

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD



WYOMING DISTRICT
Lutheran Ministries Center
2400 Hickory Street
Casper, Wyoming 82604
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Office of the President

December 11, 2017

Dear faculty of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis,

Thank you for your response and your expressed concerns to the Wyoming District Pastoral Conference's Resolution condemning the false doctrine inherent in Dr. John Jurchen's *Concordia Journal* article, "The Age of the Earth and Confessional Lutheranism." We appreciate the time and hours you collectively put into answering our concerns.

You posit two concerns as to our Resolution, first regarding the approach to, and second the treatment of, the article. Please allow us to explain in the same order why we still find it necessary to insist on the correctness of our Resolution.

First, as to approach. You incorrectly cite Luther's Catechism on the 8th Commandment in alluding to our Resolution as slander. First, slander is speaking an untruth. We spoke no untruth. Second, slander – as you employed it in your Open Letter – has to do with private altercations. This is no private matter. The sainted Dr. Luther explicitly and emphatically declares in his Large Catechism that nothing he says about private affairs should be taken to mean that we may not or should not confront public falsity publicly. In fact, he specifically mentions false doctrine as something that is public by nature and should be addressed publicly (LC I, 284). We did not post on blogs or the internet. We followed the brotherly approach of addressing false doctrine within the confines of our beloved Synod, in our District Conference. And we did so in brotherly love. It is a sad commentary on the situation in our Synod when professors take a public rebuke and condemnation as a personal affront and as contrary to the love that Scripture commands. God's love is not the love of this world. We would commend to your reading our dear Savior's words to St. Peter and to his beloved disciples in John 6, in Mark 8, and throughout the Gospels, where he strictly and directly condemns sin as sin. In the case of St. Peter, our Lord does so in front of the other disciples. He does not bring him aside and speak to him privately (Mark 8:31–33, "He turned, looked at His disciples, and rebuked Peter, saying..."). And this because all of the disciples were affected by St. Peter's vocal contradiction of God's Word. Just so, we follow our Lord's example in publicly condemning a public error. Cf. also Gal. 2:14.

When you, in your Open Letter, express sadness that we did not come to Dr. Jurchen personally and individually, you ignore the fact that Dr. Jurchen and your seminary started a *public* conversation by publishing a *public* article, which we responded to *publicly*. It would be untenable and unproductive for the thousands of individuals offended by this public article to come to Dr. Jurchen privately and individually. Your publication of Dr. Jurchen's article has started the public conversation in which we are now engaged.

Again, as to approach, you assume throughout your Open Letter that Dr. Jurchen's article, and the statements we quoted from it, are somehow "unclear" or "confusing." They are not unclear or confusing. They are not unclear even to our parishioners, who have come to us with grave concerns that our seminary and college accept the idea that the days in Genesis 1 are anything but regular days, as we presently experience the length of days. Dr. Jurchen expressly states that the LCMS should allow for the interpretation of days in Genesis 1 extending to an amount of time that aligns with modern theories of an old earth (*CJ*, 43.3, pp. 70–71). The Bible is very clear that the days of creation were normal days, as Genesis 1 shows together with Exodus 31:17.

We do not need clarification about clear words. That is why we did not ask for clarification on this article. We know what the words say. And they contradict God's Word. The proper response to a public contradiction of God's Word is to call our brother to repentance, and since he is a teacher in the Synod, to inform the proper authorities about his error. This we did and we do in love.

Second, as to our actual treatment of the article, we did in fact discuss the article in Conference, requested quotations from it, and tabled another much more strongly worded Resolution precisely because it did not quote from the actual article and assumed things about it (e.g. promotion of theistic evolution) which we were not willing to read into the words of the article. We took a measured and careful approach, again out of love for our brothers.

Again, as to the actual treatment of the article, our Resolution is specific in holding to the Bible's clear words, as defended and stated in the Brief Statement of our Synod. When we say that the Scriptures do not allow for old-earth creationism and that the words of Scripture may not be taken to mean anything but the 24-hour days as experienced, we are faithfully presenting the clear position of our Synod, which stands alone on God's Word of Scripture, as articulated in the Brief Statement.

We are therefore pleased to read that you unanimously declare your agreement with the Brief Statement on creation. But this also raises an obvious and important concern. Dr. Jurchen's article uses the Brief Statement to say that the Synod has not taken a position on the exact length of days in Genesis or on the age of the earth (and by "age of the earth" Dr. Jurchen is talking about the categories of "Old Earth" vs. "Young Earth," not about arguments over 6,000 vs. 20,000 years, as is seen in theories of skipped generations in the biblical genealogies of Genesis 5 and 10–11). What our Resolution condemns, however, is the assertion that old-earth creationism is consistent with the Scriptures or the Brief Statement, which is based on the Scriptures.

