

Spring 2023 Theology Exam

Section I: Reformed Confessional Heritage

You are pastor of First Presbyterian Church. During an adult Sunday School class, you read the following from The Heidelberg Catechism:

- Q. What do you understand by the providence of God?**
- A. The almighty and ever present power of God by which God upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty— all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand. (4.027)

One of the class members, Sandra, comments, “I wish God upheld us only with positive things! Where’s the ‘fatherly hand’ in the bad stuff?”

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

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of **providence**. 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*. *BOC* 4.027 may be used in the essay, but it will not count as one of the required citations.
2. Building on the essay in Required Response 1, respond directly to Sandra.

Section II: Constructive Statement of Christian Doctrine

You are the Associate Pastor at Fourth Presbyterian Church, and you are leading an adult class on “Christianity in a Pluralistic World.” The class is discussing Christian participation in interfaith organizations:

Kim:	I just don't understand how Christians can rely on any cooperation from non-Christians, when they don't know Jesus. Are non-Christians morally trustworthy?
Amelie:	Of course they are! We all know people who aren't Christians who are morally upstanding. I think that's because God creates us all good.
Benny:	That doesn't sound right. I thought that the only thing that made us good was the grace of Christ.

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

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of the **moral capacity of non-Christians**. 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 Kim, Amelie, and Benny.

Section III: Application to Ministry

You are the pastor of Unity Presbyterian Church. The session meets to review a report from the mission committee requesting approval for two ministries: an English Language Learners program and a citizenship training class for immigrant adults. Not all elders are on board with the request:

Donna:	The ministries we are considering primarily serve a few specific racial or ethnic communities. If we only reach out to certain groups, won't we perpetuate a divide that already exists?
Yaisca:	I think the real problem is we've closed our eyes to the growing diversity around us. My community is part of that diversity! When the church ignores us, it marginalizes people God is calling to be part of the body of Christ.
Denis:	Jesus didn't get into racial debates in his ministry; he called everyone to follow him. It was that simple! Let's just support the local food bank and avoid diversity issues.

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

1. Write an essay discussing a Reformed understanding of **racial and ethnic inclusion in the church**. 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 and with pastoral sensitivity to Donna, Yaisca, and Denis.