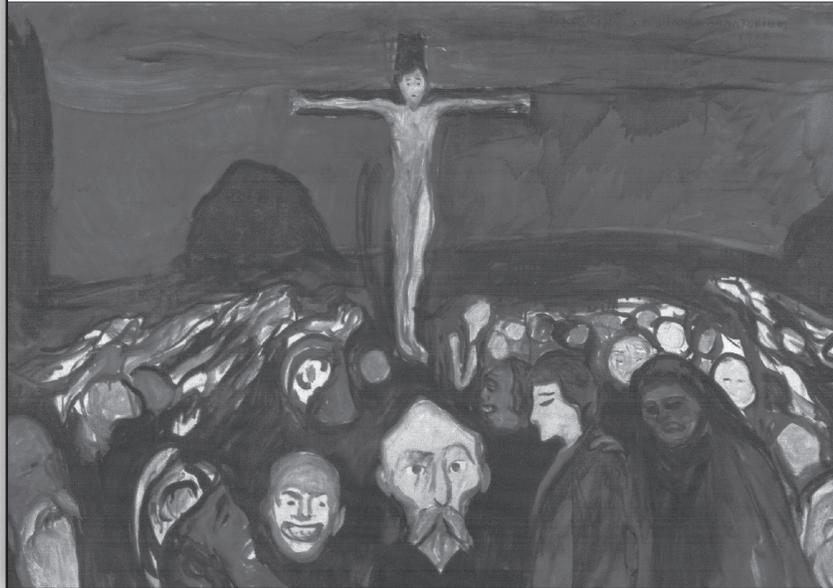


Gene Edward Veith Jr. and A. Trevor Sutton

AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY

How Lutheran Theology Speaks to a Postmodern World



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DISCUSSION GUIDE



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Prologue

A DIFFERENT WAY OF BEING POSTMODERN

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You sent Your Son to boldly proclaim Your Word and to call the lost to Himself that they may be saved. Enable us to learn more about the world around us and our Christian faith so that we may more effectively proclaim Your Word to those who don't know You; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

Introduction: Although people are moving away from the Christian Church, many continue to search for meaning and purpose in their lives. Modernism and postmodernism are two worldviews by which people have assumed to understand the world and themselves. Lutheranism, according to Veith and Sutton, presents a valid alternative for those seeking meaning and purpose in their lives. In their prologue, they provide a brief history of modern thought and Lutheranism's place in this history, as well as why Lutheranism might appeal to a modern audience.

PREFACE

1. What is the goal of Veith and Sutton's book?

PREMODERN, MODERN, POSTMODERN

2. What is modernism? How has modernism affected our way of thinking?
3. How does modernism challenge Christianity?
4. What is postmodernism? In what ways is postmodernism a response to modernism?
5. What is relativism? How has postmodernism allowed for relativism?

6. How is relativism incompatible with the message of Christianity?
7. How do certain events in our lives (e.g., death or sickness) and complaints about injustices in society (e.g., social justice movements) challenge the relativism of postmodernism?
8. What does it mean for something to be premodern? What are some characteristics of premodernity?
9. What is the value of considering premodern ways of thinking?
10. In what ways can a postmodern context allow for premodern thought to be heard today?
11. Why can Lutheranism function as a bridge of communication between premodern and modern ways of thinking?

THE RATIONALISTS, THE NIHILISTS, AND THE LUTHERANS

12. What is rationalism?
13. What is nihilism?
14. How do rationalism and nihilism critique modernism?
15. Although postmodernism provides a valuable critique of modernism, what is the error of postmodernism?
16. Who was Johann Georg Hamann?
17. How is Hamann's critique of modernism like the postmodernist critique of modernism?
18. How did the Lutheran tradition help Hamann avoid the errors of relativism and nihilism?

POSTMODERNITY AND ORDINARY LUTHERANISM

19. How can Lutheranism overcome the reductionisms of modernity and the alienated subjectivity of postmodernity?

Conclusion: Both modernism and postmodernism lead to a degradation of the world in which we live, in turn failing to provide the substantive meaning many people search for. Lutheranism recognizes the critiques and insights into reality that both movements provide, while at the same time presenting a spiritual understanding of the world around us that transcends the pitfalls of these movements.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: MEGACHURCH OR METACHURCH?

