

**MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY**

**M.A. Questions**

**SCRIPTURE AREA** (*Updated 20-Mar-2008*)

**Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures**

1. Write a detailed essay on the critical approaches used in the study of the Hebrew Bible. Include a discussion of source criticism, form criticism, comparative ancient near eastern texts, and one additional method of your choice. Use texts from the book of Genesis and/or Samuel as examples.

*OR*

Write a paragraph (ca. 100 words) on each of the following. Include appropriate definitions, details, and references to the scholarly debates in each case.

- a) Source criticism.
  - b) How the Bible came to be.
  - c) The Patriarchal period.
  - d) The Exodus.
  - e) The Canaanites.
2. Compare and contrast the methods and goals of historical-critical research and of narrative-critical studies in the field of Hebrew Bible/OT research. Be prepared to give specific examples.
  3. Write an essay on the Deuteronomistic history. Include an identification of its content, literary sources, philosophy of history, and religious themes. In addition, comment on some of the historical issues raised by this material. Use biblical citations where appropriate.

*OR*

Write a paragraph (ca. 100 words) on each of the following. Include appropriate definitions, details, and references to the scholarly debate for each within the context of the Deuteronomistic history.

- a) The judges.
  - b) David.
  - c) The split of the kingdoms.
  - d) Hezekiah.
  - e) The last years of Judah.
4. Consider the following questions regarding the book of Isaiah: How is the book of Isaiah arranged? What are the different parts of the book? What have been some of the major developments in the study of this book in the past century? How should one assess the claims that modern scholarship has made about the book of Isaiah?

*OR*

Write a paragraph (ca. 100 words) on each of the following topics associated with prophecy:

- a) Labels, roles, and the social location of the prophet.
- b) Assyrian challenges in the eighth century BCE.
- c) Babylonian challenges in the sixth century BCE.
- d) Jeremiah.
- e) Eschatology.

5. Detail the content and scholarly concerns of five of the following topics from John Collins's Introduction to the Hebrew Bible.
- The Primeval History
  - The Patriarchs
  - The Exodus from Egypt
  - First and Second Samuel
  - The Babylonian Era: Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Lamentations
  - The Hebrew Short Story: Ruth, Jonah, Esther, Tobit, Judith

6. Discuss the problems inherent in attempting to construct a theology of the Hebrew Bible. In your discussion, engage the work of several Hebrew Bible scholars whose works are included in the M.A. bibliography.

*OR*

Write a paragraph (ca. 100 words) on each of the following:

- The "Biblical Theology" movement.
  - The "Center" of the Old Testament.
  - The Salvation-Historical model.
  - The Traditio-Historical model.
  - The Canonical approach.
7. William Dever's article, "Artifacts, Ecofacts, and Textual Facts" (see Bibliography), discusses some of the problems associated with biblical archeology. What are these problems? In your answer, include some of the names and stances of major practitioners of "Biblical Archeology." Why is Dever dissatisfied with this term? Why does he prefer "Syro-Palestinian Archeology"? What does Dever see as the proper relationship between biblical studies and archeology?

*OR*

Write a paragraph (ca. 100 words) on each of the following:

- The Bible as artifact.
  - The Albright School.
  - Biblical archeology.
  - The Period of the Settlement.
  - Dever's idea of the proper relationship between archeology and biblical studies.
8. Discuss the political and social (religious) realities surrounding the Antiochene crisis and the Maccabean Revolt making special reference to key texts. How and in what ways did these realities and the Maccabean Revolt itself help to shape late Second Temple Judaism (167BCE-70CE)?

*OR*

Write a paragraph (ca. 100 words) on each of the following topics associated with apocalyptic literature:

- Books of Enoch
- Apocalyptic eschatology
- Historical apocalypses
- The Story of the Watchers and the Giants
- Pre-Christian Son of Man traditions

## New Testament

1. Why is it important to study the Hellenistic era, not merely as the *background* but as the *context* of the NT writings? Give some specific examples, from various parts of the NT (gospels, Acts, epistles, Revelation), that show the benefit of such study for NT exegesis.

OR

Write a paragraph (ca. 100 words) on each of the following:

- a) Philo of Alexandria.
  - b) Rabbinic Judaism.
  - c) Stoicism/Cynicism.
  - d) The politics of Palestine from 323 BCE to 135 CE.
  - e) The Mystery Religions.
2. Assess the role of the OT in the formation of early Christian tradition, and with reference to one or more NT passages show some ways in which NT writers used the OT.

