

**TH 302 Study Guide for Midterm Exam – Spring 2006**  
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The following questions are provided to focus your study for the exam. The exam will consist of four essay questions, and you will have up to 1.5 (one and a half) hours to complete it. The questions from the exam will be taken from the eight possibilities below, although the precise form might be different or differently worded. Use this guide to work through and think about your answers ahead of time. I strongly recommend against going into the exam ‘cold,’ having not thought at all about how you will respond to these questions (In this course, we balance Grace and Individual Accountability!)

1. “When the expressions "infant baptism" and "believers' baptism" are used, it is necessary to keep in mind that the real distinction is between those who baptize people at any age and those who baptize only those able to make a confession of faith for themselves. *The differences between infant and believers' baptism become less sharp when it is recognized that both forms of baptism embody God's own initiative in Christ and express a response of faith made within the believing community*” [WCC Document on Baptism – Commentary (B12)].

Drawing from your readings and our discussions in class, evaluate the above statement *theologically* (look for its sources and norms, project its consequences, etc). Imagine you are writing for a decision-making body of your denomination: write a brief essay I which you make a theological argument *for or against* adopting this paragraph as a policy of your church.

2. “Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth” [Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 1250].

The above statement contains clear positions on the 1) essence of human beings, 2) the effect of sin upon humanity, 3) the nature and mechanism of God’s grace, and 4) a proper response to the condition of sin. Drawing upon your knowledge of your tradition and the theological resources you have gained in this course, write a statement for your denomination, modeled upon the one above, in which you articulate *your* church’s understanding of these four matters. (Your answer should pay close attention to the *interaction* of the three positions. How, in *your* statement, is 4 a response to 1 and 2, in light of 3?)

3. You are having a conversation with some married friends of yours who happen to be agnostic. They have just had a baby. “My mother is really pushing us to have the child baptized,” your friend says. “We don’t go to church ourselves, but it’s really important to my parents, so I guess we’ll go along with it, at least to keep up appearances.”

Drawing upon your readings in this course, and upon your own tradition, what advice would you give your friends as to how to proceed? Would you agree with their decision? In your response, pay attention to the balance between both *theological* and *pastoral* concerns (how do you speak the truth in love?)

4. An acquaintance of yours declares, “I just can’t believe that God would abandon all the Buddhists and the Hindus and whoever else just because they hadn’t heard the Gospel or been baptized. I think God must save everybody. That’s what a loving God would do!”

From your reading of the Catechism, what would be an informed *Catholic* theological response to this statement?

Drawing from your experience, what is an informed theological response from *your* tradition to this statement?

5. Drawing on Lathrop, our discussions in class, and doctrinal resources (WCC, Didache, Catholic Catechism, your own tradition), write an essay in which you explain your understanding of the relationship of Baptism to justification and sanctification.

[Hints: you’ll want to consider things like “washing and teaching”, ‘human nature’, the effect and mechanism of chosen and/or original sin on that nature, the role of the church in salvation, how grace operates in redemption, etc. You’ll need to think this one through – it’s all about *consequences!* While there is no one ‘right’ answer, you’ll need to demonstrate how you’ve thought about Justification and Sanctification in a theological light in relation to baptism]

6. Your church is expanding. Your church has asked you to be on the committee to suggest designs for a new sanctuary. Paying attention to what you have learned thus far in the course about the relationship between theology, time, and space, give a brief explanation of what you would put where, and why.
7. Near the end of the WCC document on Baptism, there is the statement, “Some African churches practise baptism of the Holy Spirit without water, through the laying on of hands, while recognizing other churches’ baptism” [Commentary

B21(c)]. A similar practice of spiritual (as opposed to physical) baptism occurs among the Religious Society of Friends (the Quakers).

Drawing upon your learning in this course, and your own church tradition, how would you respond theologically to this sort of position? In other words, *is a physical, water baptism necessary?* How do you justify your answer? Think through this one carefully – it’s trickier than it might first appear, though there are several ways in which you might answer it correctly.

8. An unbaptised friend of yours is considering joining the church. There seems to be some confusion. “If I get baptized, doesn’t it wash away my sin? If that happens, will I never sin again? If I *do* sin after that, what do I do? Do I have to be baptized again, or am I lost forever, or is there some other way to get right with God again? Help me understand!”

Drawing on the resources gained in this course and your own tradition, help your friend understand.