Your Open Letter therefore raises a concern as to this very point, since you confess the Brief Statement and yet ask us to retract our Resolution which upholds the Brief Statement and calls for repentance for denying the Brief Statement's articulation of Scripture. Francis Pieper is very clear in his *Christian Dogmatics* that the length of days in Genesis is 24 hours (and neither he nor we have any wish to quibble about minutes). This also is the clear meaning of the Brief Statement. While we rejoice to see what Dr. Arand has recently written on concordiatheology.org, that not a single member of your faculty (nor even Dr. Jurchen)

advocates day-age creationism and that you all believe the “most natural” and “plain” reading of “day” is “to regard it as an ordinary day,” the purpose of our Resolution is to address a public article, not the personal beliefs of members of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis or of Dr. Jurchen. More than this, the question before us does not yet concern outright advocacy or promotion of old-earth creationism, but whether this false doctrine should be allowed in our Synod. That is the point at issue in your publishing Dr. Jurchen’s article in *Concordia Journal* and our Resolution against it. We do not use the words “promote” or “advocate” in our Resolution, but instead simply quote from Dr. Jurchen’s article, which clearly *allows* for day-age creationism as an acceptable position in our Synod. And so our concerns have not been met. The article you published allows exegetical freedom for the false teaching that the world came about in immense periods of time and that the days of Genesis are something other than normal days.

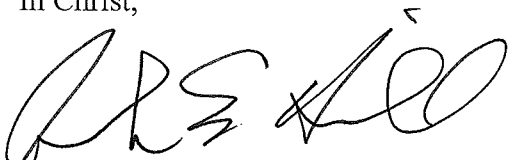
Specifically, the Brief Statement states, “We reject every doctrine which denies or limits the work of creation as taught in Scripture. In our days it is denied or limited by those who assert, ostensibly in deference to science, that the world came into existence through a process of evolution; that is, that it has, in immense periods of time, developed more or less of itself.” Dr. Jurchen’s article specifically allows for the interpretation that the world came into existence in immense periods of time. We have called on the appropriate authorities in Synod to reject this opinion. Openness is needed here. We are brothers in Christ. We respectfully request clarification now, not from Dr. Jurchen, whose words are clear, but from you, the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

You “unequivocally state that we hold to and teach in accordance with the Brief Statement’s paragraph on creation, both its thesis and antithesis.” Do you understand the Brief Statement to be saying that the world did not come about in immense periods of time and to be condemning and *disallowing* any interpretation that would say it did? If so, please join us in condemning Dr. Jurchen’s article and, as the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, which publishes *Concordia Journal*, retract this article “for its false teaching and for sowing discord among brethren.” If this is not how you understand the Brief Statement, that is, if you *allow* for the interpretation that the days of creation are immense periods of time, and you only reject the idea that the world came into existence in immense periods of time *if* this is stated with the evolutionary assumption that the world “developed more or less of itself,” then we again respectfully request that you make your position clear both to each other and to us and to the Synod at large. This is the brotherly, godly, and loving thing to do, so that there is no misunderstanding as to your position on Dr. Jurchen’s article and the interpretation of the Brief Statement. Allowance of false teaching turns into promotion of the same in due time. Dr. Jurchen’s article, published by *Concordia Journal*, allows false doctrine as an acceptable position in our Synod. This is, again, the point at issue.

This is a matter of conscience. You are professors in Christ’s Church and bear a great responsibility before God and his people. When our people are led to doubt God’s clear Word in Genesis 1, they are led down the road of doubting the clarity of all God’s Word. Our youth, in particular, need to hear a clear confession from the pastors and teachers of their Synod. Dr. Jurchen’s article leads tender Christian consciences to doubt the clarity of God’s Word. It hurts

them and their faith in Christ. We love our people. We love Dr. Jurchen. We love you, our brothers in Christ. And so we ask you to join us in removing the offense caused by this article and supporting us as we teach God's children that his Word is clear and should never be doubted. God grant you Christ's wisdom and humility in this matter.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Hill', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rev. John E. Hill, President

Wyoming District LCMS

On behalf of the pastors of the District

CC: Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, President of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Rev. Dr. Dale Meyer, President of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
Rev. Dr. Charles Arand, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich, President of Concordia University, Nebraska
Dr. John Jurchen, Concordia University, Nebraska
Rev. Dr. R. Lee Hagan, President of the Missouri District, LCMS
Rev. Dr. Richard Snow, President of the Nebraska District, LCMS
Rev. Shawn Kumm, Chairman of the Board of Regents, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
Mr. Paul Schudel, Chairman of the Board of Regents, Concordia University, Nebraska