit the same errors as they accuse of their opponents, grounding an interpretation of Scripture on *human* assumptions.

² See my essay, "*The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look: Ten 'Compelling' Exegetical Reasons the Creation Days of Genesis are Non-24 Hour.*" (<http://www.christianityontheoffense.com>).

Every Christian, from a child in Sunday School, to a person facing death, and each one in between, has a stake in the solidity of the grounds of our faith, whether these matters are pondered or not. The Bible purports to be more than a collection of commonsense platitudes. It is instead God's revelation which entails life-and-death ramifications. Assertions about God that are tenuous are a poor substitute to the conviction that the truth of the Bible is *demonstrably* secure. Our Synod's assertion, contrarily, that Scripture is true on the *solitary* grounds that the Bible says so (p. 2, below) is epistemologically³ equivalent to the Latter Day Saint's appeal to a "burning in the bosom" as their testimony that the *Book of Mormon* is true. Neither party, for differing reasons, appeals to independent⁴ validation from external facts. Consequently, the grip that young-earth creationism (YEC) holds on the LCMS is related to our rejection of a foundational principle of the Bible in terms of the authority of the testimony of nature (p.3, below). This posture not only undermines the certitude of the faith of *individual* Christians, but also diminishes our capacity to effectively proclaim both law and Gospel to a lost world.

The extreme irony of our present situation is astonishing. While Jesus highlighted as favorable the climate of his day for preaching the Gospel with his words, "*The fields are white unto harvest*" (John 4:35), in our day it is the hairs on the heads of church members that stand out for being noticeably white. The average age of LCMS members is high while the number of attendees is declining. This dismal situation, however, need not continue. There is much that stands in our favor as the Christian Church with respect to the prospect of making disciples. For example, never in history has the evidence of science so closely correlated with Christian belief that God created the heavens and the earth, as in our present day,⁵ which, if Christianity is true, is exactly what should be expected. Yet appallingly, instead of drawing on that evidence in order to demonstrate its truth in a manner consistent with King David (Psalm 19:1) and the Apostle Paul (Acts 14:15-17), our Synod is sidelining itself to the point of utter irrelevance by our refusal to engage our culture over the merit of that evidence. Worse, we are both turning the Gospel into a stumbling block⁶ and insisting that thinking people must accept the Gospel as true on grounds that are altogether foreign to established methods of verifying truth claims.⁷

In the opinion of our Synod, the grounds for casting aside the body of evidence just identified is that it is alleged to be incompatible with the Bible.⁸ My goal is to challenge that suspicion on specifically *biblical* (as opposed to scientific) grounds. Is the LCMS strategy on defending the Bible correct? And can it claim such confidence in its interpretation of Genesis as

¹ Epistemology is the study of knowledge. "epi" means "upon," while "histemi" means "stand." Hence: "On what do we ground our faith?"

⁴ Insofar as evidence is made subservient to religious dogma it becomes merely its own self-sustained foundation, which is an oxymoron.

⁵ Dinesh D'Souza. *A Universe with a Beginning: God and the Astronomers. What's so Great about Christianity.* (Tyndale, 2007), p. 117.

⁶ Augustine. *The Literal Meaning of Genesis.* J.H. Taylor, S.J. tr. v.l. (Newman 1982), p.42f. ** Tragically Einstein's early encounter with Scripture led him to reject the notion of "received" religion. Walter Isaacson. *Einstein.* (Simon & Schuster, 2007), p. 20. ** Consider 2 Corinthians 6:3.

⁷ "The Elephant Standing Between Secularists and the Truth of the Gospel," at my website: <http://...www.christianityontheoffense.com>.

