

Fall 2022 Theology Exam

Section I: Reformed Confessional Heritage

You are pastor of Third Presbyterian Church, meeting with a group of teenagers preparing for confirmation. Today you are discussing the Holy Spirit. You read John 14:16-17 (NRSV):

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

A few of the students react:

- Josie: I really don't get this Holy Spirit thing. What you read makes the Spirit sound like something separate from God, but isn't the Spirit part of God?
- Alex: I thought the Holy Spirit was a person, but some people refer to it as the Holy Ghost. Maybe it's the ghost of Jesus who comes to haunt us when we're not doing what we should!
- Miyung: Well, the verse doesn't say the Spirit haunts us. It says the Spirit advocates for us, but what does that mean? Does it mean the Spirit takes all our requests to God?

REQUIRED RESPONSES: (*Total responses in this Section not to exceed 1,200 words.*)

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of the **Holy Spirit**. In the essay, identify and discuss at least one (1) citation (e.g., 0.000) from each of three (3) different documents in *The Book of Confessions*.
2. Building on the essay in Required Response 1, respond to the class, being sure to address the comments of Josie, Alex, and Miyung.

Section II: Constructive Statement of Christian Doctrine

You are the pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church. During the reception following a funeral, you are in conversation with some people in attendance:

Jin:	Pastor, during the service you said something I didn't understand. You said, "We thank you, O God, for your servant Franny, whose baptism is now complete in death." How can a baptism be complete in death? I thought it was complete the minute you were baptized.
Paul:	Baptism is complete in death because baptism is your ticket to heaven.
Roberta:	Baptism and death have nothing to do with each other, because one often happens early in life and the other at the end of your journey.

REQUIRED RESPONSES: *(Total responses in this Section not to exceed 1,200 words.)*

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of **baptism's completion in death**. In the essay, use at least two (2) of the following resources: the Scriptures, classical theology (sources before 1900), modern theology (sources since 1900).
2. Building on the essay in Required Response 1, respond directly to Jin, Paul, and Roberta.

Section III: Application to Ministry

You are pastor of First Presbyterian Church and are meeting with the deacons to plan a dedication service for a new transitional housing center. The congregation has invited local politicians, business owners, donors, and future residents of the housing center to the dedication. The following conversation takes place:

Cindy:	I think we should have reserved seating upfront for the donors since they made the center possible.
Terry:	Honestly, I think the future residents should sit up front. Listen to this passage from James: My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? (James 2:1-4, NRSV)
Dina:	That passage has to do with preferential treatment in church life. It doesn't mean that we can't acknowledge people who are more important in civic life. I am afraid we will lose donors for future projects if we don't honor these supporters.

REQUIRED RESPONSES: *(Total responses for this Section not to exceed 1,200 words.)*

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of **privilege**. In the essay, use at least two (2) of the following resources: the Scriptures, classical theology (sources before 1900), modern theology (sources since 1900). James 2:1-4 may be used in the essay, but it will not count as one of the required resources.
2. Building on the essay in Required Response 1, respond to the deacons, addressing the concerns they raise.