

Fundamental Theology I and II

Objections and Questions to prepare the Oral Exam

The student is asked to prepare a response to one of the “**Objections posed by socio-cultural context**”, freely chosen from the list here below. The response must be approximately **10 minutes** long.

This response **will be followed by one short question** chosen by the professor from the “**Questions on the Course Program**”.

In the case that a student does not want to prepare a “Response to the Objections posed by socio-cultural context”, the professor will choose 2-3 questions among the ones listed in “Questions on the Course Program”.

The student may do the exam in any of the following languages: Italian, English, French, or Spanish. If the student wishes to do the exam in a different language than any of those aforementioned, he or she must bring a translator who knows one of these languages, provided that the translator has not ever been a student in the Fundamental Theology course at the PUSC.

SEMESTER I

OBJECTIONS POSED BY SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT (one chosen by the student)

1. Human religiosity, and all the historical religions that have proceeded from it, are a cultural superstructure arisen in the advanced phases of the cultural and biological evolution of the human being. Human religiosity is born out of the ignorance of primitive man facing the elements of nature, or as it emerges later in an organized form, out of functional, social, and cultural motives. The origin of the Jewish religion, and therefore also of Christianity, is due to the same reasons.

See G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 3: *Religione e Rivelazione*, Città Nuova, Roma 2018, cap. I; F. FACCHINI, *L'emergenza dell'homo religiosus. Paleoantropologia e paleolitico*, in “Le origini e il problema dell'homo religiosus”, Jaca Book, Milano 1989, 141-165; M. DHAVAMONY, *Religione e Rivelazione*, in R. FISICHELLA (ed.), *Gesù Rivelatore*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 1988, 71-84; R. GUARDINI, *Religione e rivelazione* (1958), Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2001.

2. There are not sufficient reasons to sustain that God has really spoken to man in history. Rather, it is true that man has spoken of God as the outcome of his aspirations and demands, making a fictitious image of God in response to his own existential anxieties.

See G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Filosofia e rivelazione*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo, Milano 2008, 100-119, 137-208.

3. To maintain that God, Creator of the universe, became man, is the product of mythological thought. The transcendence of God is incompatible with faith in the incarnate Word. Jesus of Nazareth was a man with a great spiritual life and a very profound doctrine, but his story and all that happened to him is very similar to the life of many other prophets and messiahs that had worked in Israel.

See J. DANIELOU, *Miti pagani e mistero cristiano* (1967), Arkeios, Roma 1995; G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 2: *La credibilità del cristianesimo*, Città Nuova, Roma 2015, 187-201 e 262-278.

4. The Jewish religion originates from an attempt to consolidate their political identity and justify their wars of liberation and conquests. The image of God affirmed in this tradition is that of a Lord mighty in war, who works in a violent and vindictive manner. In particular, as in every form of monotheism, the Jewish-Christian religious tradition is a dangerous font of fanaticism and intolerance.

See G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 2: *La credibilità del cristianesimo*, Città Nuova, Roma 2015, 457-497; INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *God the Trinity and the Unity of Humanity: Christian Monotheism and its Opposition to Violence*, 6.12.2013.

5. To admit that God can reveal himself through nature is something incompatible with the view of nature conveyed by contemporary science. To think that God gives men an enduring witness to himself in the created world is part of a mythological thought or it results from ignorance.

See G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 3: *Religione e Rivelazione*, Città Nuova, Roma 2018, 343-450.

6. Faith is a personal interior attitude, often irrational, which obliges a person to make decisions against reason. Moreover, the contents of the Christian faith depend on personal opinions that cannot be shared by all. For this reason, national governments should leave no space for religions, and among them for Christianity, in public life. After all, a democratic national State cannot share any religious tradition.

