

**Doctrine of God**  
**THEO-526**  
**Essay Questions**

**Essay Question 1**

*Discuss the distinction between propositional knowledge of God and relational knowledge of God. Show how this distinction is important practically and epistemologically.*

The real question being asked is "What does the knowledge of God consist of?" Is it the mere recitation of a series of facts, or is it something deeper?

If the answer is propositional knowledge, then one who has the correct data about God is one who knows him. This would mean that many of the men who deny Christ as Lord, deny the scriptures, and deny the revelation of God as given in the Bible are in fact the men that really know God. Many of these men have all of the facts, and can recite them at will along with the proof texts. Unfortunately, their knowledge of God is surface only.

On the other hand, if in knowing God one means relational knowledge, then those that know God are not the intellectual, but the simple. More often than not, the more "facts" one knows about God, the less one enjoys God himself. It is somewhat like the botany professor who dissects and examines the rose under his microscope, but fails to appreciate the beauty and the joy the rose brings to life.

This distinction between "factual" and "experiential" knowledge is also seen in the words used to speak of the "knowledge of God". The specific word used for experiential knowledge is "ginosko". This implies not a mere awareness of fact, but an experiential knowledge. The other word, "oida", refers to head knowledge. God's desire is that we "ginosko" him, not "oida" him.

How important is this? Only those that know God in the relational sense are his children. There are many who have the facts about God, but fail to see the God behind the facts. In fact, the knowledge of God begins with the realization that we are not after intellectual data, but after the knowledge of a person. David was called a man after God's own heart. The reason for this is that David spent many a night looking up into the heavens and contemplating the God behind them.

My pursuit in life is to know God. In fact, I believe that I will spend eternity getting to know God. Because God is infinite, and I am finite, it will take an infinite amount of time to know him. The pursuit of facts is fine, but only those that know God in a relational way as their father will spend eternity with him.

## Essay Question 2

*How does one come to "know" God? Why does such knowledge depend on God's initiative?*

Two elements are essential in knowing God. One is obedience, and the other is God's initiative. By obedience, we mean that we must be willing to act in a positive manner to that which God reveals. This includes, but is not limited to, our acceptance and affirmation of Christ as our Lord and Saviour. In fact, our salvation is only the beginning of the adventure to get to know God. By God's initiative, we mean that it is God who must take the first step towards man.

Why must God take the initiative? It is because God is infinite, and we are finite. Finitude cannot comprehend infinity, nor can the created comprehend the creator. Man, in and of himself, is unable to comprehend or approach God. It is for this reason that "God became flesh and dwelt among us". Because of our limitation of finitude, and the darkness of sin, man is in a total fog, unable to know or seek after God (Romans 3:10-17). God must take the first step.

However, once God takes that step, it is up to man to respond. Jesus Christ came to show man the way back to God and to provide salvation through his substitutionary death on the cross. God must enlighten the mind of the unregenerate person to see Christ as who he is, and man must respond to that light in positive obedience (although I believe the work of salvation is from God from start to finish, from our viewpoint, man must respond).

Why do I make this point? It is because God reveals himself to those who seek him, and to those who obey him. There are many Christians who have halted their process of knowing God because of disobedience and sin. The first step is obedience to God in accepting Christ as our Saviour, but the succeeding step is a commitment to a life of obedience. When we live a life of disobedience, we stifle the process of getting to know God.

## Essay Question 3

*Does the Bible attempt to prove God's existence? Explain.*

The Bible never attempts to prove God's existence, it assumes His existence. The first verse of the Bible starts out by saying "In the beginning God created..." Nowhere in the scriptures do we find a logical treatment concerning arguments for the existence of God.

Why is that? I believe it is because of the infinite character of God. For us to prove the existence of God, we must be able to measure and examine him. Since God is the creator, and we are the created, that is not possible. God does not reduce to a scientific experiment.

However, although we cannot prove the existence of God, we do get clues to his existence in the form of natural revelation and special revelation. God has revealed himself in the created world (Romans 1:18-21), as well as having revealed himself in Jesus Christ (John 1). Although these two categories of revelation do not "prove" God, they do support the probability that he exists.

One final thought, a man must deny himself and logic to discount the existence of God. The atheist may make fun of the Christian for being a fool to believe in God. However, it is the atheist who is the fool (Psalms 14:1).

### **Essay Question 4**

*Discuss Martin Heineken's "Qualitative Difference." What are the philosophical roots of his thoughts? How would his approach affect apologetics, the theological conception of God, evangelism?*

Martin Heineken's philosophical roots come from a reaction against the humanization of God effected by Hegel and others. Instead of seeing God in human terms, he sees God as being qualitatively different than man. In doing so, he insists that the difference between man and God is not one of mere degree, i.e. man is "good", God is ultimately "good", but that the difference is one of quality or essence of existence. This idea, if carried to its logical extreme, would make the knowledge of God impossible. How can we know anything that is unlike anything we have experienced?

Where would this approach lead? I think that in the area of apologetics it would make the use of the "arguments for God's existence" irrelevant. Since God is utterly unlike and beyond anything we can imagine, it is impossible to prove his existence. In the area of our conception of God, any analogy we could draw from human experience to explain God's character becomes meaningless. Since God's holiness is not one of degree, but one of quality, our concept of holiness does not do justice to the nature of God. God is not seen in superlative terms, but in absolutely other terms. In the area of evangelism, such a view would tend to make the knowledge of God a chase after a ghost. Since God is unknowable, we would not be able to know him. This would make evangelism consist of pointing men to God as their saviour, but not as their intimate friend which they can get to know.