Prayer: O God, You have entrusted to Your Church the Word of Truth. Help us to remain firm and steadfast in this Word that we may be found faithful regardless of the changing tides of our culture and society; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Introduction: Many believe that the church needs another reformation so that it can continue to effectively reach the lost. Groups have tried to change the church so that it is more appealing to outsiders and more welcoming. But the church can only change so much without destroying its essence. Dangers that the church faces in its modern context include various understandings of God, a confusion regarding man's work and salvation, and a struggle to define the church's relationship to the dominant culture. The church is in need of an effective "metatheology" to deal with these problems and reach out to those around them; Veith and Sutton posit that Lutheranism provides just that.

BURNED-OUT BELIEVERS AND SPIRITUAL SECULARISTS

1. Who are the "nones"? Of whom do they primarily consist? What could be some reasons for their rising numbers?
2. What are two movements in the church that have tried to appeal to these "nones"? How have they done this?
3. In what ways have the approaches of these movements had a negative effect on the Christian message?
4. Why might their approaches be ineffective in reaching out to the "nones"?
5. What is a local maximum? How does this principle call into question the effectiveness of using change in the church for reaching out to the "nones"?

6. Veith and Sutton identify a different way that the church can reach out to the “nones”—that is, by effectively harnessing those things that are authentically Christian and using them to reach out to people today. What are some beliefs that help form the framework of an authentic Christianity?
7. How is the authentically Christian approach inclusive? How does this inclusivism differ from the inclusivism of the two movements that were mentioned previously?

METACHURCH

8. What was the goal of Luther’s Reformation?
9. What was the guiding principle behind this Reformation?
10. How did Luther’s Reformation differ from what Veith and Sutton identify as later Protestant revolutions?
11. Veith and Sutton, instead of using the terms *catholic* or *orthodox*, propose that the Lutheran Christian theology be called a *metatheology*. What is a metatheology?
12. What is the driving principle behind this theology of theologies?
13. How is the *meta* nature of Lutheranism seen in its teachings concerning redemption, the sacraments, and an individual faith? Compare these Lutheran teachings to those of other Christian traditions mentioned by Veith and Sutton.

ISSUES FOR THE NEW REFORMATION

14. If the Word of God never changes, then why must Christians take into account their historical context when espousing God’s Word?
15. What are aspects of the church’s setting that might affect the way God’s Word is proclaimed in a specific time or place?

DISTORTION OF GOD

16. For those who still believe in God, what are two common misconceptions about God that run rampant today?

17. How does the message that God became flesh in Christ challenge these misconceptions?

GNOSTIC HERESY

18. How does materialism (the belief that the physical world is all that exists) undermine creation?

19. How is materialism's disregard for creation similar to Gnosticism's rejection of the physical world? How does the denial of the value of the physical world by each affect the way one lives? Give examples from hot topic issues in modern society.

20. What are other American religions or forms of Christianity that seem to be Gnostic in nature?

21. How does Lutheran theology challenge an undermining of reality?

CONFUSION AND REPUDIATION OF LAW AND GOSPEL

22. What are the Law and Gospel?

23. What is legalism? How does legalism reveal a denial or a confusion of Law and Gospel?

24. In a society where objective moral values are denied, people still try to live lives that they believe are good. What movements within society betray a belief in right and wrong, though they formally deny the objective existence of such values?

25. How does this attempt to live a good life amount to a sort of legalism?

26. How does a postmodern denial of objective moral values undermine the Gospel?

27. In what ways do certain practices in American Christianity reveal a legalistic attitude?

28. How does the Lutheran distinction between Law and Gospel challenge moral relativism and legalism?

CONFUSIONS ABOUT THE SECULAR WORLD

29. What are two common ways in which Christians today think about the relationship between Christianity and the secular world?
30. What is the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms?
31. How do the two kingdoms help to articulate the Christian's relationship to the secular world?
32. How does the doctrine of the two kingdoms help to avoid the mistakes associated with the two previously mentioned ways of viewing the Christian's relationship with the secular society?

Conclusion: The attempts of the Church Growth Movement and mainline Christian denominations to reach people outside of the church have watered down and distorted their Christian proclamation. The scriptural and confessional basis of Lutheranism avoids the risk of a muddled message or mingling of our identity with foreign ideas, while at the same time being able to address questions modern people have about God, salvation, and their place in the world.