See G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contest scientifico*, vol. 1: *La Teologia fondamentale e la sua dimensione di apologia*, Città Nuova, Roma 2015, 81-113; M. PERA, *Perché dobbiamo dirci cristiani. Il liberalismo, l'Europa, l'etica*, Mondadori, Milano 2008; G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 4: *Fede, Tradizione, Religioni*, Città Nuova, Roma 2022, 308-359.

7. If someone wants to live an authentic Christian life, he or she must leave aside the Traditions of the Church and live according to the Scripture. In fact, throughout the centuries, a number of human traditions have been superimposed that have hidden the spirit of Christianity contained in the Gospels, ultimately distorting it in many ways. Because of this, the words of Jesus to the Pharisees can be applied to Tradition: "You disregard God's commandment but cling to human tradition" (Mark 7:8).

See A. FRANZINI, *Tradizione e Scrittura. Il contributo del Concilio Vaticano II*, Lateran University Press, Roma 2014; Y. CONGAR, *Tradition and Traditions*, Basilica Press, San Diego (CA) 1998; G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 4: *Fede, Tradizione, Religioni*, Città Nuova, Roma 2022, 431-450.

8. The Church holds herself to be infallible in that which she teaches. But can one believe that she truly is infallible after so many centuries of unjust judgments, unjustified and inappropriate actions, and teachings contrary to scientific results? Moreover, if the bishops and even the Roman Pontiff have changed their opinions on so many occasions and on so many issues, how can the Church be infallible in all of her teachings?

See Y. CONGAR, *Infallibilità e indefettibilità*, in K. RAHNER (ed.), *Infallibile?*, Paoline, Roma 1971, 81-113; G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Il magistero della Chiesa cattolica e la ricerca scientifica*, in J. FUNES, A. OMIZZOLO (edd.), *Esplorare l'universo, ultima delle periferie*, Queriniana, Brescia 2015, 127-179; G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 4: *Fede, Tradizione, Religioni*, Città Nuova, Roma 2022, 450-474, 506-523.

9. The Magisterium of the Church has received as a divine mandate the command to hand on and teach the contents of biblical Revelation. She must, therefore, refrain from teaching on subjects and topics that are not present in Scripture; for example, those which falls in the sphere of philosophy or those which concern new ethical questions that have arisen in the modern and contemporary epochs. In any case, the teaching of the Church on these topics, not explicitly contained in Scripture, cannot be infallible.

See C. CAFFARRA, *La competenza del Magistero nell'insegnamento di norme morali determinate*, «Anthropotes», 4 (1988), 7-23; F. OCÁRIZ, *La competenza del magistero della Chiesa "in moribus"*, in *Humanae Vitae 20 anni dopo*, Ares, Milano 1989, 125-138; G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 4: *Fede, Tradizione, Religioni*, Città Nuova, Roma 2022, 431-450.

QUESTIONS ON THE COURSE PROGRAM (chosen by the professor)

1. What are the object and purpose of Fundamental theology in relationship to other theological disciplines? Mention the four major areas of Fundamental theology, commenting on some of the relationships between them.
2. What is the distinction between the dogmatic moment and the apologetic moment of Fundamental theology? Explain this distinction in relation to the twofold nature of Revelation, as a mystery and as an event.
3. Comment on the origin and historical development of the treatise of Fundamental theology. What the three-way partition *Demonstratio religiosa—Demonstratio christiana—Demonstratio catholica* consists in, and how was it developed?
4. Comment on some aspects of human religiosity as a fundamental anthropological constant and present the openness of religious phenomenology towards a divine revelation.
5. Comment on the different kinds of divine revelation in the Old Testament and the main characteristics of Revelation *through the Word*, bringing to light its specificity in respect to the phenomenology of other religious traditions.
6. How do the Gospels speak of *Revelation* and of the *Revealer*? In which way do this the three synoptic Gospels and how does it the writings of St. John?
7. How does St. Paul understand the notion of “revelation”? What does biblical theology indicate by the expression *pauline mysterion* and what are its contents?
8. Briefly explain some elements of how the idea of divine Revelation was understood in the Patristic period.
9. Share some considerations about the understanding of Revelation in medieval theology, with particular reference to the thought of Thomas Aquinas.
10. Comment on the content of *Dei Verbum*, n. 2, in relation to the concept of *revelation*, to its object, aim, and recipient, and to the different ways in which God reveals himself.
11. What are the main biblical contents of what we call “the revelation of the origins”? Mention some element of originality of the Jewish-Christian Revelation with respect to other extra-biblical religious traditions.
12. Why and in which way can the created world be seen as a true *revelation* of God? Give some biblical and theological reasons to demonstrate such a view.
13. Lay out the major steps of the history of salvation and discuss the main theological contents associated with the biblical categories of Promise and Covenant.

