

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SPECIAL ISSUE: EIGHT IDEAS YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

GENERAL QUESTIONS

- a. How has the West preserved and developed “Truth, beauty, and Goodness.” Why these three?
- b. Can tradition be a good thing?
- c. Does studying the West help or hinder our study of other cultures?
- d. Would we be able to study the West without Christianity?

1

TRANSCENDENT: THE NOT SO OBVIOUS IDEA ABOUT GOD

- a. Why was the Jewish and Christian way of seeing the world completely alien to Greek and Roman pagans?
- b. In the first century, the Romans accused Christians of being atheists because they did not believe in Roman Gods. Could the Christian’s different view of God have had a role in this?
- c. What basic assumptions about the world do pagans and atheists share? How might studying the pagans help us understand atheists?

2

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD: A REVOLUTIONARY IDEA, LOST

- a. How did Plato’s cave analogy clear the way for the Christian idea of transcendence?
- b. How might a Christian add to or change Plato’s idea?
- c. What does Plato’s cave analogy say about the concepts of truth, goodness, and beauty?
- d. How are absolute moral standards similar to mathematical concepts? How are numbers like words? What does that say about the importance of being able to use words well?

3

THE CRUX: THE AXIS AROUND WHICH ALL OTHER IDEAS REVOLVE

- a. Historically, “Athens” has represented Greek philosophers and human reason and “Jerusalem” has represented faith and the Jews. What did Athens and Jerusalem get wrong or right?
- b. How does the Gospel bridge Athens and Jerusalem? What made the Christians different

from either Jews or Greeks?

- c. How would you respond to the age-old question, “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”
- d. How might studying “Athens” and Christian history help guard against “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism”?

4

KINGS WHO ARE SUBJECTS: AND SUBJECTS WHO ARE KINGS

- a. What is the difference between the old order dictators, and the later Kings of England?
- b. St. Augustine said that rulers were not gods themselves, but rather operated under God, like everyone else. How do you think this idea shaped America’s founding?

5

THE FORMATION OF THE FIRST “UNIVERSITY”: MAKING IT ALL MAKE SENSE

- a. What does “All truth is one” mean?
- b. Why might the fact that God can be seen in his creation be an argument against isolating subjects? Does the author imply that moving toward unity in subjects imply less organization and order?
- c. What does it mean to study theology, according to the author?

6

A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS: LUTHER’S TRANSFORMATION OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

- a. What was the old idea revived in 1517? What was Luther’s goal? Why did this lead to the growth of Christian schools? What was the goal behind schools like Harvard and Yale?
- b. How do schools help solve the problem Luther saw? What does this say about the purpose of school?

7

POWERFUL AND DANGEROUS

- a. How did the founding father’s belief that men are not angels lead to modern prosperity?
- b. If this idea is lost, what is the danger? How would a classical education help?

8

FROM BACH TO THANKFULNESS: A CLARION CALL

- a. How might a classical education foster thankfulness?
- b. What was the essential difference between the way most people today think about music and the way Bach did?
- c. Does Bach’s way of thinking about music lead us to be thankful?