CHAPTER 2

RECONSIDERING GOD

***Prayer:** Lord God, You sent Your Son into the world so that we may know You. Remind us to search for You where You have promised to meet us so that we are not deceived or misled into false belief and despair; this we pray in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Introduction: People today are searching for God. Those who cannot see God in the world have concluded that God is distant or nonexistent, while others believe that God is so imminent that they can find Him within themselves. These different views of God lead to several different answers about who God is, what His relation to humanity is, and what role He plays in the world, in turn leading to much confusion and uncertainty concerning who He is. Lutheranism addresses man's search for God by proclaiming that man doesn't have to search for God because God has clearly revealed Himself to man in Jesus Christ.

GOD IN THE CLOUD

1. What is the cloud?
2. What do Deists believe about God? How is this concept of God similar to the cloud?
3. How does a Deist view of God disagree with the Christian understanding of God?
4. What role does God play in the everyday lives of people according to Deism?
5. What is therapeutic Deism? How does this form of Deism differ from that of traditional Deism?
6. What is moralism? In what ways does therapeutic Deism espouse a form of moralism?

7. How does a therapeutic Deist view of God negatively affect the way we understand God's relation to us?

THE GOD WITHIN

8. In contrast to Deism, which holds to a God far removed from the world, other beliefs search for a god within oneself. How did rationalism challenge the idea of a transcendent creator God and lead to this new understanding of God?
9. How has Pietism helped to facilitate the move away from the Christian belief in a transcendent God to the belief of God within oneself?
10. Can the belief of God within oneself fit a postmodernist understanding of reality while at the same time avoiding the meaninglessness to which postmodernism seems to lead?
11. If we search for God within ourselves, have we made ourselves into idols? If so, how?

THE NEARNESS OF GOD: INCARNATION

12. Where do Christians find God? How does this differ from the impersonal God of Deism and the simple imminence of God within oneself?
13. What does *incarnation* mean? Why did God become incarnate?

THE TANGIBILITY OF GOD

14. What do we mean when we say God became flesh? Did all three persons of the Trinity become human?
15. Can mankind perceive God apart from Jesus Christ? Why or why not?

WHERE IS GOD TO BE FOUND?

16. By what means does God continue to speak to us today?
17. List the different forms that God's Word might take. Explain how each one is God's Word.

18. Veith and Sutton say that God speaks two things through His Word. What are they, and what do they accomplish?
19. Define a sacrament. What two things are recognized as sacraments in the Lutheran Church? How does God work through them?
20. What are the objections of some Christian denominations to the belief that God can be found in the sacraments?
21. How might we respond to their objections? Do we have scriptural support for our belief that God can be found in finite things?
22. The church is different from any other place on earth, for in the church God has promised to be present. How can sinful human beings hope to dwell before a holy God?

Conclusion: Lutheranism avoids the despair of Deism by saying that God has drawn near to us by taking on our flesh and continues to be with us through His Word and Sacrament. At the same time, it recognizes that God is beyond us, providing the comfort of knowing that God is greater than our weaknesses and struggles. The search for God is not a mystery; Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, has revealed Him to us all.



CHAPTER 3

STOP JUSTIFYING YOURSELF

***Prayer:** Gracious Father, Your Son's blood was poured out on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, reconciling us to You. Keep us in this forgiveness that we may finally enter into Your kingdom, where we will be with You for all eternity; in the name of Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

Introduction: Some have called into question the reality of sin and therefore man's need for reconciliation with God. Movements such as moral relativism question the reality of objectively real moral values. Nevertheless, humans, even if they don't realize it, try to find ways to justify their actions and ways of life. Man is still in need of justification, and this justification can only be found in Jesus Christ.

JUSTIFICATION

1. Define *justification*.
2. What are some ways that modern society challenges the belief that man needs to be justified before God?
3. How do people who deny that they need justification betray the fact that, deep down, they know they actually need it?

THE HUMAN OBSESSION WITH JUSTIFICATION

4. How does moral relativism challenge the reality of sin?
5. Even though many people deny the reality of objective moral values, very few people can live consistently with this idea. How do many moral relativists betray the fact that they believe objective moral values actually exist?

6. People often use the problem of suffering in the world to call into question the existence of an all-good and all-powerful God. This problem of suffering and God's existence is called *theodicy*. How is theodicy a distorted form of justification?
7. Mankind's attempts at self-justification constantly meet failure. Why is man unable to justify himself before God?

