

Confessional Lutheran Worldview Assumptions¹

1. *Is there anything or anyone beyond this apparently unending universe?* There is one being who transcends this universe of time and space – the eternal and personal Triune God. He is the Ultimate Reality.
2. *What is the relationship between this universe and the God that transcends it?* One is the Creator and the other is the created. One is uncreated (eternal) and the other is finite. The Triune God created the universe and everything in it in six normal days and still sustains it by his all-powerful Word.
3. *Does this God communicate with us, and if so how? What does this tell us about knowing things?* The transcendent God communicates with man naturally (through the conscience, observing creation, and the use of reason) and supernaturally (the special revelation of Scriptures). Real truth, real right and wrong, and real knowledge about God and the world are discoverable and knowable because God has chosen to make them discoverable and knowable.
4. *Is there anything in this universe besides the natural; anything beyond what we can sense with our natural senses?* Within the universe of time and space there exists both the natural and spiritual, the visible and invisible; unseen beings really exist and miracles that have no natural explanations really can occur and have occurred; there is an unseen world beyond the natural senses.
5. *Are there truths that never change and are always true for all people of all time?* Absolute truths, morality, beauty, and goodness exist and transcend the box, having their source in the transcendent Triune God.
6. *Are there also therefore ideas, beliefs, and behaviors that are truly and always evil or false?* All that is contrary to God, his truths, and his goodness are truly false, evil, or sinful; these are realities in this world even when people do not acknowledge them as such.
7. *Are human beings in any sense truly unique and set above the rest of creation, especially other living things?* Man, as the pinnacle of God's creative work, was made in his image and is unique, set apart from all else. Man is connected to all other creatures in that he, like them, was created. But, unlike other creatures, he also has an upward connection with God in that he alone was created in God's image. God has made human beings either male or female. Therefore, it is contrary to his will for a male to live and identify as a woman, and for a female to live and identify as a man (Deut. 22:5). God's has made them male and female in order that they might enter into the sacred institution of marriage and beget and raise godly children.
8. *Do people act as they were designed to act? How is man's observable selfishness and badness explained? Why is he sometimes plagued with feelings of guilt?* Man chose to reject God as God in the historical event of the Fall, resulting in total, sinful depravity or corruption, and who, ever since, cannot help but sin against God and other people.
9. *What about death and a suffering world? Are they natural?* Temporal and eternal death, along with a corrupted world, are a result of the Fall, serving as God's punishment for the evil which man chose.

¹ This is not an in-depth doctrinal statement. These assumptions may be used as a springboard to delve more deeply into each assumption and the Scriptures that support them, and then used to ask how other worldviews answer these same questions.