OR

Write a paragraph (ca. 100 words) on the use of the OT in each of the following:

- a) Matthew.
  - b) Luke-Acts.
  - c) Romans.
  - d) Hebrews.
  - e) Revelation.
3. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are commonly grouped together under the title “Synoptic gospels,” while John is placed in a separate category. Why is this? On what basis is the gospels’ *chronological* relationship typically determined, and why is John not included in standard diagrams of the gospels’ literary connections?

OR

Write a paragraph (ca. 100 words) on each of the following:

- a) The significance of the fall of Jerusalem (70 CE) for gospel studies.
  - b) The difference between the “Two-Source Hypothesis” and the “Griesbach Hypothesis.”
  - c) “Q”: What is the best evidence *for* and *against* its existence?
  - d) How is the gospel of John both *like* and *unlike* the Synoptic gospels?
  - e) If Mark is the earliest NT gospel, how can we determine how Mark used his sources?
4. Define *form criticism*. Give examples of some *forms* (e.g., the miracle story), and for each identify its defining characteristics and some examples of its occurrence. What are the advantages and disadvantages of form criticism?

OR

Write one paragraph (ca. 100 words) on each of the following:

- a) What is the chief goal of form criticism?
- b) Give the form of the typical NT “miracle story.”
- c) Give the form of the typical NT “apophthegm” (sometimes called “narrative,” or “paradigm,” or “chreia”).
- d) How, typically, did the NT evangelists edit their sources?
- e) What help can form criticism offer the student of the life of Jesus?

5. Sketch the hermeneutical meaning of John 1:1-18 (the Prologue) for a believing Christian today, in light of Ignace de la Poterie's article on the M.A. reading list (*Communio*).

OR

Write one paragraph on each of the following:

- In John 1:1, what does the author mean by "word"?
  - "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). How does this verse both reflect and differ from contemporary Jewish theology of "the Word"?
  - Suggest two or three ways in which the Johannine Prologue gives some clues as to what follows in the rest of the gospel.
  - How do you respond to the charge that the Johannine Prologue is "gnostic"?
  - Comment on John 1:17: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."
6. Briefly summarize Raymond E. Brown's reconstruction of the history of the Johannine community, and with specific examples (texts, theological tendencies) suggest some ways in which this reconstruction affects the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel.

OR

Write one paragraph (ca. 100 words) on each of the following:

- "Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep gate a pool, in Hebrew called Bethzatha, which has five porticos" (John 5:2). Can we therefore conclude that John's gospel was written before the destruction of the temple?
  - List some features of "the Johannine community," its composition and its outlook.
  - What is the likely origin of the long discourses of Jesus in John's gospel?
  - How does John's theology of the "Spirit" (or "Paraclete") reflect the life of his community?
  - What are some similarities and differences between the theology of the Johannine *gospel* and the theology of the Johannine *epistles*?
7. Why did Paul write Romans? Give several of the reasons that have been proposed, and, with supporting evidence from the letter itself, outline your own position.

OR

Write one paragraph (ca. 100 words) on each of the following:

- Comment on Rom 1:9-15 and 15:28-29.
  - Rom 1:16-17 is often called the epistle's "thesis." Do you agree?
  - What is the role of Abraham in Romans 4?
  - Comment on Rom 5:12-14.
  - In Romans 12-15, what evidence suggests that Paul is addressing both Jews and gentiles?
8. Under what circumstances, and to attain what goals, was the NT "canon" created? Can any of the same influences be seen already within the NT? Be sure to mention specific writings, people, and dates.

OR

Write one paragraph (ca. 100 words) on each of the following:

- Marcion.
- Irenaeus.
- Jamnia (Yavne).
- The Muratorian Canon.
- The "festal letter" of Athanasius.

9. How would you go about writing a theology of the NT? What are the chief goals of such a project? How can it best take into account the theological diversity of the NT documents?

OR

Write one paragraph (ca. 100 words) on each of the following:

- OT passages that are re-contextualized or reinterpreted by NT writers.
- A theological topic on which two NT authors disagree, or at least appear to disagree.
- In what basic theological claims is there a unity in NT theology?
- How does one responsibly exercise the principle that “scripture interprets scripture”?
- What is the relationship between NT teaching and later, ecclesiastical tradition? Give several possible views.