JUSTIFICATION AND ATONEMENT

8. How has all humanity been justified?
9. What does it mean that Christ's death is substitutionary? Give three examples of how specific acts of Christ function in a substitutionary way for mankind.
10. What is the "wonderful exchange"?

BY FAITH

11. How do we receive what Christ has earned for us?
12. How does God create faith?
13. Luther's explanation of the Third Article in his Small Catechism says that we cannot believe in Jesus or come to Him by our own reason or strength. How does this statement challenge both modernism and postmodernism?
14. Veith and Sutton mention the call to faith. How do Law and Gospel function in the call to faith?

THE MEANS OF GRACE

15. How often do we need to be brought to repentance by the Law and hear the forgiveness of the Gospel? Is it a one-time event or a recurring one?
16. How are the sacraments a visible form of the Gospel?

17. Veith and Sutton say that the Law can function as a guide. What does this mean? For whom does the Law function in this way?

OTHER TAKES ON JUSTIFICATION

18. How do the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Reformed, and Evangelical understandings of the Gospel differ from the Lutheran understanding of the Gospel?
19. What is objective justification?
20. What is subjective justification? Why is subjective justification necessary?
21. What are some objections to the doctrine of justification that Veith and Sutton mention? How might a trinitarian understanding of God be used to challenge claims that justification or the atonement espouse a narrative of abuse and contradict God's mercy?
22. What are the formal and material principles of Lutheran Christianity? Why is it important to keep these principles in mind when dialoguing with other denominations and worldviews?

Conclusion: Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose from the dead to justify all people to God. These benefits are daily and richly available to all people through the ministry of the church, where the forgiveness of sins is received through God's Word and Sacraments. Since God has justified us, we don't have to justify ourselves.



CHAPTER 4

GOD ON A CROSS

***Prayer:** Loving Father, You sent Your Son to take on our flesh and bear our suffering. Help us to be ever mindful of this so that when we face difficult times we are not led astray but know that You are near to us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

Introduction: “Live your best life now.” This seems to be the driving approach of many people to life. No one likes pain and suffering. Pain and suffering, however, are unavoidable. Although many false gospels preach otherwise, the Christian Gospel is not a message of ease and prosperity. Instead, at its center, is the message of a God who has become intimately associated with the suffering of mankind by taking on our flesh.

ENCOUNTERS WITH ANOTHER GOSPEL

1. What is the prosperity gospel?
2. Summarize the origin of the prosperity gospel as it is presented by Veith and Sutton.
3. Luther’s explanation of the First Commandment says, “We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” How does the prosperity gospel misdirect our trust and in turn make ourselves into gods?

SELF-WORSHIP

4. In what ways is the message of the prosperity gospel similar to that of secular culture?
5. How does the Word of Faith Movement relate to a postmodernist constructivist view of reality?

6. Modernism and postmodernism, like the prosperity gospel, lead to a misplacement of trust. How can technology and medicine become objects of misplaced trust?

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS VS. THE THEOLOGY OF GLORY

7. How does the cross function to reveal who God is, as well as who we are as humans?
8. How does a cross-centered view of God and humanity challenge the prosperity gospel and similar messages?
9. What is the Heidelberg Disputation? What are the two theologies that Luther talks about in this disputation?
10. Postmodernists say that all religions are manifestations of power. How does the theology of the cross challenge this analysis of religion?
11. How is the theology of glory manifest in the messages of other Christian denominations?

SUFFERING

12. What do people normally think of suffering?
13. What are positive aspects of suffering?
14. Veith and Sutton say that the cause of suffering is not necessarily evil. What are examples of things that might cause suffering but are not evil?
15. How can God be found in suffering?
16. Veith and Sutton claim that the cross and resurrection justify God. How do the cross and resurrection take care of the problem of suffering?

“SURELY HE HAS BORNE OUR GRIEFS AND CARRIED OUR SORROWS”

17. What are Christ's two natures? How does Chemnitz explain Christ's two natures using those of human beings?

18. Luther says that God dies in Jesus. What are the implications of this statement about the relationship between Christ's natures? Which persons of the Trinity died on the cross?

CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGIES OF GLORY VS. THE CROSS

19. Explain how modernism and postmodernism are theologies of glory.

20. How does suffering challenge the theology of glory espoused in modernism and postmodernism?

Conclusion: Though some believe that suffering challenges the existence or righteousness of God, the theology of the cross proclaims a God who entered into the midst of man's suffering to the point of death. The theology of the cross provides an answer to the question of God's presence in suffering, as well as a critique of those worldviews that either ignore suffering or try to avoid it.