10. *And yet people do some really amazing and good things. How is this explained?* Man in his fallen state retains the ability to perform *outward* righteous acts that benefit himself and his neighbor, but lacks any capacity to perform true *inner* righteousness before God that would make him acceptable before God.
11. *How valuable are the human gifts of senses, reason, and conscience?* Human senses, reason, and conscience are useful in this life, though limited, enabling man to come to know many facts and truths. But because of the Fall these gifts are corrupted and therefore will also be misused to oppose God and his truths and to sin against his neighbor.
12. *What is the relationship between God's special revelation (the Bible) and man's use of his reason, senses, and feelings? Are they equally useful? Is one more important than the others?* The Scriptures are divinely inspired and therefore "without error in everything they teach, including matters of geography, science, and history, and they are the only infallible rule and norm of Christian doctrine and practice."² Therefore the truths of Scriptures trump all "truths" and "facts" that man finds within himself or discovers with his reason and senses when they are truly contrary to the Scriptures. Holy Scriptures are the ultimate standard against which all other worldviews, religions, and truth claims are to be measured and judged. The Scriptures also communicate clearly so that man may know with certainty their meaning and message.
13. *What is the solution for man's desperate situation – his depravity and certain death?* The only solution for man's sinfulness and God's punishment of eternal death is Justification (total and free forgiveness) by faith alone in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, true God and true man, and his real substitutionary work of atonement for all sin for all men accomplished in time and space on the cross. He truly and historically became flesh, lived, suffered, died, rose bodily from the dead, and ascended to his Father's right hand exactly as the Scriptures explain. This faith in Jesus that saves is worked and preserved within man solely by the Sanctification of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel in Word and Sacraments. It is this Justification by faith that is the heart and center of Christianity.
14. *What does this Christian life consist of? How ought the Christian to live in this life?* The Holy Spirit guides the Christian here and now to confess his sins throughout his life, gather with other Christians to receive God's grace in Word and Sacrament, forsake sin, bear his crosses, pray and give thanks, confess the truth of Christianity to an unbelieving world, reject what is false, enter into and be faithful in marriage, beget and raise children, obey the governing authorities, love and help his neighbor through his various vocations guided by God's moral law, make use of and enjoy the many temporal gifts and blessings of God, and be faithful to Christ and his Word unto death, all the while looking forward to the sure hope of eternal life.
15. *Can this world in any real, meaningful sense become better?* Because of the fall, the present world is and will remain corrupted, affecting not only man but all of creation, resulting in death, suffering, disease, injuries, aging, war, rebellion, holocausts, tyranny, terrorism, perversion, family breakdown, injustice, slavery, false religions and teachers, famines, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, etc. Even though individuals and whole societies are often spared some of these for a time, even though there are societal pockets that make some strides in some civil rights, and even though

² *We Believe Teach and Confess*, ELS Doctrine Committee (Mankato, MN: Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1993), 3.

knowledge and technology may increase, the world in general will not improve (to which history clearly testifies); if anything, it will get worse.

16. *Is there anything or institution that been set up to help man through this life?* God, and not man, has established and defined three estates for the benefit of man in this fallen world: the Church, the State (see 17), and Marriage/Family (see 7, 14, and 17), each with its distinct sphere of influence and responsibility. Individuals and societies can expect to be blessed when these divine institutions are valued and honored.
17. *How is the Christian worldview reflected in various institutions and disciplines (such as religion/theology, anthropology, ethics, philosophy, science, history, art, music, sociology, politics, government, church, etc.)?*

Religion/Theology: Since the ultimate and eternal being of the Christian worldview is the one true God, Christianity is essentially theology (the study of God) as revealed in His Word (Special Revelation).

Anthropology: (see 7-16 above)

Ethics: The Christian worldview acknowledges that there are real and transcendent morals that apply to all people of all time and that these have their source in the one, true God. They are absolute, not relative; this does not mean, however, that there will not be challenges in discerning which moral absolute applies when and how. They are written on the heart of man and each person's conscience testifies to them (Rom. 2:14-15), though since the Fall into sin man's natural understanding of the moral law is flawed. The only clear and perfect description of this God-given ethic is found in the Bible, summarized by the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20) and even more simply by the Two Great Commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul; and love your neighbor as yourself." The specific moral laws (such as the Ten Commandments and other more detailed descriptions in both the Old and New Testaments) are in harmony with the Two Great Commandments and the former help explain the latter. The moral law of God serves three purposes. First, to curb the sinful nature of man so that society remains civil. Second, to serve as mirror so man understands he is sinful and cannot save himself. Third, to guide the Christian in a life that is pleasing to God on a daily basis.

Science: The Christian worldview acknowledges the essential role of reason and observation in the study of science. But the Christian worldview insists on filtering reason and observation through Special Revelation since human reason is imperfect, corrupted and tempted by false worldviews such as Darwinism or evolution. For example, Special Revelation reveals a universe that was created out of nothing, not out of pre-existing matter; was created thousands, not billions, of years ago; was created by God's powerful Word with thoughtful design, not blind, undirected chance; that man was created and is unique, not evolved from some lower species; that the supernatural and miraculous exist; etc. Empirical science (where conclusions are reached based on repeatable observations) is complementary to the Christian worldview. When correctly used empirical science does not contradict but actually supports many aspects of the literal interpretation of Genesis, including the existence of a Creator/Designer, the uniqueness of each species, a worldwide flood, a young earth, and more. There is a growing number of scientists who are convinced that scientific knowledge and observations of life and the universe oppose evolution, not Creation.

