

Comprehensive Examination Questions

Distance Learning Program

Master of Arts in Theology

General Information

The comprehensive examination for the Holy Apostles College and Seminary Distance Learning Program for a Master of Arts in Theology must be taken prior to graduation. Before you will be allowed to sit for the examination, you *must* complete all your course work, and, if applicable, complete your thesis.

Inform the Distance Learning Coordinator of your choice for a Testing Monitor. Make sure the testing monitor is aware that this examination is given over a six hour time period – three hours in the morning, a one hour break for lunch, and two hours in the afternoon. Prior to taking your exam, you will be mailed an invoice for \$80 to cover the comprehensive examination fee. Upon receipt of your completed exam, Holy Apostles College and Seminary will send a check for \$75 to your testing monitor.

Inform the Distance Learning Coordinator of your choice for a “major” from Moral Theology, Dogmatic Theology, Sacred Scripture, or Church History. The examination will consist of three questions in your major area, and one question in each of the other three disciplines. There will be some choice in the questions (e.g., you will choose three questions in your major area out of four or five questions that will be given to you).

Have enough knowledge to write for 45 minutes on each of the questions in your major area, and 30 minutes in each of the questions in the other three areas. The additional time given to you in your examination can be used to think about your answers and to check them.

Sources

Since you are not required to take all classes that are offered through the distance learning program, the material in some of the following questions may not have been covered in your classes. Sources that will help you formulate your answers are given for the four areas for which you are responsible: Moral Theology, Dogmatic Theology, Sacred Scripture, and Church History.

Bible

This is a closed book examination, but you will be allowed to use your Bible when answering the Sacred Scripture question(s).

Moral Theology

Sources

To formulate answers for moral theology, the following sources are helpful:

Ashley, Benedict, O.P. *Living the Truth in Love: A Biblical Introduction to Moral Theology*.

Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Donum Vitae*.

John Paul II. *Evangelium Vitae*

_____. *Veritatis Splendor*.

May, William. *Introduction to Moral Theology*.

Pinckaers, Servais. *The Sources of Christian Ethics*.

The New Catholic Encyclopedia.

Paul VI. *Humanae Vitae*.

Questions

1. Explain why natural family planning is in accord with natural law while artificial means of contraception are not. Be sure to discuss how these two ways of preventing pregnancy reveal a pro-life or contraceptive mentality.
2. List and define the theological and moral virtues. Explain the relationship between the theological virtues and the moral virtues.
3. Define and differentiate between situation ethics, proportionalism, consequentialism, utilitarianism and legalism.
4. Explain the three factors relevant in predicating the 'good' or 'evil' of human acts: the moral object chosen; relevant moral circumstances; and the personal end or intention. How does the "Fundamental Option" violate this understanding?
5. Define sin. Apply the definition to:
 1. mortal and venial sin
 2. sins of weakness, ignorance, and malice
 3. original sin
 4. concupiscence.

6. Explain the Principle of Double Effect and the Principle of Material Cooperation. Apply the former to the case of a pregnant woman who needs a hysterectomy to remove cancer; apply the latter to an accountant who works in a hospital where abortions are routinely performed.

7. Articulate the traditional Church teaching concerning just war theory. Make sure to distinguish between the standards concerning when it is permissible to engage in war (*jus ad bellum*) and what behavior is acceptable in war (*jus in bello*) once war has begun.

Dogmatic Theology

Sources

To formulate answers for Dogmatic Theology, the following sources are helpful:

Baker, Kenneth. *Fundamentals of Catholicism*.

Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Flannery, Austin. *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Volume I.

Neuner, J. and J. Dupuis. *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*.

The New Catholic Encyclopedia.

Ott, Ludwig. *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*.

Questions

1. Explain the following in detail:

- 1) The three kinds of knowledge traditionally attributed to Christ; and
- 2) The three kinds of grace traditionally attributed to Christ (NOT the effect of grace on mankind).

2. Define ecumenism and religious liberty. Distinguish between true and false ecumenism, and between ecumenism and religious liberty. Does Vatican II's approach to ecumenism and religious liberty condone religious relativism? Does it lead to abandoning belief in the Catholic Church as the true Church?