CHAPTER 5

THE REAL PRESENCE

Prayer: Dear Lord, giver of sight and hearing, open our eyes and ears that we may recognize Your daily provisions and give thanks for our daily bread; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Introduction: Humans have an innate desire to find value in the world. Materialism has failed to find value in the physical world because it denies any sort of meaning and purpose behind the universe. Postmodernism, on the other hand, seeks to impose a meaning based on one's own construction of reality. Lutheranism gives the world real purpose, as it proclaims a God who draws near to people in their everyday lives, dwells within the physical world, and even promises to meet humanity through physical means.

THE PHYSICALISM OF LUTHERANISM

1. In what ways is Lutheran Christianity a physical religion? Where does one see this emphasis on the physical world in the Lutheran doctrines of salvation, of the sacraments, and of vocation?
2. How do modernism and postmodernism lead to a negative view of the physical world?

DISENCHANTMENT AND REENCHANTMENT

3. What is the fact/value distinction? How has it affected the way we view the material world?
4. People think that they can customize their bodies based on their sense of gender, receive plastic surgeries to improve features they don't like about themselves, and take part in sexual relations without any consequence. How do these attitudes reflect a disregard for the physical world?

THE FINITE IS CAPABLE OF THE INFINITE

5. How did the Enlightenment, Pietism, and medieval communion practices banish Christianity from the external world?

6. The Reformed have traditionally denied Jesus' physical presence in the Lord's Supper. They argue that Christ has ascended into heaven, that He is no longer present on earth, and that finite things cannot contain Him. If these objections are taken to their logical conclusions, how might they lead to a denial of God's presence at all in the world?

7. What have Lutherans traditionally said about the implications of the ascension, God's omnipresence, and what it means for the Godhead to be infinite?

8. What is the difference between a magisterial use of reason and a ministerial use of reason? How is a ministerial use of reason applied in traditional Lutheran arguments for Christ's real presence in the Lord's Supper?

THE BIBLE ON GOD'S PRESENCE

9. Veith and Sutton say that Genesis 3:8–9 is the foundational text for all of Scripture. Why do they say this?

10. Track the theme of God's presence among His people throughout the Old Testament and into the New Testament (as it is presented by Veith and Sutton).

11. How does Lutheran sacramental theology continue the Bible's theme of God's presence among His people?

ABSENCE AND PRESENCE

12. How has the technological age contributed to people being absent in a situation even though they are bodily present?

13. God has, at times, been used as a means to supplement human knowledge where it is lacking. This treatment of God has properly been called a "God of the gaps." How does the use of God to supplement human ignorance pose the risk of removing God further and further from our experience of reality?

14. Bonhoeffer suggests that we “find God in what we know.” What does this mean? What are some places that Chemnitz says we know God to be present?

15. What might a theology of presence do for a culture of absence?

16. How does justification open up the world to the believer?

Conclusion: In an age that seeks to connect through technology, absence is more prominent now than ever before. God, however, is always with us. He is ever present with us as He promises to come to us through the simple bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper. Even though those around us might seem to be absent, God certainly isn’t.



CHAPTER 6

THE PURPOSE OF YOUR LIFE

***Prayer:** Heavenly Father, You have placed us in our stations of life. Help us to be mindful of our relationships with others and the work that You have given us to do so that our works, in accordance with Your will, may better serve our neighbor; in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Introduction: How do we try to find meaning and substance in our daily activities? The Lutheran doctrine of vocation challenges us to find meaning in our daily callings, as God works to serve others through our work and relationships. Luther's identification of multiple vocations, which exist in four realms, helps us to understand how our seemingly mundane lives take on great significance in the sight of God.

MILLENNIALS' CRITIQUE OF SOCIETY

1. What critique of modern life do Veith and Sutton say that millennials provide?
2. What three major teachings did the Reformation contribute to Protestantism?
3. What is the doctrine of vocation?
4. How is the doctrine of vocation related to God's presence in the world?

VOCATION IN THE BIBLE

5. What do 1 Corinthians 7, Ephesians 5–6, and Romans 6 teach us about the biblical concept of vocation and how God uses it?