14. What is the image of God, and what are the attributes of God, that one can deduce from the logic of the Covenant?
15. What are the three major theological areas presented and developed by the Word of Wisdom (Wisdom books)? Comment on the importance of the Wisdom books to explain the divine revelation to contemporary man.
16. What are the most important theological elements associated with the person of the prophet? Explain, particularly, his relationship with the word, with history, and with the Law and the Covenant.
17. How can the incarnate Word be considered the fulfillment of the revelation manifested by the word of creation? How is the economy of the incarnate Word presented by the New Testament as the fullness of time?
18. How does the Old Testament economies of the Promise and of the Covenant reach their fulfillment in Christ? Give some examples to illustrate the “dynamic of promise and fulfillment” between the Old and the New Testament.
19. Comment on the role of the Holy Spirit in the economy of Revelation. Offer biblical comments and develop theological considerations.
20. Which paragraphs of *Dei Verbum* speak about the Holy Spirit, and which subjects, roles and features are there involved?
21. Explain how the Old Testament speaks of *faith*: what does it mean “to believe in God” for a faithful in the people of Israel?
22. Explain how the synoptic Gospels speak of faith. What is the Christocentric dimension of faith according to the Gospel of John?
23. In what documents do Vatican Council I and Vatican Council II speak about the faith? What these documents say on this subject?
24. Explain some theological features of the Christological dimension of the faith.
25. Explain some theological features of the ecclesial dimension of the faith.
26. Explain the most important contents associated with the notion of *Tradition*, according to what the Vatican Council II presents in *Dei Verbum*, nn. 7-8.
27. What are the theological and historical criteria for recognizing what belongs to the Apostolic Tradition? What are the fundamental places where Tradition is found?
28. Considering the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, giving examples that bring to light their *unity*, their *distinction*, and their *interdependence*.
29. What is the object (primary and secondary) of the Magisterium of the Church, and what are the (four) forms of teaching of the Magisterium?

30. What are the (three) forms of assent of the faithful to the teachings of the Magisterium, as set out in the corresponding three paragraphs of the CDF document, *Inde ab ipsis primordis* (1998)?

31. What are the biblical foundations of the indefectibility of the Church? How can we derive the property of infallibility *in docendo* of the Church from the notion of indefectibility?

32. Who is the *subject* of the infallibility of the Church *in docendo*, and what are the conditions to let the charism of infallibility operate, according to *Lumen gentium*, n. 25?

33. Explain how extended is the *matter* on which the Magisterium can teach in an infallible way, and provide reasons to affirm such an extension.

34. Comment on n. 10 of *Dei Verbum*, showing the principal relationships between the Magisterium of the Church, the Sacred Scripture and Apostolic Tradition.

SEMESTER II

OBJECTIONS POSED BY SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

(one chosen by the student)

1. There is no reason to speak of the “credibility of Christian Revelation” as a set of arguments that can be communicated and shared by others, in an objective way. Revelation is accepted on the basis of exclusively personal opinions that are only subjective and inner to one’s conscience.

See JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et ratio* (1998), nn. 1-48; G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 2: *La credibilità del cristianesimo*, Città Nuova, Roma 2015, 25-75.