⁸ To be fair, the challenge of protecting a favored position is not limited to religious contexts and considerations. James Ladyman notes that "scientists are often quite committed to their theories, and sometimes they will adopt all manner of strategies to save them from apparent refutation, rather than simply giving them up." (*Understanding the Philosophy of Science.* (Routledge, 2002), p. 101). ** David Klinghoffer (Ed, *The Unofficial Guide to Cosmos: Fact and Fiction in Neil Degraesse Tyson's Landmark Science Series.* (Discovery Institute, 2014), p. 164) states, "There shouldn't even be a debate over whether, in defending truth, its' ever justified to lie. Yet as 'Cosmos' aired, an international consortium of scholars and teachers interested in the humanities and social sciences—including Darwin-defending historians of science—were mulling whether it's acceptable for the series 'too lie' for a good cause—in this case, defending the authority of science. (see H-Net.org).

to recuse itself from need of reform on this matter? No and No. And unless this stance is reassessed in light of Scripture, we will continue to fail to employ the God-given tools (2 Cor. 10:5) that are necessary to effectively engage our unbelieving culture in the truth of the Gospel.

Every LCMS pastor, including myself, has pledged full ascription to the doctrinal standard upholding the inerrant, revealed, Word of God as the final authority. Since LCMS President Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison recently declared what he judges to be the only faithful reading of Genesis, then it is fitting that his position be likewise examined in light of the same Bible.

When Dr. Harrison affirmed his rejection of a multi-billion-year (BY) age for the cosmos⁹ solely because, in his judgment, that figure cannot be harmonized with Genesis 1,¹⁰ he committed three serious errors: 1) Firstly, he exposed his lack of awareness of a vital *exegetical* insight highlighted by the lauded late LCMS professor Dr. Paul Zimmermann, who noted that if Genesis 1:2 lies “*outside the limits of the first day [which indeed it does] and indicates a preliminary activity, then certainly a **great amount of time** could be included in this verse*” (boldface mine).¹¹ 2) Harrison also committed the “*genetic*” fallacy¹² when he equated belief in an “old” cosmos with commitment to Darwinism. In truth, the scientific grounds for dating the age of the universe is not Darwinian dogma, but *exhaustively-corroborated* data from precision-level instruments which calculate about 13.7 billion years (BY) as the amount of time lapsed by light travelling *from* the most distant galaxies *to* our telescopes.¹³ It is also a matter of *historical record* that from the time the Big Bang was first considered mid-last century, Darwinists have despised it¹⁴ for the reason that it indicates the cosmos had a beginning.¹⁵ 3) When Harrison suggested that scientific data has no authority to inform us of the age of the universe, he also set himself, albeit unwittingly, against the very Scriptures that he seeks to defend.

Harrison’s dismissal of scientific authority mimics the premise of the CTCR document, *In Christ All Things Hold Together: The Intersection of Science & Christian Theology*, which asserts, “*Science is not authorized to stand as an arbiter over God and His Word...*”¹⁶ Yet in this case it is *not* scientists who commit the overreach, but theologians who dismiss data of a kind that only scientists are properly qualified to discern.¹⁷ This posture illuminates that it is the LCMS which is

⁹ “You can’t stretch the [Scriptural] accounts to cover billions or millions of years and so mesh the biblical account with Darwinism.” (*Where is Your God?* The Lutheran Witness, (September 2015), p.1). ** Significantly, James Ladyman,

¹⁰ I argue to the contrary in “*The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look*.” At my website, Op.cit. (5).

¹¹ In an address to the NW District of the LCMS, June 23-26, 1964. *The Christian and Science*. Bible Science Newsletter. (Caldwell, Idaho).

¹² This fallacy mistakenly dismisses evidence solely on the grounds of their source as opposed to analyzing that evidence on its own merits.

¹³ Hugh Ross. The Creator and the Cosmos. (NavPress, 2001).

¹⁴ Ibid. Arthur Eddington stated, “*The notion of a beginning of a beginning of... nature to be repugnant... We [must] allow evolution an infinite time to get started*” p.77. ** “*Einstein tried to avoid such a start by holding onto his cosmological ‘fudge factor’... when Hubble’s astronomical observations caused [Einstein] to grudgingly accept ‘the necessity for a beginning.’*” Fred Heeren. Show Me God, 2nd ed. (Daystar, 2004), p.107.