Philosophy: Whereas different philosophies can grasp bits and pieces of wisdom and truth through Natural Knowledge, complete and lasting wisdom and truth can only be found in and explained by Special Revelation. Apart from Christ, philosophies will end up to be hollow and deceptive (Col. 2:8).

History: History has a beginning (Creation) and an end (the Second Coming of Christ); that is, it is linear; it is, therefore, not meaningless. The central event of all history is the life of Christ. History is directed and planned by God. Nothing in history happens without God's foreknowledge and will. Historical facts can be known through both Natural Knowledge and Special Revelation. The Christian worldview also tells us that history includes miraculous and supernatural events that cannot be explained by natural causes. The learning of history is one of the greatest endeavors that human

creatures can undertake since history teaches invaluable lessons about the authority, wisdom, justice, and mercy of God, the magnificence and corruption of his creation, the uniqueness of man, the reality of his fall into sin, and his need for grace.

Art and Music: These gifts exist because man was made in the image of God; among God's creatures, art and music are unique to man. Though art and music may be neutral in their content and message, the highest form of art and music is that which expresses a transcendent beauty, goodness, nobility, or some other characteristic of God (Phil 4:8) or some truth or event of the Scriptures. There is art and music created by man that can be called truly good, and art and music that can be called truly bad or ugly, otherwise God's declaration "it is good" regarding His creation has no meaning. The Christian worldview also recognizes that a distinction can be made between an individual's talent or skill and the content or message of his art and music, so we can say a man may have poor or undeveloped talent but is pursuing good art, or he may have great talent and is pursuing bad art. It is similar to saying that Hitler as a leader may have been very gifted but also very evil, or President so-and-so was very inept but very moral.

Sociology and Politics: The origin, development, behavior, and structure of human societies and individuals are to be understood from the perspective of the divinely instituted estates of **Marriage**, **Government**, and the **Church**. **Marriage** is the most basic and highly valuable earthly unit of society from which all other natural relationships flow, including parent, son or daughter, grandparent, teacher, doctor, farmer, lawyer, legislator, etc. Marriage is defined by God as a life-long union between a male and female that God Himself joins together as "one flesh." For this reason, God hates divorce as well as same-sex "marriages." The Marriage estate exists so that man would not be alone (marriage is the most unique complementary human relationship which includes differing roles which God defined as good from the beginning; Gen. 2:18), for the purpose of begetting and raising children (to benefit them in both the spiritual and civic realm; Gen 1:28), and, since the Fall, to help curb sinful sexual desires (1 Cor. 7:9). Within marriage, man is to be the loving leader and the woman is to respect his headship (Eph. 5:22ff.). These roles have been ignored, distorted and abused since the Fall but when correctly understood and fulfilled bring about great joy and comfort within the marriage.

Government "is derived and developed out of the authority of parents"³ and is also divinely instituted. Therefore, man is to submit to the governing authorities, even when governments are corrupt, unless they command him to do something contrary to the will of God (Rom. 13:1ff; Acts 4:19). Because individual governments are established by God, the Christian worldview recognizes and upholds the concept of national sovereignty and rejects attempts to undermine it, including utopian dreams and pursuits of a one-world government or a one-world community (sometimes referred to as globalism) in which countries would have to forfeit all or part of their national sovereignty. Government exists for the purpose "of punishing evildoers and protecting the innocent, and of promoting civil order among its people."⁴ Good government, then, is that which limits itself to this purpose and does not infringe upon responsibilities that belong to either parents or the Church or oppose them (such as taking over parental responsibilities, teaching false worldviews, or serving as priest, cleric, or evangelist for any religion, including Christianity). In order for government to carry out its responsibility it should be well grounded in Natural Knowledge which will help direct it in understanding right from wrong, justice, etc. Good citizenship where citizens play a role in government requires appointing people to office and establishing laws that recognize the purpose and limitations of government. Participation in the political process, including participation by Christians, can be very beneficial in helping establish good government (for example, when they support those who understand basic moral truths and the limitations of government, when they run for office, when they promote laws that would defend innocent life and protect the institution of Marriage, when they speak out against false worldviews taught in government schools, when they help their neighbor in time of need so the government will not be distracted from its purpose, etc.). Citizens, including Christians, may serve in the military and fight in just wars. The Christian