2. It is the opinion of many that the Gospels are made up stories—or at most, “theologically enriched” history—written by authors in the first centuries. They are the only source we have about the supposed existence Jesus. They have no historical value, nor is it possible to verify the historical existence of anything they record. What is contained in the Gospels is not sufficient to motivate a choice of faith that decide and determine the entire human existence.

See R. LATOURELLE, *Finding Jesus through the Gospels*, Alba House, New York 1979; G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 2: *La credibilità del cristianesimo*, Città Nuova, Roma 2015, 112-158.

3. There are not sufficient reasons to maintain that Jesus of Nazareth really made miracles. These stories have other explanations. Such stories are due to the ignorance or naivety of people there present, to the action of natural causes, or they belong to a mythological or devotional literary genre.

See G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 2: *La credibilità del cristianesimo*, Città Nuova, Roma 2015, 230-256.

4. The resurrection of Jesus was not a historical event, but was rather the product of the psychological projections his disciples had, when faced with the unexplained fact of the open and empty tomb. The disciples of Jesus of Nazareth preached the resurrection for political reasons, or to give continuity to the religious movement he founded, or to overcome the delusion caused by a wrong eschatological expectation.

See G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 2: *La credibilità del cristianesimo*, Città Nuova, Roma 2015, 279-364.

5. “I believe in Jesus Christ, but not in the Church.” This statement is justified, because contemporary Church is a hierarchical institution having nothing to do with the spiritual community founded by Jesus in the days of his earthly existence. Accordingly, the Catholic Church is a historical superstructure with respect to the gospel message of

Jesus of Nazareth. There are not sufficient elements to establish continuity between these two realities. Therefore, you can believe and adhere to Jesus of Nazareth without agreeing with a good part of what the Catholic Church and her pastors affirm or teach.

See G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 2: *La credibilità del cristianesimo*, Città Nuova, Roma 2015, 394-456.

6. Who can still believe that the Church is really “holy”? Everyone can see the abuses, scandals and corruption. The Church has even asked forgiveness for her sins.... Under these circumstances, how can anyone be asked to believe that the Church can be a “signal to the nations” (cfr. *Is* 11:12), a sign to announce to humanity the goodness and the love of God? The Church is not a spiritual reality willed by Christ, but rather a simple, earthly community. Then the Church cannot be considered as a reason to believe in divine Revelation.

See G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 2: *La credibilità del cristianesimo*, Città Nuova, Roma 2015, 394-456; H. DE LUBAC, *Meditazione sulla Chiesa*, Jaca Book, Milano 2011.

7. At the base of religious sense, there must be humility before the one and only God, whose grandeur and truth infinitely transcend what man can know or desire. Interreligious dialogue must start precisely from this admission. For this reason, it would be reasonable to ask every religion to abandon part of its beliefs in order to reach a meeting point with other religions, and to discover together the unknown Transcendent God who unites all the religions and cultures.

See INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Christianity and the World Religions* (1996); G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 4: *Fede, Tradizione, Religioni*, Città Nuova, Roma 2022, 537-542, 648-690.

8. Modern society is characterized by multiculturalism. The peaceful coexistence among people of different cultures, beliefs, and religions is a very important goal we have to achieve. Ask a believer to leave his own religious belief and embrace another one should be avoided. Moreover, Catholics today know well and assess positively the spiritual wealth of non-Christian religions. For these reasons, the Catholic Church must not promote missions in non-Christian countries with the goal of announcing the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth and promote faith in Him.

See PAUL VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 8.12.1975; JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris missio*, 7.12.1990; G. TANZELLA-NITTI, *Teologia fondamentale in contesto scientifico*, vol. 4: *Fede, Tradizione, Religioni*, Città Nuova, Roma 2022, 537-542, 648-690.