I tend to agree a little bit with Martin Heineken's view in the sense that there are certain aspects of God that are beyond our comprehension. However, to remove God beyond the "dimensional barrier" to such an extent that we can know nothing is not true. There are certain things we can know about God, especially those things he has revealed in the scriptures. Our attitude should be to know what we can, but not speculate about that which we cannot know.

### **Essay Question 5**

*Are the arguments for God's existence compatible with Scripture? Explain. Would you ever use them? If so, How? Be specific.*

As we have already examined in a previous question, the Scriptures do not attempt to prove God, they assume his existence. However, that is not to say that the logical proofs for God's existence find no basis in the Scriptures. Psalms 19:1-4 attest to the validity of the Cosmological argument. Psalms 94:6, 8:3-4, and Acts 14:15-17 attest to the Teleological argument, i.e., design implies a designer. The moral argument is somewhat attested to in Romans 2. Finally, the argument of religious experience is supported in Matthew 5:13-16, 1 Peter 2:9, and John 14:21 as well as others.

As to the question "would I ever use them?" I believe the answer is yes and no. I would never use these arguments in an attempt to prove the existence of God nor would I use these arguments to prove the existence of the God of the Bible. All these arguments do is to lend credibility to the supposition that there is a God. However, I do see a use for them in a supporting role. In other words, it is the Holy Spirit that must illumine a man's heart so that he can see God, however, once illumined (no matter how dimly), these arguments lend additional support to the belief in a God and our responsibility to him.

One final note, we can never prove the existence of God. I have never seen God, but I believe in his existence because of the Holy Spirit. I see God through the eyes of faith, not through the eyes of scientific inquiry and analysis.

### **Essay Question 6**

*What are two significant offenses to the modern mind in the Old Testament representation of God? Explain.*

We could give many reasons why modern man is offended by God. However, the two major offenses are that God has revealed himself in the Old Testament as a personal as well as exclusive God.

By personal, we mean that God is personality. He is not an absentee landlord as deism would like us to believe, nor is he some kind of impersonal force as pantheism would have us believe. When God revealed himself to individuals in the Old Testament, he revealed himself in personal terms. Abraham did not hear an impersonal force talking to him. Noah did not build an ark to escape the judgment of an impersonal force or absent landlord. God is a personal God, and has revealed himself as such.

By exclusive, we mean that God is not the first among equals. God is the only God. The first commandment tells us not to worship any other God, the second tells us not to worship the true God in an invalid manner. God is the creator and sovereign lord of mankind. This is where the rub comes. Men today do not wish to see the God of the Old Testament as a God they are personally accountable to. I have heard many of my secular

professors describe the God of the Old Testament as some sort of bloodthirsty, tribal deity who demanded sacrifice and the wholesale slaughter of the Canaanite civilization. They fail to see that the Canaanite civilization was one of absolute moral and spiritual apostasy and as such had violated God's laws.

This is sad, but true. Men today often do not believe in God not because of the facts, but because there is no alternative. Rather than see themselves as accountable to a personal, exclusive God, they believe any other theory that lets them live the way they want to.

### **Essay Question 7**

*Discuss the three-fold character of the self-revelation of God as shown in his names. Explain.*

According to the lecture, the three-fold character of God's self-revelation in his names is 1) they are personal, 2) they are anthropic, and 3) they are analogical.

By personal, we mean that God has revealed his character and attributes through his names. Since God is infinite, and we are finite, we can only understand God when God reveals himself in concepts we can understand. Thus when we read of Jehovah-Jireh, we see that God is a God of provision, not deprivation. When we see Jehovah-Roi, we see that God sees everything. These names are descriptive of his very nature. Thus "El" and "Jehovah" or "Yahweh" refer to God's strength and eternity. He is the strong one, "El" and the self-existent one "Jehovah".

When we say that God's names are anthropic, we mean that God has revealed himself in human terms. We cannot comprehend a God who describes himself as "grickle" and "lopnak" if we have no idea what these words mean. Thus when the scriptures picture God, they picture him in human terms. God does not have the physical organ of an eye, yet he sees. He does not have the physical organ of an ear, yet he listens.

Finally, when we say that God's names are analogical, we mean that his names reveal in finite terms what he is in infinity. For example, God is holy, yet he is infinitely holy. We can understand what it means to be holy, but not infinitely holy.

As a final note, God has revealed himself through many names in the scriptures. However, even if we had billions of names, we could never fully comprehend the greatness of God. He has chosen to reveal himself to us by his names, but there is much more to God than revealed. We only see a part.

## Essay Question 8

*Choose five names for God discussed in this chapter and give their significance concerning the self-revelation of God.*

Yahweh or Jehovah

This name is from the verb "to be" and denotes God's eternal character. When Moses asked God what name he was to use to describe God to the Israelites, Moses was told to use "I AM". God has always existed and will always exist. Time to him is one big eternal now. God cannot say (contrary to what process theologians say), that he was, or that he will be, God is.

Jehovah-Jireh

We are introduced to this name for God when Abraham was about to offer Isaac upon the altar. God tested Abraham to see if Abraham was fully convinced of God's promises. Instead of being required to offer Isaac, Abraham was given a ram caught in a thicket. God is the provider. God not only provides physical life, but he provides eternal salvation.

Jehovah-Rohi

This name is found in Psalm 23:1. In this psalm God is pictured as a shepherd who takes care of his sheep. God not only provides, as is pictured by Jehovah-Jireh, but he cares for us as a shepherd cares for his sheep. This refers to physical necessities as well as spiritual needs. God is our shepherd.