3. Explain the following Trinitarian concepts:

1. Two processions
2. Three Persons
3. Four relations (real)
4. Five Notions
5. Three personal properties.

4. What is the nature of the causality of a sacrament. Include in your answer:
 1. the meaning of “ex opera operato”
 2. the manner in which the seven sacraments relate to the natural progress of human life (e.g., birth and baptism).
5. Summarize briefly the following Christological heresies:
 1. Arianism
 2. Nestorianism
 3. Apollinarianism
 4. Monophysitism.
6. Explain the three images of the Church used in Lumen Gentium: People of God, Mystical Body of Christ, and Temple of the Holy Spirit. Apply them to the question of the relation of the College of Bishops to the infallibility of the Pope and the universal call to holiness.
7. Define sanctifying and actual grace. Include in your answer:
 1. the difference between sanctifying grace and the charismatic graces of the Holy Spirit
 2. the nature of justification
 3. the nature of merit and how both man and the Spirit participate in human meritorious acts.

Sacred Scripture

Sources

To formulate answers for Scripture, the following sources are helpful:

Baker, Kenneth. *Inside the Bible*.

Brown, Raymond E., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland A. Murphy, Editors. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*.

Leo XIII. *Providentissimus Deus*.

Pius XII. *Divino Afflante Spiritu*.

Pontifical Biblical Commission. *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*.

Vatican II. *Dei Verbum*.

Questions

1. Discuss the teaching of the documents *Providentissimus Deus*, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* and *Dei Verbum* concerning inspiration and interpretation.
2. Discuss the theme of covenant as it is presented in the Pentateuch (include the covenant at Mt. Sinai). Discuss the Documentary Theory, the Fragment Theory and the Supplement Theory used to explain the composition of the Pentateuch.
3. Discuss the call and mission of the prophet Isaiah. Discuss the contents, major themes and historical background of the book of Isaiah.
4. Describe the authorship, purpose, and theological message of the synoptic gospels. Describe some of the features that distinguish them. Discuss the Two Source Theory and the Two Gospel Theory as it relates to the synoptic gospels.
5. Explain the literary character of the Book of Psalms, including an analysis of the various types of Psalms.
6. Discuss the authorship, structure, purpose and contents of the Gospel of John. Identify and discuss its principle themes.
7. Explain Paul's purpose in writing the Letter to the Romans, discuss the central message of the letter and summarize what we know about the early Christian community at Rome.

Church History

Sources

To formulate answers for Church History, the following sources are helpful:

Bellitto, Christopher. *The General Councils. A History of the Twenty-One Church Councils from Nicaea to Vatican II.*

Comby, J. and Diarmaid MacCulloch. *How to Read Church History* (2 vols).

Duffy, Eamon. *Saints and Sinners, A History of the Popes.*

Hamman, Adalbert. *How to Read the Church Fathers.*

Holmes, J. Derek and Bernard W. Bickers. *A Short History of the Catholic Church.*

Tanner, Norman. *The Councils of the Church: A Short History.*

Questions

1. Describe the categorization of the Fathers into Apostolic, Apologists, Third Century, Golden Age, and Later Fathers.

2. Explain the significance of the alliance of the Frankish monarchy and the papacy, touching upon all of the following in your answer:

1. the conversion of Clovis
2. the battle of Tours
3. the Eastern Emperor
4. the “Donation of Constantine”
5. Christmas Day, 800.

3. Discuss each of the following, showing how they led to and contributed to the Settlement of 1648:

1. the Protestant revolt
2. Catholic Reform and counterattack
3. Wars of Religion

4. What are ecumenical councils and what role do they play in the life of the Church? What purposes was the Second Vatican Council expected to serve, according to John XXIII and the Council fathers themselves?

5. What was accomplished, of significance, at the three Councils of Baltimore? Specifically enumerate and describe the accomplishments of each Council.

6. The keys of St. Peter are still the keys of the Middle Ages. Test this statement with regard to the following:

1. the Crusades
2. the Dictatus Papae
3. the mendicant orders and their activity
4. Catholic/Orthodox relations
5. Boniface VIII and Philip the Fair.

7. Pio Nono is usually regarded as a reactionary. Evaluate this statement with regard to:

1. his pontificate before 1848
2. the Syllabus of Errors
3. the First Vatican Council.

(Revised 9.15.08)