¹⁵ This is conceded on scientific grounds in the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) study, The Natural Knowledge of God. (LCMS, April 2013). It states on p. 59 .n 215, that by projecting backwards into the history of the cosmos in light of recent scientific discoveries “*it is now generally accepted that the universe of space and time had a beginning in the finite past.*”

¹⁶ The CTCR. (LCMS, February 2015), p.19. ** It should be noted in contradiction to this statement that if it is true that facts are admissible only if Scripture authorizes them, then they cannot in turn be appealed to as support for the very Bible which must authorize them in the first place.

¹⁷ Martin Luther writes, “*I am giving no consideration to these ideas [the nature of the stars, sun, and moon], for astronomers are the experts from whom it is most convenient to get what may be discussed about these matters.*” Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. Luther’s Works: Lectures on Genesis v. 1. (Concordia, 1958), p. 41. ** He also writes, “*But it is not an evil thing to investigate the nature and quantities of things. Besides, the causes of the objects of this world are the most evident of all, far from difficult to know.*” Pelikan, ed. LW: Notes on Ecclesiastes. (Conc., 1972), p.18.

so committed to the YEC position¹⁸ despite the overwhelming scientific data¹⁹ which affirms the universe is much older. They object to science being admitted to the discussion table at all.²⁰

Returning then to the central point, on what *biblical* grounds can our Synod's dismissive assessment of scientific authority be maintained? Although this posture represents virtually the unanimous view of the LCMS, the Bible says otherwise. Indeed, there is not one single biblical passage which authorizes the imposition of our Synod's stricture onto scientific knowledge.

Therefore it can be demonstrated from Scripture that my challenge to the LCMS is neither a call to compromise the Bible, nor an appeal to an alien authority, but to the contrary, a summons for our officials to acknowledge what they have been persistently neglecting from Scripture, and embrace that passage which bears most directly on this question: Romans 1:18-20. Neither then is my assertion a matter of opinion since it stands or falls on the undisputable relevance of that passage. It is obvious that Paul's Letter to the Romans is the most extensive and systematic doctrinal presentation of the Gospel in the Bible. Significantly these verses stand prominently at the very beginning of the body of his Gospel presentation. It is also important to highlight that they are employed as one aspect of God's law against which unbelievers will be judged for resisting His revelation as to His rightful claim as Lord (see Rom. 3:19-20). It is in these three verses taken as a whole (as they are intended), that Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16), makes plain the authoritative status of the testimony of nature in relation to biblical proclamation. Indeed, no other Bible verse is as remotely pointed or relevant on this matter. That is one reason why it is so odd that the CTCR document which focuses on "*the Intersection of science and Christian theology*,"²¹ almost entirely neglects reference to Rom. 1:18-20, let alone deliberates over those relevant conclusions which logically follow from it. What then does the Apostle Paul state with respect to these matters?

Firstly, Paul labels as "wickedness" (v. 18) occasions where people suppress (*katechonton*) the testimony of nature, for the reason that it is **through nature** (the "*things that have been made*"-- v. 20) that God chooses to reveal to all people evidence of "*His eternal power and deity*" (v. 19). Indeed, so highly does God deem the authority of this testimony, He holds as liable all people who evade his rightful claim as Lord, on the grounds of their being "*without excuse*" for having suppressed that evidence. All three verses unite to make Paul's central point. In v. 18 Paul writes that the very act of suppressing truth will, in itself, be one basis on which God's wrath will fall for the reason that the denial of this testimony undermines one means by which God's revelation, as *law*, confronts sinners with their disobedience (Rom. 3:19-20). Certain Christians who suggest that scientific knowledge is not trustworthy are guilty of diminishing the culpability of unbelievers in their rejection of God's existence. Despite their

¹⁸ Stephen Jay Gould writes with some accuracy, "...others, particularly in positions of leadership, chose not to yield an inch, and then played the old hand of dichotomy to brand the developing magisterium of science as a sinister bunch of usurpers under the devil's command—hence the actual and frequent warfare of science, not with religion in the full sense, but with particular embodiments better characterized as dogmatic theology" in his *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life*. (Ballantine, 1999), pp. 105-6.