## HISTORICAL AREA (Updated 23-Oct-2013)

### Section One: Origins to Late Medieval

- Discuss the role of creeds in the early church and their significance for the development of doctrine.
- Trace the history of the Trinitarian discussion from Origen up to and including the Council of Constantinople (381). What were the issues, the various schools of thought, the biblical foundations for the different positions, the intellectual and social factors that led to the Nicaean and Constantinopolitan decisions, and the meaning of those two decisions?

OR

Answer *three* of the following short-answer questions (two to three paragraphs, up to one page).

- Against whom was the Council of Nicaea convoked? What issues did the Creed of Nicaea address? What remained for the Council of Constantinople (381) to address?
  - Describe a key moment in the development of Christology in the early church.
  - Describe the rise of Christianity in one specific geographical area (e.g., Syria, Rome, North Africa, Alexandria.)
  - How does exegesis figure in parting of the ways between Christianity and Judaism?
  - Describe one important example of Christian appropriation of a pagan philosophical idea.
- Some have said that the icon provides the key to Eastern Christian theology, Christology, and spirituality. How does it sum up the Christological debate from Chalcedon to Nicaea II? In forming your reply, bear in mind particularly the Eastern understanding of deification (*theosis*).
  - Write an essay on a Byzantine theologian from Dionysius to Palamas.

OR

Answer *three* of the following short-answer questions (two to three paragraphs, up to one page).

- The idea of Christendom begins properly with the Emperor Constantine. Discuss.
- Pick out and trace briefly one significant outcome of the rise of monasticism.
- Describe what you understand as the central question at issue in the iconoclast controversy.
- Why did the Christological definition of the Council of Chalcedon create difficulties?
- Was 1054 really the true date of the schism between the Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Catholic) Church? Discuss.

5. Define and contrast the "monastic" and the "scholastic" ways of Christian life and thought.

OR

Answer *three* of the following short-answer questions.

- Who is Anselm of Canterbury, and what did he contribute to the history of theology (give titles of works, name key concepts; answer in one paragraph)?
  - When was the first European University founded (give century at least), where, and by whom (answer in a sentence or two)?
  - Contrast the nominalist and the realist positions on universals in the twelfth century, naming in your answer key texts and/or thinkers (answer in one paragraph).
  - Identify an outstanding Dominican theologian of the 13th century, give titles of at least two of his works, and briefly comment on his teaching career (e.g., what texts did he lecture on, where did he teach, etc.; answer in one paragraph).
  - Identify and briefly discuss two key doctrines in medieval "Augustinian" thought.
6. There have been several explanations offered of Christ's saving work: describe and compare two authors from the patristic and medieval periods, identifying the authors and their historical settings.
7. Compare and contrast Thomas Aquinas's and Bonaventure's understanding of philosophy in general and the role of philosophy in Christian theology in particular.

### **Section Two: Late Medieval to Modern**

1. Write an essay on the Lutheran and Tridentine views on justification by faith.

OR

Answer *three* of the following short-answer questions.

- Who is William of Occam/Gabriel Biel [choose one], and why is he important to Martin Luther (one paragraph)?
  - Explain *sola fide, sola Scriptura, sola gratia* so as to show what the slogans intended to refute (one page maximum).
  - Briefly explain the doctrine of total depravity and its place in reformation theology (one page maximum).
  - Contrast the Tridentine doctrine of justification with that of the mature Martin Luther (one paragraph).
  - Choose *one* sacrament that was the subject of controversy in the 16th century; describe two opposing views on the issue, naming key thinkers and texts (one paragraph).
2. What is the problem of Scripture and Tradition? Discuss the historical background to the Reformation problem of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition.

OR

Answer *three* of the following short-answer questions (two to three paragraphs, up to one page).

- What does modern scholarship mean by the "coinherence of Scripture and Tradition" in the early church?
  - When did the relation between Scripture and Tradition become an issue (Augustine, Scholasticism, Occam)?
  - Discuss the Humanists' (e.g., Erasmus) contribution to the problem of interpreting Scripture in relation to Tradition.
  - How did Protestant Reformers address Scripture and Tradition?
  - What was at stake at Trent's Session "On the Canonical Scriptures"?
3. How did the age of confessionalism (Protestant and Catholic orthodoxy) give rise to the age of Pietism and Enlightenment rationalism?