Jehovah-Shammah

We find this name in the last verse of Ezekiel. Many Bible scholars interpret Ezekiel 40-48 as referring to the Millennial Temple and city of Jerusalem. In that day, Jerusalem will be called Jehovah-Shammah, the God who is there. During this age, God is in heaven. However, in the age of the Millennium to come, God will be present on earth. As glorious as that will be, it will only be a forshadow of the time when God is with all saints for all eternity (Revelation 21:1-4).

El Roi

We find this name in the narrative concerning Hagar's flight from Abraham and Sarah. Hagar is in the wilderness about to die from thirst and exhaustion. In a most deserted and barren area, God sees her plight and miraculously delivers her. We may feel many times that God is distant and unconcerned with us, however we must not forget that God does see us and will deliver in his own time.

### **Essay Question 9**

*Compare and contrast the approach of Erickson to that of Berkhof with respect to the study of the attributes of God. Suggest the strengths and/or weaknesses of each.*

Louis Berkhof approaches the study of the attributes of God from the viewpoint of the communicable and incommunicable attributes. By communicable, he refers to those attributes that have a correlation in man. For example, God is omniscient, man is not. However, man does possess a certain degree of knowledge, although in an infinitely less degree than God. When we refer to the incommunicable attributes, we refer to those that have no direct counterpart in man. For example, God has eternal self-existence, we have a beginning.

Erickson approaches the study of the attributes of God from a different perspective. He divides God's attributes into the categories of greatness and goodness. Greatness refers to God's transcendent qualities, such as spirituality, aseity, and personality. Goodness refers to the moral qualities, such as holiness and righteousness.

Because of the very nature of who God is, it is very difficult to find a perfect way to understand his qualities. Berkhof focuses on God in relation to man, that is, what does God have in common with us and what does God have that we don't. Erickson focuses more on the life quality and moral quality of God's attributes.

Which one is best? I think both are valid. We can get a certain amount of information about God by comparing him with what we are and are not. However, this isn't the only way to look at him. We need to also look at the life and moral qualities of which we are mere reflections. One approach (Berkhof) looks at man to determine God, the other (Erickson) looks more at God to determine what man is and should be.

### **Essay Question 11**

*Compare the way in which God reveals Himself through history and through natural phenomena.*

God's self revelation in history is seen in his dealings with the course of mankind and his purpose in redemption. For example, we see God's revelation in the events of the Exodus, events that were awesome enough to strike fear in the hearts of the Canaanites forty years later. God is also seen in the powers that are set up and destroyed by him. In Daniel, God is seen as the ultimate ruler of mankind. It is he who gives power to men to rule. Perhaps the greatest display of God's revelation in history is the events of the birth of Christ. God made sure that the world political, religious, and social conditions were just right. Caesar Augustus decided to have a census at the right time not knowing that God was behind it all the way.

On the other hand, God's revelation in natural phenomena is usually for the benefit of single individuals (although this breaks down in the case of the creation). God revealed

himself to Elijah in a still, small voice. He revealed himself to Job in a whirlwind. Ezekiel saw wheels and fire. However, behind it all, God is showing that he alone controls all of nature. It is he who made everything, and it is he who transcends it all.

## **Essay Question 12**

*Suggest four ways in which God, the Father, as seen in the New Testament, parallels the self-manifestation of God in the Old Testament.*

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mark 12:26, Matthew 22:32)

One of the divine appellations given to the Father by Christ is the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob". In fact, in Matthew Christ uses this name to show that although Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were dead, they still existed. To die is not to cease to exist. The use of this name clearly correlates the Father with Jehovah.

The God who Loves and Forgives (David and Bathsheba, 1 John 1:9, Romans 3:26)

One of the misconceptions many have is that the God of the Old Testament is a cruel tribal deity who demands sacrifice and the slaughter of other nations while the God of the New Testament is one of love. This is not true and not supported by scripture. The God of the Old Testament was also a God of love and forgiveness. Perhaps the life of David shows this more than any other example. Although David committed murder and adultery, God forgave him. God's forgiveness is based on his grace, an eternal attribute as prevalent in the Old Testament as in the New.

The God who Chooses

One of the clearest doctrines in the Bible is that of God's predetermined choice of individuals to salvation and favor. The God who sovereignly chose Abraham to be the father of the Jews and the progenitor of the Messiah, is the same God that chose me in eternity past to be one of his children.

The God who draws us to Himself, causing a willing obedience

Compare the life of the believer to the life of Job. Job understood that all he had, and all he was, was a gift of God to him. Job did not serve God because of what God gave him, but because of who God was. In the same way, we obey God not for what we get, but for who He is.

### **Essay Question 13**

*Lowry discusses three alternative theories of the Trinity available to theology. State, define, and evaluate each of these. How would you assess his model?*

#### Sabellianism

The first of the three alternative views of the Trinity is Sabellianism. This view pictures God as being of monadic character, but plural in his manifestations. For example, God was manifested as the Father in the Old Testament, as the Son in the New, and as the Spirit in the Church age. This view tends to emphasize the monadic character of God while minimizing the trinitarian overtones found in the scriptures.

#### Modal

Lowry's second alternative is what he calls his "modal" view. This view emphasizes the triune nature of God as existing of three persons, all exhibiting a single divine essence. This view is close to tritheism, but falls somewhat short since it insists that there is only one divine "essence" or God exhibited in three distinct, eternal persons. This view minimizes the monadic character of God while emphasizing his triune nature.