¹⁹ Even YEC scientist Dr. Russell Humphreys concedes this data is accurate in his *Starlight & Time*. (Master Books, 2010), p. 43f. ** On the other hand, his conclusions have been roundly refuted in <http://www.reasons.org/articles/the-unraveling-of-starlight-and-time>.

²⁰ Gilbertson and Yerxa decry the fact that "*There is no denying that contemporary professional theologians have very little interest in the scientific picture of the world as a source for theology...To some degree, the near-complete absence of scientific influence on the writings of theologians is due to the near-complete absence of scientific knowledge among theologians.*" Karl Gilbertson and Donald Yerxa. *Species of Origins: America's Search for a Creation Story*. (Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), p. 182.

²¹ Op.cit. (14).

pious motives, they effectively turn themselves into enablers of unbelief. Verses 18 and 19 heighten the direct relationship between the things of God and specifically matters of truth.²² And in v. 20 Paul highlights *nature* as one²³ of several **truthful** instruments through which God has chosen to reveal His existence to those who have no contact with the written Word.

It is not my point to suggest that the Bible needs approval from *people* with science degrees in order to be validated, as though they can be infallible in their judgment about anything (indeed, scientific insight, by the very nature of its research methods, is ever subject to revision in the light of new data). My intention is instead to point out that, according to the classical definition of the word “truth,” there *must* be correspondence between a given claim by Scripture and the reality to which it refers.²⁴ The late LCMS scientist, Dr. John Klotz, for example, correctly stated that our faith “*cannot go contrary to science and observation... There must be a basic unity between [scientific] facts and truth as it is given to us in revelation.*”²⁵ Consequently, where discrepancy is shown to exist between these two, one of the two halves of that equation must, as a matter of logic, give way for the reason of being incorrect, whether because of insufficient *scientific* data or understanding, or faulty exegetical/hermeneutical considerations. Unlike the spirituality exemplified by Eastern religions, the Bible never exempts religious claims that pertain to reality from the scrutiny of rational reasoning (see Isaiah 45:9-20). Therefore, when it is asserted that the Bible teaches that the earth was created 6-10 thousand years ago, that claim must, according to normal standards of truth, be substantiated by scientific data which it purports to correct. But what YECs cannot legitimately do is maintain their claim by suppressing inconvenient aspects of the data of nature *because* they are alleged to conflict with “an assured” interpretation of Genesis. Indeed, Scripture amply establishes that such denigration of nature’s testimony is inconsistent with its method of establishing truth.²⁶

Nature is, I repeat, a God-ordained medium for His revelation. The consequences which follow on the authority of the Bible is that it is not legitimate to frame an interpretation of Genesis which ignores the facts of nature. Conclusions arising from scientific discovery that the cosmos is 13 BY+/- old, and that animals have died (virtually all as meals for their predators) over a portion of that time, but **prior** to Adam’s sin, are valid clues for faithfully interpreting the early chapters of Genesis. So says the Bible.²⁷ While the authority of Scripture may be asserted, it cannot be legitimately *established* by decree alone. While the LCMS is free to challenge the time-frame just identified, the implications of Rom. 1:18-20 indicate that that venture must, on biblical grounds, nevertheless incorporate the testimony of nature at face value.

Of course, one standard counterargument of the LCMS is that the Book of Genesis says otherwise with respect to the duration and the specifics of the process by which God created the universe. Indeed, the protest is often laid that God shouldn’t require billions of years to finish His creation (obviously He doesn’t). But that misses the question: Is it possible instead

²² John Warwick Montgomery. *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics*. (Thomas Nelson, 1978), p.27f, 129f. ** In John 3:12 Jesus highlights the necessity of truth in terms of our science if we expect it to persuade doubters to the truth of God, by stating, “*If I told you about earthly things [epigeia—the stuff of nature “with an attitude!”] and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?*”

²³ See also Romans 2:1-3, and v. 12-16.

