

Unit Two: Philosophy of Religion

I. Introduction: What is the Philosophy of Religion?

A. Definitions of the philosophy of religion (and natural theology)

1. "To inquire, in a rational way, into the things human reason can disclose concerning God."

—Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 9. n. 4.

2. PR is "the attempt to analyze and critically evaluate religious beliefs."

—Michael Peterson, et. al. *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Oxford, 1991.

3. ". . . the attempt to think hard and deeply about such fundamental questions as . . . Is there a God? Why does God allow suffering? What happens to a person at death? Philosophy of religion is therefore critical reflection on religious beliefs."

—C. Stephen Evans, *Philosophy of Religion: Thinking About Faith*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1982.

B. How to analyze and evaluate a religious belief

1. Understand the belief
2. Examine the justification for the belief
3. Evaluate its what and why
4. Revise the belief as needed (or discard it!)

C. The contributions of philosophy to the philosophy of religion

1. Analytic clarity
2. Critical analysis
3. Arguments
4. Constructive or synthetic aspect

D. Issues or problems in philosophy of religion

1. Faith and reason
2. God's existence and nature

3. Problem of evil