LUTHER ON VOCATION

6. What is the primary emphasis in Luther's understanding of vocation?

7. How does a Calvinist and Puritan understanding of vocation depart from the original emphasis of vocation?
8. Quoting Luther, Veith and Sutton say that we are “masks of God” in our callings. What does this mean? Why does God choose to work in this way?

THE CHRISTIAN'S MULTIPLE VOCATIONS

9. List Luther's four estates.
10. How is the estate of the Church intimately connected to the idea of vocation?
11. What is the difference between vocation and a station or office?
12. What does the estate of the household consist of?
13. What does the estate of the state consist of?
14. How does the distinction between the estate of the Church and the estate of the state help to straighten out the Christian's role in political matters?
15. What is “the common order of Christian love”?
16. In Luther's time, what was the attitude behind monasticism? How does the doctrine of vocation challenge monasticism?
17. How do what happens in the church and the Christian's vocation relate to one another?
18. How does the doctrine of vocation relate to the doctrine of justification? Who benefits from the Christian's good works?
19. How does the doctrine of vocation challenge a self-centered and materialistic attitude in economic endeavors?

20. In what way does vocation transform the idea of authority? What is the purpose of offices of authority? What should be the motivation of those holding such positions?
21. How does vocation relate to moral issues such as the Christian's place in an army or sex outside of marriage?
22. What is the priesthood of all believers? How does it relate to the Christian's vocation and Jesus' call for Christians to bear their crosses?

VOCATION AND TRANSFIGURATION

23. Veith and Sutton say that vocation makes that which is ordinary extraordinary. How does the doctrine of vocation do this?

Conclusion: Luther understands the Christian's life and work as one that God uses to provide for His people. To help the Christian better understand his or her vocation in life, Luther divided daily life up into three formal estates—the Church, the household, and the state—and an informal realm he referred to as “the common order of Christian love.” In each estate, God uses the vocations and orders of individuals to take care of His creation.



CHAPTER 7

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

Prayer: O God, by whose command the order of all time runs its course, look graciously on us Your servants, whom You have been pleased to call to serve in this world, that our service may be pleasing to You; mercifully keep us in Your name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Introduction: Within an increasingly secularized society, Christians might wonder how they are to relate to the world around them. Some feel as though it would be best to withdraw from the world, and others believe that it is the Christian's responsibility to listen to the changing culture and adjust his or her beliefs accordingly. Veith and Sutton believe that this confusion over the relationship of the Christian to his or her culture can be untangled by Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms.

CHRIST AND CULTURE

1. How does the illustration of plate tectonics accurately capture the relationship between the church and culture? What are examples of where the church is currently colliding with culture?
2. What are the two kingdoms of God?
3. What do Veith and Sutton list as four ways in which the doctrine of the two kingdoms can be misconstrued?

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE DOCTRINE OF THE TWO KINGDOMS

4. St. Augustine makes the distinction between two cities. What are these cities? What things are being distinguished through this image?
5. In what ways does Luther's doctrine of two kingdoms differ from St. Augustine's two cities?

6. What is the temporal kingdom? What is the primary focus in this kingdom?
7. What are separatism, dualism, quietism, and liberalism? How do they each conflict with the doctrine of the two kingdoms?
8. Why is there conflict between God's will and evil in the two kingdoms if God is the Lord of both?
9. What are the three ways that God presides over His temporal kingdom?

THE TEMPORAL KINGDOM AND THE LAW

10. Why does the Law properly belong to the temporal kingdom and not God's spiritual kingdom?
11. What are the three uses of the Law? How do they function within God's temporal kingdom? Which is most important in this kingdom?

THE TEMPORAL KINGDOM AND THE CREATION

12. How are the laws of nature an expression of God's lordship over the temporal kingdom?
13. In what ways does the heavenly kingdom relate to the temporal kingdom, primarily God's involvement in human history?
14. How does the concept of the temporal kingdom challenge evolutionism and the belief that people construct reality?

THE TEMPORAL KINGDOM AND VOCATION

15. How does God use our vocations to exercise His lordship in the temporal kingdom?
16. How might we, as Christians, understand our present existence as both saints and sinners in light of the distinction between God's temporal and spiritual kingdoms?