²⁴ Dr. Scott Yakimow of Concordia University Ptld. stated this at the LCMS Puget Sound Pastors Conference, Oak Harbor, WA on Oct. 8, 2015.

²⁵ *Modern Science and the Christian Life*. (Concordia, 1962), p.79, (note also p.137f).

²⁶ See my paper, “*The Pervasive Employment of Apologetics in the Bible*,” (my website, Op.cit. (5).

²⁷ Op.cit. (11), pp. 2, 11.

that the reason we can view virtually the whole history of the cosmos back to its beginning²⁸ is because God *deliberately* displayed His power just for our instruction and pleasure (Ps. 19:1)? Even setting aside the answer Rom. 1 provides, the central question remains: Do the first chapters of Genesis even say what YECs claim they do? At the very least, expositors must focus *on* the contents of the actual text instead of weaving naïve and abstract generalities *about* it.

That very question is often dodged on the naïve assertion that, since the goal of Christianity is salvation in Christ then the age of the earth is not important. Yet this charge commits the “*black-or-white*” fallacy. Consider the following deliberately exaggerated assertion, known as a *reductio ad absurdum*: “*You can trust the evidence that Christ was raised from the dead, just as we know that the moon is made of green cheese.*” Clearly, the coupling of our true “Jesus” claim, with a silly “green cheese” claim, damages the very credibility of the former. For similar reasons, educated people will not consider a Gospel which contradicts knowledge about our world that is so broadly and thoroughly established. Jesus Christ Himself agrees.²⁹

It is, at bottom not only the pagan, but also our Synod, which is engaging in selectively suppressing evidence. It is manifestly evident that it is the YEC view of beginnings which impels leaders to dismiss data from nature which indicates the cosmos is ancient. What is also clear is that it is their dismissal of certain³⁰ evidence from nature which in turn reinforces their interpretation of Genesis. The further point to be made is that the LCMS suppresses truth not just on one front, but two; by entailing not only the witness of nature, but also evidence from the Hebrew text of Genesis which indicates the creation days may very well be longer than 24-hours.³¹ Sadly however, despite our inheritance of the treasure and example of Martin Luther’s reformation, LCMS leaders express little interest in investigating with open mind the Scriptures undergirding their position on Genesis, in spite of compelling textual evidence to the contrary.³²

The stakes of the central issue of this paper are enormous. On the one hand our Synod’s conviction that the Bible is the revealed and inerrant Word of God properly impels us to defend that claim. Indeed, were the relevant evidence actually to be admitted to the table, the compelling strength of our case would become obvious. On the other hand, our practice of shielding Scripture from cross examination is detrimental to that purpose because it implies that our claim is groundless and for that reason, unworthy of consideration. The irony here is two-fold. First, as I have noted, the LCMS’ posture of suppressing the evidence of nature is forbidden by the Bible. Yet amazingly it is that same evidence which supports the truth of Scripture³³ and cries out to be employed in our spreading the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Rev. Gary Wayne Jensen
Zion Lutheran Church (LCMS)
© October 24, 2015

²⁸ Fred Heeren. Op.cit. (12), pp. 162, 3.

²⁹ John 3:12.

³⁰ I am not claiming that the LCMS ignores all scientific evidence, but that it cherry picks which evidence it will embrace with respect to creation.

³¹ B.D. Op.cit. (8), p.2, 4, n.11.

³² B.D. Op.cit. (8), n.2, 3, 6, 7. ** Luther himself conceded that the text of Genesis 1 is “*difficult to understand*” in Op.cit. (15), Genesis. p.3.

³³ Wm. Lane Craig. Reasonable Faith, 3rd Edition. (Crossway, 2008). ** Also, my essay, “*The Prints are Everywhere*,” at my website, Op.cit. (5).