³ Martin Luther, Large Catechism, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, edited by Robert Kolb & Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), p. 405.

⁴ *We Believe Teach and Confess*, p. 12.

worldview also recognizes that government is a temporary institution that is needed to maintain good order but, in this sinful world, will never be able to produce anything close to an ideal or utopian society. Governments and their leaders stand in the place of God when they carry out the purpose of government, but they are not God.

The **Church** on earth is God's institution of true believers in Christ which has been given the task of administering the Gospel to extend and preserve the Church (Matt. 28:18-20). The Church is the Bride of Christ and is submissive to Him (Eph. 5:23-24) who reveals His will in the Scriptures. The Church can have a beneficial effect on culture and even on Government (see above); Christ has called believers "the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). The Church's purpose is not political, but in carrying out its spiritual responsibilities – warning against false teachings and worldviews, loving one's neighbor (for example, defending the unborn or upholding God's definition of Marriage), and spreading the Gospel – the Church may unintentionally find itself involved in matters that have become political. This is not a violation of the so-called separation of Church and State principle; rather it is a failure of the Government to fulfill its responsibility to protect the innocent (the unborn), to guard the most important and basic unit of civilized society (Marriage), and to limit itself to temporal affairs so that it does not hinder the Church in her spread of the Gospel. When the Government fails in these ways, it may resort to criticizing, limiting, or persecuting the Church for simply fulfilling her responsibilities. On the other hand, the Church is not to exercise civil authority and when it does so it is going beyond its sphere (Luke 12:13-14).

The Christian worldview recognizes there are many religions and churches in our culture that are not a part of the true Christian Church. They, too, can benefit a culture, or they may harm culture. Their beliefs, as wrong and damning as they may be, are matters of conscience and their members should never be forced by either the Christian Church or the Government to believe otherwise. However, the Government has the authority to hinder a religion, even if it is a Christian congregation, when the religion's actions interfere with a civil society.⁵ The Church, on the other hand, has the tools of Law and Gospel (which alone converts unbelievers) and is commanded to love (Rom. 1:16; 3:20ff; John 13:34-35). Loving others does not preclude the Church from judging and condemning false religions, teachings, and lifestyles; in fact, it is commanded and in doing so rightly is actually an act of Christian love. So whereas the Church loves everyone, it does not tolerate (in the sense of respect or approve) that which is false. The Church must not leave the impression that all teachings are equally valid (2 Cor. 10:5).

18. *Will this world just go on and on and on? Is there any meaning or end to it?* The history of the world is not meaningless or futile. It has a beginning (Creation) and an end (the Second Coming of Christ) at which point the dead will be physically resurrected, all will be judged, the present universe will come to an end, and each person will enter eternity in either hell or the perfect and amazing heaven that Christ himself has prepared. The central event of all history is the life of Christ. All of history is directed and planned by God with Christ the crucified in mind.

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⁵ A good example would be immigration policies that seek to prevent radical or fundamentalist Muslims from entering this country or becoming naturalized citizens. The concern is not only one of potential terrorism, but of a religion that opposes democracy, fundamental freedoms (especially of religion and for women), and believes that all countries should be ruled by *sharia* – strict and radical Islamic law. The presence of such a religion in our country would be inviting the denigration of our Constitution and Bill of Rights. Such fundamentalist Muslims could not sincerely take the required oath of allegiance to our Constitution.