#### Analogy of Society, Intercourse, Fellowship

Lowry's third alternative is derived from Augustine's analogy in which God is pictured as being "one" in the sense of communion and fellowship, although he is triune in the sense of nature and existence.

#### My Assessment

I think Lowry missed the Biblical view that emphasizes both God's monadic character, and triune nature. I think the real problem is that we do not like to coexist with apparent paradoxes in thinking. I feel that any view of God that emphasizes his monadic character over his triune nature or vice versa is incorrect. God is one, yet three. God is three persons, yet one God. I cannot fully understand it, but I believe it because that is what the Bible teaches.

### **Essay Question 14**

*Explain in detail why it is important to believe in the historicity of Jesus.*

There are many reasons for believing in the historical personage of Jesus. First and foremost of these is the fact that the Bible claims that he existed. If Jesus is not an historical person, then the Bible contains errors and cannot be trusted. A closely related reason is the fact that Jesus' coming was clearly predicted in the Old Testament. If Jesus did not actually come, then the prophecies of the Old Testament were inaccurate. This throws the entire Bible upon the rocks of human reason and subjective interpretation.

Another reason for believing in the historical Jesus is to avoid the problems of neo-orthodoxy. God does not exist in supra-history, but in history. God is not manifested on some faith-plane of existence, but in the everyday experiences of life. When one divorces spiritual truth and fact from its historical foundation, the actual events of history mean nothing. Furthermore, it is not a great step further to relegate all truth to one's own perception of things. Truth becomes relative, not absolute.

A third reason for believing in the historical Jesus is that the fall of man was an historical event with historical consequences. Therefore, we need an historical redeemer to give men a way back to God. God is the creator of history and time. As a result, he works in the affairs of men through history, not above history.

Finally, we need to note that the facts of an historical Jesus, coupled with the fact of an historical death and resurrection, is the Gospel. Without believing in those facts, we cannot receive God's salvation. For someone to claim salvation, and deny the historical events of the birth, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, is to reveal that person as deluded and lost.

I believe in an historical Christ, who was born on a day in history, lived in history, died in history, rose again in history, and is coming back in history. I don't worship a ghost, but the incarnate Son of God.

### **Essay Question 15**

*Choose one or two objections to the deity of Christ and defend the deity of Christ with a logical, scriptural answer.*

Christ never claimed to be God

This objection is totally ludicrous in that it finds absolutely no support in the scripture. Many would like to make Christ out to be some demented person or glory-seeker, not God in human flesh. Perhaps the best passage in which to refute this objection is found in John 8. In this chapter we find Christ confronting the religious leaders in the temple. The action starts in verse 14 in which Christ claimed he knew where he came from, and where he was going. I may know where I am going, but I don't know where I came from. To do that requires pre-existence prior to birth.

Secondly, in the next few verses, Christ asserts the closeness he has with the Father. He states that he is of above, they are not. In verses 24 and 58 Christ claims to be "I AM", the very name God used at the burning bush. Note further that in verse 59, the Jews take up stones to kill Christ. Why? Because he claimed to be God! The Jehovah Witnesses are dumber than the Jews who heard Christ firsthand. They knew what he claimed, equality with God.

Note also that in verses 56-58 Christ claims pre-existence. Before Abraham existed, Christ was. No mere mortal man can say that, only God. How a person can read this chapter and deny the pre-existence of Christ and his equality with the Father is beyond me.

Christ claimed to not know everything

This is another major objection to the deity of Christ. Since God knows everything, and Christ is presumably God, then how could Christ not know some things like the time of his return?

This objection really avoids the issue of the humiliation of Christ. It is not that Christ did not know everything, it is that he only knew those things the Father revealed to him. Why is it that he prayed all night before choosing the disciples? Didn't he know who they were? Why did he ask "Who touched me?" in the crowd when he could have known it was the woman with the issue of blood? It is because in his humiliation, he totally subjected himself to the Father. Although he had the potential of knowing all things, he chose to limit himself. Although he had all power and could have called ten thousand angels, he did not. The issue is not one of Christ's lack of deity, but one of Christ's self-humiliation. (Philippians 2:1-11)

### **Essay Question 16**

*Since the title "Son of God" is used of men and angels (Romans 8:14, Job 1:6, see also John 10:31-36), how is it that Christian theologians use this title to prove the deity of Christ?*

The basis for understanding the use of the term "Son of God" to prove Christ's deity is, in my opinion, one of context. In other words, do we interpret this title in a technical, or a general sense?

If it is interpreted in a general sense, then any being created by God is a "son of God" in the sense that God is their father. I am a son of God because of the mere fact that he is my creator. The angels are sons of God because they were created by God.

However, more often than not, the phrase "Son of God" refers to the second person of the Trinity. This is made abundantly clear in the gospels, as well as in the Epistles of John. Christ is seen as the Son of God, and God the Father is seen as Christ's Father.

Before we make heretical error of saying that Christ is then subordinate to the Father in terms of ability or position, we need to understand that God is presented to us in anthropic terms. To say that the Father is "gleekaw", the Son is "hrupat", and the Spirit is "perfnoid", is to describe the Trinity in incomprehensible terms. As a result, the Trinity is presented in terms that we can understand, although we need to see that these terms cannot be taken in exactly the same way we understand them. It is true that the Son

submitted himself to the Father in the redemptive plan of God, but that is not to say that the Son is "inferior" to the Father in power or quality.