QUESTIONS ON THE COURSE PROGRAM (chosen by the professor)

1. What are the motives for the credibility of the *fact* of Revelation (a divine revelation is truly present in Christ and in His Church) according to the Magisterium of Vatican Council I and other magisterial teachings of the XIX Century before that Council?
2. What are the “preambles of faith”?
3. According to the Magisterium of Vatican Council II, what are the signs of salvation that show the divinity of Revelation and manifest Christ’s presence in the Church?
4. What does it mean that the credibility of Christianity is centered on the person of Jesus Christ as: a) fullness and fulfillment of Revelation, b) source of intelligibility of the whole Revelation, and c) key of discernment of the mystery of man?
5. What are the main contexts of Old Testament Revelation in which the God of Israel offers to His people reasons to believe in Him; namely, what are the manifestations of God’s self-testimony?
6. Why is the “dynamic between promise and fulfillment” considered the fundamental *logic* of the credibility of Revelation? Offer some considerations that encompass the whole of salvation history, between Old and New Testament.
7. What are the most important extra-biblical documents which back the historical authenticity of the person of Jesus of Nazareth? Mention authors, context, and contents.
8. Comment on the apostolic *kerygma*: “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who died for our sins and is risen from the dead.” Show why a previous philosophical, historical and anthropological knowledge, is necessary in order to fully comprehend its meaning. Why religion and the notion of God also play a role in such a comprehension?
9. How does the historical authenticity of Gospels’ accounts depend on the fact that their authors were *simultaneously* disciples, apostles, and martyrs?
10. Among the reasons to believe, what is the role of our access to the psychology of Jesus through the Gospels?
11. Explain what *sign* the Pascal Mystery of Jesus Christ is, and why it can be considered as the conclusive and ultimate sign of the credibility of the Revealer.
12. How does Jesus appeal, in the Gospels, to his works and to the fulfillment of prophecies as reasons to believe in Him?
13. What the criterion of historical authenticity of gospel accounts called the “criterion of continuity/ discontinuity” consists in? How does it work?
14. Mention some sound reasons to back the historical realism of a certain number of miracles in the New Testament. Give some examples.

15. What aspects of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ are objects of historical knowledge and which ones pertain to faith? What about Jesus' appearances after his resurrection?
16. Offer a comparative overview of New Testament data about the resurrection of Jesus, distinguishing definite and conclusive results from questions still left open to theological discussion.
17. Mention a couple of objections to the truth of the resurrection of Jesus and offer the corresponding responses.
18. In speaking of the divine origin of the Church as the true Church of Jesus Christ, what constitutes the classical content of the *via historica*, and how is this *via historica* now understood and proposed by contemporary theology? In particular, how can we establish continuity between the community born around Jesus and contemporary Catholic Church?
19. What constitutes the *via notarum*, used in the past to show the truth of the Church as witness and custodian of Revelation? How has the *via notarum* come to be understood today by contemporary theology, when presenting the sacramental and eschatological dimensions of the Church?
20. How was the *via empirica* classically formulated by Vatican Council I? How do we comprehend today this *via*, interpreting the Church as divine-human sacrament and the Church as a paradox?
21. According to Vatican Council II, the Church is the *sign* of Christ and the *witness* of Christ? In what this sign and this witness consist? Which aspects of this testimony should be emphasized when proposing the credibility of Revelation in contemporary times?
22. What are the main, specific characteristics of Judaeo-Christian Revelation that emerge, when compared to other religious traditions and their forms of revelation?
23. What does the document of the International Theological Commission, *Christianity and the World Religions* (1996), speak about?
24. Concerning the relationship between Christianity and other religions, what is the "pluralist model"? Why is this model incompatible with sacred Scripture's and Tradition's teachings about the uniqueness and divinity of Jesus of Nazareth?
25. Comment on the two frameworks that theology of religions can follow when developing the Christocentric-inclusivist model, namely the theology of the seeds of the Word and the convergence between anthropology and christology.
26. What are the main reference points that must regulate the relationship between Christianity and religions, according to the CDF document, *Dominus Iesus* (2000)?