HIDDENNESS AS A MODE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

17. What does it mean that God is hidden in the world?

18. What is the difference between the spiritual and the physical church? In which kingdom does the church exist?

19. How does the spiritual kingdom continually feed into the temporal kingdom and vice versa?

THE MASKS OF GOD

20. How does God work through masks in the temporal kingdom to build up His spiritual kingdom?

Conclusion: God is Lord over both the temporal kingdom and the spiritual kingdom. It is within these two kingdoms that Christians find themselves: in the church, where we receive forgiveness of sins, and in the world, where we are called to serve our neighbor. For this reason, Christians are not called to withdraw from the world but to engage it, for God is Lord of both kingdoms.



CHAPTER 8

SANCTIFICATION AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Prayer: Holy Lord, You have given us Your Spirit. Sanctify and keep us in the one true faith by the same that our lives may ever be conformed to that of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Introduction: Life presents both opportunities and setbacks. This is also true of the Christian life. Although the Christian is instantly justified by faith in Jesus Christ, he or she is still going through a process of being made holy—something Christians have traditionally called sanctification. This sanctification is an act of God that occurs as Christians live out their lives in the world.

THE SLOW AND FAST MOVEMENT

1. Veith and Sutton say that our culture is used to having everything instantly. In response to this desire for everything “right now,” a desire to slow down and enjoy things has resulted in the Slow Movement. How do Veith and Sutton compare justification and sanctification to fast and slow movement?

FREEDOM

2. How do the doctrines of justification, vocation, and the two kingdoms free the Christian to live in the world?
3. What does Luther mean when he says that the Christian’s will is bound?
4. What are examples of ways that people might be enslaved to sin today?
5. How is one set free from sin?

6. How do good works relate to the Christian's justification?
7. What does sanctification mean? Who is the primary worker in this process? Does man have any part to do in sanctification?
8. What are means by which the Holy Spirit works sanctification?
9. The Reformed believe that once a person is saved, he or she will never fall away from the faith. Lutherans disagree with this belief, recognizing that Christians can fall away from the faith if not careful. What behavior is destructive to one's faith?

FREEDOM AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

10. What is the Christian freed from?
11. How is the Christian a lord of all while at the same time a servant of all?

SANCTIFICATION IN VOCATION

12. Can God still work through someone who does not cooperate with Him in his or her vocation?
13. What does it mean to mortify one's flesh?
14. How is sanctification related to an individual's mortification of his or her flesh in service of his or her neighbor?
15. A person's vocation is not something that he or she will always find self-fulfilling. What are some of examples of when this might be the case?
16. Robert Benne says that every vocation has its own temptations. What are some of your vocations? What might be their corollary temptations? How do temptations in a vocation relate to the mortification of one's flesh?

17. Veith and Sutton say that some vocations can change throughout an individual's life, such as a vocation associated with a specific job. As the job changes, so might the specific calling related to it. What are examples of vocations that cannot be abandoned? Why are these vocations indispensable?

Conclusion: God is the primary worker in the sanctification of the Christian. Christians, however, do play an active role in this process as they live a life in servitude of others, at times denying the desires of their flesh and their own self-interests. Luther shows us that Christians do not become holy by withdrawing from the world but by living in the vocations that God has given to each person.



CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

***Prayer:** Heavenly Father, You have entrusted Your Word and Sacraments to Your church. Help us to ever faithfully receive Your gifts and share them with those around us that we may be found faithful at the end of the age; all this we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

Introduction: There are many churches that claim to be Lutheran today, but not all of them have remained faithful to their call to preach the Word of God purely. How have Lutherans historically remained faithful to the message of the Gospel? What does a church that has done so look like?

LUTHERAN CHURCHES

1. What do Veith and Sutton identify as the living, beating heart of Lutheran spirituality? Based on what you've read so far, why do these things play such a major role in Lutheranism?
2. Most Lutherans in Europe have given in to liberalism. What are ways that Lutheranism in Europe has given in to the secular culture?
3. What documents do Lutherans subscribe to? Why is this?
4. Is Luther the absolute authority in the Lutheran tradition? Why or why not?

THE DIVINE SERVICE

5. What is the Divine Service? Why is it called this?
6. In what ways do the content and structure of the Divine Service center around the fact that in it God is serving man?

7. In what ways do the Divine Service and Lutheranism in general transcend time?

Conclusion: Lutheran Christians are called to be faithful proclaimers of the Gospel in an ever-changing world. This call is answered both in the center of the Lutheran life—Word and Sacrament—and in worship services that are centered around the Gospel. In both word and deed, Lutheran Christianity functions as a herald, proclaiming the redemptive work of God in a world searching for security, identity, and meaning.