Thus, the use of the phrase "Son of God", is a technical name for the second person of the Trinity. Generally it refers to all created beings, specifically it refers to Christ. Its meaning is determined from the context.

### **Essay Question 17**

*Suggest two orthodox approaches to the doctrine of the impeccability of Christ. With which view do you agree? Support your preference by showing how it best explains the Biblical data and answers possible objections.*

There are two main views regarding the impeccability of Christ that allow him to be the sinless substitute for us. The first is the view that Christ could not sin. This is derived from the fact that since God cannot sin, and Christ is God, Christ could not sin. The second view is that Christ could have sinned, otherwise his temptations would have been meaningless, but he did not sin.

I personally agree with the view that Christ could not sin. I do so for several reasons. First of all, I believe that the syllogism mentioned in the preceding paragraph is valid. Christ is God, and as such he could not sin. To allow Christ to sin would be to allow God to sin. James 1:13 states very explicitly that "God cannot be tempted with evil".

Secondly, the assertion that if Christ could not sin would mean that he could not be tempted is unfounded. Instead of saying that Christ could not be tempted, it is better to say that Christ was tempted to an extent no man had been tempted before. Since Christ was God, he experienced the ultimate strength of temptation, but did not succumb. Hebrews 2:18 states that Christ was tempted. Hebrews 4:15-16 states that Christ is able to be touched with the feelings of our infirmities because he knows what it is like to be tempted. In other words, the New Testament is very clear that the temptations of Christ were very real. However, since he was God, he could never succumb but had to endure their full force.

Another objection to the impeccability of Christ is that he died. Since death is a result of sin, then Christ must have been able to sin, otherwise he would not have experienced death. I think the clearest refutation of this is found in 2 Corinthians 5:21 in which we read that God made Christ sin for us, who knew no sin. What that verse is clearly stating is that Christ took upon himself the consequences and penalty of sin, although he did not know sin. The Greek word for know in this verse is "ginosko" which carries the idea of an experiential knowledge. In other words, Christ did not know sin in the sense he did not know what it was, but in the sense that he did not know sin experientially.

Another verse that substantiates the assertion that Christ could not sin is 1 Peter 1:20 in which we find that Christ was foreordained in the plan of God to be the offering for our sin. Since God is sovereign, and God sovereignly planned the death of Christ before the

foundation of the world, it naturally follows that Christ could not have sinned even if he could have. In other words, the sinless life and substitutionary death of Christ was in God's mind from eternity past. For Christ to have violated that plan would have been to force a schism in the Trinity and violate the sovereignty of God.

Christ could not sin!

### **Essay Question 18**

*Suggest three reasons why it is important to orthodoxy to affirm the personality of the Holy Spirit.*

There are many reasons we should affirm the personality of the Holy Spirit. Probably one of the most important, as far as I am concerned, is that the personality of the Holy Spirit is taught in the scriptures. If I believe in the accuracy and inspiration of the Bible, then I must also ascribe to the idea that the Holy Spirit is a person and not an invisible force.

However, aside from the fact that the personality of the Holy Spirit is affirmed in the scriptures, some major problems arise if we deny the personality of the Holy Spirit. First, and foremost, is the fact that we destroy the doctrine of the Trinity which is found throughout the scriptures. How can we have a triune God if one part is nothing more than an invisible force? We can't! By denying the personality of the Holy Spirit, we must also deny his deity and the triune nature of God.

Secondly, by denying the personality of the Holy Spirit we find that we cannot understand the power Christ used in his ministry. Luke 4:14 clearly states that what Christ did he did in the power of the Holy Spirit. We see clearly that this power must be a personal power, not some force. If it were some force, then Christ should have been able to bend it to his will. However, we clearly see in the gospels that Christ submitted himself to the Father and to the Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit must have will.

Thirdly, if we deny the personality of the Holy Spirit we are left with problems in interpreting John 14-16. In that portion of scripture, the Holy Spirit is time and time again spoken of in terms of personality. It is the Spirit who will guide the disciples into all truth. It is the Spirit who is the other comforter. The word Christ used is not "another of a different kind" but "another of the same kind". Since Christ was obviously a person, then the Spirit must be a person as well.

However, I think that the only real reason for believing in the personality of the Holy Spirit is that the New Testament clearly teaches it. To deny the Spirit's personality is to deny the inspiration and authority of scripture.

### **Essay Question 19**

*Augustine is a good example of a tendency among theologians to find some sort of analogy in human experience to illustrate or demonstrate the Trinity. What, exactly, is his analogy? Do you agree with him? How would Erickson respond to this question?*

From what I can tell, Augustine draws a parallel between human love for one person to another as an analogy of the Trinity. In doing so, he identifies the lover with the Father, the loved with the Son, and the love itself with the Holy Spirit.

I disagree with this interpretation. I believe the basic flaw in this analogy is the fact that God is of infinite essence, and we are finite. As a result, there are certain aspects of God's nature that we cannot comprehend. I believe the Trinity is one of these. That is not to say that we are to throw out any attempt of comprehension, it is just to say that we need to realize that there are certain things no amount of human brain power will be able to comprehend.

I also think there is a flaw in this analogy in the sense that love is a non-personal thing. In other words, it seemed as though Augustine was minimizing the personality of the Holy Spirit in his attempt to identify him with love. In fact, John tells us that God is love, not the Spirit.