Harrison, Matthew <MCH@lcms.org>

11:18 AM (5 hours ago)

Gary,

Grace and peace. I'm curious as to why you came into the LCMS
In 2007, knowing you so sincerely reject one of its significant teachings?

Matt H

From: Gary Jensen <gjensen549@gmail.com>

Date: Friday 13 November 2015 23:19

To: Matthew Harrison <mch@lcms.org>, LCMS President <LCMSPresident@lcms.org>, "Paul (Cindy)
Linnemann" <pauill@nowlcms.org>, Pastor Ted <rev.ted@comcast.net>, Al Jensen <al-cheryl_jensen@sil.org>, Jim Jensen <jdj0547@gmail.com>

Subject: When LCMS Tradition Contradicts the Bible

November 14, 2015

Dear Dr. Harrison,

I cannot have been more disappointed by your email. I am not a frivolous rabble-rouser, but a loyal Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) clergyman who is deeply committed to the advancement of the Gospel as a denomination. I had vainly hoped for a hearing from you. On the other hand, what I actually *expected* to receive was either, sadly, resistance, or at least a healthy rebuttal. But your reply gives me virtually no indication that you have bothered to examine my documents at all. I simply cannot square how the question you posed to me logically follows from anything I stated anywhere.

As I stated with sufficient clarity in my papers, I embrace the Bible as the inerrant revealed Word of God, and as such, the highest authority against which all our Synodical doctrines are to be judged. My stance on Scripture is therefore entirely consistent with our "*Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod*" which states under the sub-section, "*Concerning the Holy Scriptures*:"

"We furthermore teach regarding the Holy Scriptures that they are given by God to the Christian Church for the foundation of faith, Eph. 2:20. Hence the Holy Scriptures are the sole source from which all doctrines proclaimed in the Christian Church must be taken and therefore, too, the sole rule and norm by which all teachers and doctrines must be examined and judged" (boldface mine).

My goal has been to highlight a glaring example where the LCMS is elevating human dogma above the authority of Scripture with respect to Romans 1:18-20. While you are suggesting that I am out of compliance with LCMS doctrine, I am making the much stronger charge that you are out of compliance with the Bible. You have not answered this legitimate challenge. Exactly where do you find me to be in error in my contention that the LCMS position on creation contradicts the Apostle Paul's declaration that the evidence of nature ("*the things that have been made*") is truthful testimony to the "*eternal power and deity*" of God?

Sincerely in Christ Jesus,

Gary Jensen, Pastor

Harrison, Matthew <MCH@lcms.org>

6:55 AM (10 hours ago)

November 15, 2015

**Again, why did you join the Synod while knowingly rejecting its teaching
On creation?**

Matt H.

Sub cruce

November 15, 2015

Dear Dr. Harrison,

Many months after I resigned from my position as a pastor in the ELCA, due to numerous irreconcilable theological differences (the gap continues widening exponentially), I came to enter the LCMS for the reason that our official elevation of Scripture above tradition allows room for differences of opinion concerning the interpretation of Genesis 1. Despite Luther's 24-hour day position, he nevertheless conceded that the text of Genesis 1 "*difficult to understand*" (LW v. 1, p. 3). When it became apparent following my ordination and installation that I was facing insurmountable obstacles regarding my perspective, I consulted two high ranking LCMS officials concerning the question of whether I should leave. One of them simply underplayed the extent of the challenge. The other replied that, to the contrary, I need to stay because the Synod needs my perspective.

In an email of a number of months ago you advised me that I should submit my paper, "The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look," to the CTCR for their judgment. As I stated near the beginning of that document, I had already done so at the behest of Dr. Kieschnick. I have a documented reply on official letterhead from Dr. Lehenbauer in which he stated, "*I am not personally aware of any LCMS resolution or doctrinal statement that specifically makes reference to the days of creation in Genesis 1 as '24-hour days,'*"

In Christ, Pastor Gary Jensen