4. What were the primary issues regarding revelation during the Enlightenment? What were the principal challenges to the understanding of the Bible?

*OR*

Answer *three* of the following short-answer questions (not more than a page each):

- a) During the Enlightenment a fear of religious persecution tended to put the very idea of revelation in question. Yes or no? Give brief historical reasons for your answer.
  - b) What major reason can be adduced for the appeal that the idea of "natural religion" exercised on so many eighteenth-century persons? What stance(s) towards Christianity did such persons typically assume?
  - c) How is "deism" conventionally distinguished from theism? Identify two or three of its adherents.
  - d) Characterize some aspects of the Bible that came under particularly heavy criticism from Enlightenment authors. Describe the criticisms and reasons for them.
  - e) Describe a line of defense for the reality of divine revelation that one or more Enlightenment thinkers adopted (e.g., Locke, Butler, Lessing, Paley).
5. What were the primary issues regarding faith and reason during the Enlightenment?

## **SYSTEMATICS/THEOLOGICAL ETHICS** (*Updated 17-Feb-2010*)

### **Systematics**

1. Analyze the understanding of God's existence and nature, and the theological methodology underlying that conception, in the work of two theologians chosen from the list below. Each theologian must be chosen from a different group in the list or from a different confessional tradition. Your answer should include some analysis of the ways in which methodological and/or confessional matters play a role in their different understandings of this issue. Your answer should also include some discussion of how your analysis is influenced by any commentators (texts or former teachers) and should indicate aspects in which you follow, question, or have reservations about their interpretations.
2. Analyze the understanding of revelation, and the theological methodology underlying that conception, in the work of two theologians chosen from the list below. Each theologian must be chosen from a different group in the list or from a different confessional tradition. Your answer should include some analysis of the ways in which methodological and confessional matters play a role in their different understandings of this issue. Your answer should also include some discussion of how your analysis is influenced by any commentators (texts or former teachers) and should indicate aspects in which you follow, question, or have reservations about their interpretations.
3. Analyze the understanding of the identity and mission of Jesus Christ, and the theological methodology underlying that conception, in the work of two theologians chosen from the list below. Each theologian must be chosen from a different group in the list or from a different confessional tradition. Your answer should include some analysis of the ways in which methodological and confessional matters play a role in their different understandings of this issue. Your answer should also include some discussion of how your analysis is influenced by any commentators (texts or former teachers) and should indicate aspects in which you follow, question, or have reservations about their interpretations.

Group I: B. Lonergan (Catholic), K. Rahner (Catholic), P. Tillich (Lutheran), W. Pannenberg (Lutheran).

Group II: K. Barth (Reformed), H. U. von Balthasar (Catholic), Jürgen Moltmann (Reformed).

Group III: G. Gutierrez (Catholic), J. Cone (Methodist), A. Carr et al. (Catholic).

Group IV: Vladimir Lossky (Orthodox).

## **Theological Ethics**

1. Discuss scripture as a source in moral theology/theological ethics, addressing the various ways biblical texts are appropriated in the work of one recent Catholic and one recent Protestant moral theologian.
2. Briefly describe the development of Catholic social thought in the papal encyclical tradition. Comment upon the sources utilized by this tradition, and discuss this tradition's approach concerning two of the following topics:
  - a. the understanding of the "right" to private property
  - b. the forms of justice inherent in a just society
  - c. the understanding of human rights, both socio-economic and political
  - d. the understanding of poverty, its causes, and the means to eliminate it
  - e. the ethical critique of communism and capitalism
3. Discuss the chief characteristics of feminist, womanist, and liberationist approaches to theological ethics, focusing upon their critiques of mainstream ethical reflection and their proposals for remedying these deficiencies.
4. Using the sources of Christian ethical reflection (scripture, church tradition, natural law/human reason, and experience), analyze how these sources are utilized in one of the moral issues discussed in the bibliography for example, gender, racism, homosexuality, war and peace, or another issue of your choice.
5. Delineate and discuss the principal sources and themes that mark a distinctively Christian approach to and understanding of theological ethics.

(Historical chgs. 10/21/2015 per JMSJ)