Erickson's response to Augustine's analogy is much like mine. He asserts that Augustine was helpful in attempting to draw parallels from human experience to understand the Trinity. However, any parallel that can be drawn from our existence still falls far short of what the Trinity really is. Analogies are helpful in some cases, but we must always be aware that they are but analogies. Sometimes we must be content to take the Bible at face value and allow apparent paradoxes to exist in our thinking.

### **Essay Question 21**

*What are the "attributes of God"? Distinguish them from "properties". Give an example.*

The "attributes" of God are those innate and intrinsic characteristics that are a part of the nature of God himself. They are qualities of existence that make God who he is. On the other hand, "properties", as defined by Millard Erickson, are the functions, activities, or acts of the individual members of the Godhead. An additional distinction is that the "attributes" of God are those qualities that are true of the entire Godhead, whereas the "properties" of God are true only of the individual members of the trinity.

Some examples of attributes are love, mercy, omniscience, omnipresence, infinity, goodness, and eternity. These are qualities true of the entire Godhead, not just one or more of the individual members. (Arianism blows it here by asserting that Christ is not eternal but a created being of the Father). Again, attributes are true of all members of the trinity equally.

Examples of properties, on the other hand, are the mediatorship of Christ, the intercession of the Spirit in prayer, the eternal generation of the Son, and the eternal procession of the Spirit. These qualities are only true of the respective member of the Godhead, not the Godhead as a whole.

## **Essay Question 22**

*How can God be described as unchanging when scripture speaks of Him as repenting, regretting, and experiencing pain?*

The answer to this question depends on what we mean by "change". If we mean that God changes in character either qualitatively or quantitatively, then we assert that God does not change. A qualitative change would necessitate God all of a sudden acquiring a new attribute he lacked previously. Since God is absolutely eternal and exists outside of the boundaries of time, this is an impossibility. By the same token, a quantitative change would require that God become more of something he already is. Again, since he exists outside of the boundaries of space and time, this is an impossibility.

However, if by change we mean that God's relationship to His creation changes, then we assert that God does change. Those passages that seem to indicate God as changing in fact refer to the changing nature of his relationship to his creation. For example, we find God repenting of his desire to destroy Israel on account of the intervention of Moses. What changed? God did not change! What changed was that Moses interceded for the nation of Israel and as a result of his intercession, God stayed the judgment that the nation of Israel deserved. By the same token, Jonah gives us an example of God changing his mind regarding the immediate destruction of Nineveh. What changed? The Ninevites did! If they had not, God would have destroyed them as promised.

Many times when we see a change in this way, it is not God who changes, but his relationship to man. This is seen in the fact that when we repent of our sin and turn to Christ as saviour, God's judgment on us is annulled. It is not God that changed, but us. However, from the human viewpoint, it is God that changed. (Thus God's repentance is an anthropomorphism which helps us understand what happened, it is not a description of what actually happened).

Also, God appears to change during the course of his expanding revelation of himself in the Bible. Again, it is not God's character or nature that has changed, but his relation to men. This is clearly seen in the progression of dispensations from Innocence to the Eternal State.

Thus, God's character and nature is forever fixed. When we respond to him in a positive, or negative, manner, his relationship to us changes, which is often seen as a change in Him when it is really a change in us.

### **Essay Question 23**

*How does the God of Process Theology compare to the God of the Bible? Tabulate and discuss four vital distinctions given by Carl F. H. Henry in his critique of process theology.*

Succinctly defined, the God of Process Theology is a being that is not stable in nature, but ever expanding and growing. Creation is not an entity that is apart from this God, but one that is intimately connected. Thus, as creation matures and proceeds, so God matures and proceeds. This is in direct contradiction with the Bible.

According to C. F. H. Henry, the God of process theology is very limited in his sovereignty. The God of the Bible is seen as the one over all, the only eternal and powerful being behind all of creation. It is from God that creation is derived in a single act of his omnipotent power, and it is from God that creation is sustained. Without God, there would be no creation. Since the God of process theology depends on creation to assist him in his maturation process, his power and authority over it are severely limited.

Secondly, the God of process theology is hardly the personal God we see in the scriptures. Throughout the Bible, God is seen to personally interact in the lives of men, most notably in the incarnation. Although process theologians assert the personality of God, it is a personality that is quite different than the one revealed in the scriptures.

Thirdly, process theology reduces God to a "frontier of the evolutionary process". Thus, creation is not necessarily dependent on God, but it is God who is necessarily dependent on creation. God loses his personal involvement since all of the supposed acts that are used to speak of God's involvement with men are redefined to go along with an impersonal being.

Fourthly, process theology reduces God to a being that is in the process of evolving. He is not seen as the absolute, unchanging God of the Bible, but as one who matures along with the creation.

### **Essay Question 24**

*Describe the apparent tension between God's justice and His love. How can this tension be resolved?*

The issue raised by this question is the apparent tension when we examine God's attribute of love as over against his attribute of justice. God's love demands that he unconditionally love his creation, most specifically, men. This love is of such a degree that it precludes the possibility of dealing in wrath against men. On the other hand, God's justice demands that the sin of men be punished. God's justice would preclude the possibility of man ever escaping divine wrath.

The only possible solution for God would be to satisfy his love on one hand, and his justice on the other. This is only possible by finding an appropriate method of meting out the judgment our sin requires without consigning us to an eternity in hell, which is the just penalty of our sin.

This solution was effected by the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ in which he took upon himself our sins and suffered our penalty. Since Christ was God himself, this is equivalent to the judge taking the penalty of the law on himself. Because Christ took our punishment, we can receive full forgiveness for our sin by accepting his sacrifice on our behalf.

This is the message of the book of Romans, specifically chapters 4-5. Since we all sinned in Adam, as our representative, we can receive the forgiveness of sin in Christ. Since God's wrath has been fully satisfied by the death of his sinless Son on the cross, he is free to forgive us based on the merit of Christ. Thus, God's forgiveness is not an act whereby he just forgets about our sin, but it is an act whereby he transfers our sin to Christ, and Christ's righteousness to us. This allows him to love us by restoring fellowship with him while at the same time exacting the just penalty of our sin. Since the death of Christ provides infinite forgiveness, there is no way it's effectiveness will ever run out. Christ's death has the potential of redeeming all of mankind, although the sad truth is that it will effectively redeem only those who accept his substitutionary payment.

### **Essay Question 25**

*According to Erickson, does prayer ever "change things"? Explain. How do you resolve this problem theologically?*

Millard Erickson holds the view that prayer does not change the purpose and plan of God since his plan has been decreed from eternity past. What prayer does accomplish, however, is the attunement of ourselves with that eternal purpose and plan of God. This makes prayer not as much an exercise in getting God to change his mind, but an exercise to get us to think in terms of God's perfect plan and align ourselves with his purpose. Furthermore, Erickson believes that it is by God's design that prayer be used in this fashion.

My viewpoint is pretty much the same. I believe that God has decreed from eternity past what will happen, but he has also decreed that prayer is an essential ingredient in that. What I mean by this statement is that God's plan of action is unalterable, but as I pray and align myself with that plan, I grow in faith as I see God at work. I cite as an example the disciples prayer in which Christ instructs us to pray for the Kingdom of God to come. This seems pretty odd especially since the Kingdom of God is going to come whether we pray for it or not. However, by our praying for it, we become more sensitive to God's working of his plan and as a result we grow in faith. Thus, although prayer does not change the mind of God, it changes us. Instead of viewing things from our own finite perspective, we begin to view things from God's eternal perspective.

Another example of this would be Christ's prayer in the garden. Three times he asked God to allow him to bypass the cross. Instead of this changing the mind of the Father, who had decreed from eternity past that Christ would die for the sin of the world, it changed the mind of Christ as he obediently submitted himself to the will of the Father. (not really changed his mind as he was eternal God, but changed his mind in his humiliation)

### **Essay Question 26**

*Explain succinctly Erickson's "moderately Calvinistic" model of God's plan. How do you react to this? How does his approach correspond to Leibnitz? Does this position really allow for genuine human freedom? On what major point would the Arminian strongly disagree? Why?*

This is a lot to answer succinctly, but here goes. As far as I understand Erickson, he asserts that God does not mechanistically decree how men will act, but that he assures that the conditions exist which will render certain how men will act. Thus, although men are perfectly free in the decisions they make, the circumstances and conditions that they find themselves in will determine their choice. Thus, God does not actively determine how men will choose, but he renders it certain how they will by altering the conditions appropriately.

My reaction to this is uncertain at this point. Although I believe in the sovereignty of God, especially as it relates to salvation, I find it hard to believe that God uses circumstances to coerce men into a particular course of action. I believe that there is a divine paradox here that renders the complete resolution of this issue impossible. That is not an intellectual cop-out, but a recognition of human limitations, especially in light of the infinity of God.

Leibnitz seems to go back one step further than Erickson in asserting that God does not merely control the circumstances which result in a particular course of action by an individual, but he controls the creation and formation of that individual so that the individual will respond to circumstances a particular way. In other words, Erickson sees God as in control of the circumstances that assure a particular choice on the part of an individual, Leibnitz sees God as in control of the character of the individual which will assure a particular choice given the circumstances.

Do these positions allow for genuine human freedom. Yes, if we define freedom as the free choice of an individual to respond to circumstances in a way consistent with his nature. No if we define freedom as the free choice of an individual to respond to circumstances in any way.

Arminians would disagree with Erickson on the basis that for them (Arminians), God's sovereignty is based on a prior knowledge of what will happen. This makes God's decisions ultimately dependent on his creation. Thus God chose Moses to lead Israel because he foresaw that Moses would do it. This position does not allow for Erickson's

assertion that God controls the circumstances that will result in a decision. They would assert that God's intervention in the circumstances is only based on a prior knowledge of what that person would do, not to make them do a particular thing.

### **Essay Question 27**

*How does Erickson relate the doctrine of creation and evolutionary theory? Do you agree? Explain. Suggest, from your own study, two or three serious problems with Erickson's approach.*

Erickson holds the age-day (or day-age) view in which the Hebrew word for day, yom, is interpreted as referring to long periods of time in which God's creative acts took place. This seems to best correlate the geological data we have at hand with the description of creation as given in the first chapter of Genesis.

Personally, I think that this theory is pure baloney. I see it as an attempt to adapt the scripture to meet the prevailing theories of the day instead of allowing the scripture to speak for itself. This theory seems to allow the evolutionist and creationist to exist side-by-side. One can believe the evolutionist, and still believe the scriptures.

I do not subscribe to this theory for several reasons. One, to interpret the Hebrew word "yom" as referring to a large geological timespan is to eisegete the text and not exegete it. In other words, we must read a foreign meaning back onto the text, a meaning that is not evident from a strictly literal reading and interpretation. Secondly, the term "evening and morning" seem to clearly define this as a 24 hour day, not a geological age. How can a period of time several million years long have an evening and morning?

Thirdly, why in the world would an infinite God with infinite power take millions of years to produce something he could have called into existence in an instant of time. It does not make sense. Fourthly, all of the other passages of the Bible that refer to creation assume a literal 24-hour period of time. There is no indication that these are ages. Fifthly, if these are ages, then we have plants existing for millions of years without the sun to sustain them. The assertion that the word used for "created" in respect to the sun means that the clouds were dispersed so that the light of the sun could penetrate is to really read something into the text.

There are many other reasons we could cite. Suffice it to say that the literal 24-hour interpretation is the truest to the text. All other interpretations must read meaning into the text, something that no true Bible expositor should ever stoop to do.

## Essay Question 28

*State and explain seven vital aspects of the doctrine of creation in theology, as detailed by Erickson.*

1. Everything that is not God has derived its existence from Him.

This means that all that exists is either God, or something that God has created. This is a necessary postulate of the doctrine of creation since to deny it is to ascribe to some kind of dualism.

2. The original act of creation is unique.

By this we mean that when God created all that is, he did not do it from previously existing matter or ideas. It was something completely new and unique.

3. Nothing made was intrinsically evil.

Since God is good, all that he makes is good. Evil is a foreign influence which came after creation, not as a result of creation. God is not the author or creator of evil.

4. Creation implies responsibility.

Since man is a created being, he is subject to the requirements of the creator. This makes man responsible to God in his actions. Man did not come about by pure chance, but by the creative act of an omnipotent God. Therefore man is responsible to his creator.

5. Creation does not allow the incarnation of God to be depreciated.

If matter or creation were evil, then Christ would never have taken upon himself human form or allowed himself to enter creation. Since he became flesh, there is nothing innately evil of creation.

6. Since all of creation is by God, then it relates to itself consistently.

By this we mean that conflict between man and man, or between man and creation, is not something that was originally intended by God. Conflict has arisen in creation because of the sin, not because of some inherent flaw.

7. It excludes dualism and monism.

Before creation, all that existed was God. However, after creation not only does God exist, but creation does as well. This means that creation is not a part of

God, such as pantheism or panenthism asserts, but that creation is distinct from God.

### **Essay Question 29**

*Outline briefly God's governing activity in His providential dealings with the creature.*

The God of the Bible is seen as a God who is in control of all things. God has created this world to bring him glory, and as a result he is not an "absentee landlord" as deists would have us believe.

How does God interact and govern his creation? He does it in several ways. First of all, God is seen as the ultimate power behind all forms of government. In Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar is told that it is from God that he was given rule over the whole earth. Pilate was reminded by Christ that if it were not for God, Pilate would have no authority at all. Also in Romans 13, Paul reminds us that we are to be subject to the governmental authorities placed over us, and that if we resist, we resist God. All powers, whether good or evil, derive their authority from God.

Because of this, God controls history to work out his eternal purposes. It was God that raised up a rebellious Pharaoh in Egypt in order to show his might in delivering Israel. It was God that raised up Babylon to punish Israel's continued disobedience, only to have Babylon destroyed by Medo-Persia because of their idolatry.

Secondly, because God is in control, all events are moving steadily towards the culmination of evil that will be finally destroyed by God when he returns to set up his Kingdom. All of the events and wars that go on in the world right now are being used by God to accomplish this goal. That does not make what is happening right, it just means that God is overruling the evil to accomplish his purposes. It was not right that Christ was crucified, however, his crucifixion was planned by God from eternity past in order to effect the salvation of all men.

Thirdly, God is not only in control of the governments of men, but he is also in control of nature. Sometimes God uses natural disasters to accomplish his purposes. A good example of this is the tribulation, in which God uses one natural disaster after another to effect his eternal purpose on the earth.

### Essay Question 30

*State briefly and explain the five distinct approaches taken by theologians to resolve the problem of evil. How does Erickson resolve this problem? Do you agree with him? Explain.*

1. The problem is paradoxical in nature.

This approach views the presence of evil in light of the goodness and omnipotence of God as a paradox unresolvable by the human mind. Those who take this tact bury their head in the sand.

2. God is not omnipotent, but limited in his dealings with evil.

This approach takes two forms. One says that God cannot do anything about evil since it is something he has been fighting from eternity past. The other states that God has limited himself in allowing evil.

3. God is not omniscient.

Those who ascribe to this approach state that God does not know the future. As a result, the origination of evil took him by surprise. He is now in a reactive mode trying to overcome this surprise.

4. God's goodness is not what we consider goodness to be.

This approach sees everything that God does as being good. Therefore, the existence of evil is something good. We consider it as something evil since we do not really know what God's goodness means.

5. Evil is an illusion.

This is the approach of Christian Science which sees evil, sin, and death as illusions to be overcome by the practice of mental denial.

Erickson's resolution of the problem of evil is an eschatological one. By this, we mean that Erickson sees that in the eternal scheme of things, evil is something that is finally dealt with. Evil is finite in character, not infinite. All of the particular evils we face in this life will be resolved in eternity by God.

In a way, I agree with Erickson. Evil will be finally dealt with by God. However, it still leaves the question as to why evil exists in the first place. I think that a possible answer to this is that God uses the existence of evil, which he knew would result from the creation of free moral agents, to display his divine attributes of justice, wrath, and forgiveness. If there were no evil in the universe, those perfect beings that existed in that

universe would have no concept of justice, mercy, wrath, and forgiveness. Evil is necessary to reveal those attributes of God. Thus, although God did not create evil, he did create the possibility of evil when he created free moral agents. He then uses the resultant evil to display his attributes to all of creation.