I) Introduction

A) Augustine on God’s motive in creation and providence: “God loves his creation: in order that it should be, and in order that it should abide” (On Genesis, 173).

B) God’s end in creation and providence: the world is a theatre for Jesus’ glory (Heb 1:2; Col 1:16: “through him and for him”)

C) Overview

II) The Doctrine of Creation

Creation defined: Creation is that work of the blessed Trinity by which he alone produces all things out of nothing by his own power, in accordance with his own wisdom and goodness, for his own glory and for the creature’s flourishing in his presence.

A) The agent of creation

1) Creation is the work of the blessed Trinity (and he alone).
   
   (a) The blessed, internally productive Trinity: The blessed/happy Trinity did not need to create us. The blessed Trinity created us because he loves his own goodness and desires to manifest his glory by sharing his supreme goodness with us (Acts 17:25; Rom 11:33-35). This purpose lies at the heart of everything

   (b) Creation is the work of God alone: Isa 40:12-14; 44:24; Rom 11:33-36

   (c) The triune God alone: Ps 33:6; John 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6; Heb 1:2

2) God’s goodness is the impulsive cause or motive of creation.

   (a) James 1:17ff; Rev 4:11

   (b) “God loves his creation: in order that it should be, and in order that it should abide” (Augustine, On Genesis, 173). It was not “out of the compulsion of his needs that God loved the things which were to
be made,” but rather “out of the abundance of his generosity”  
(Augustine, *On Genesis*, 173). God is *without envy*: “Let there be …”

3) **God’s wisdom is the directing cause of creation.**  
(a) “The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he  
established the heavens” (Prov 3:19; 8:22ff; see also Jer 10:12; 51:15;  
Ps 104:24; Eph 1:11)  
(b) Thus, while creation is a **free act** (spontaneous and undetermined), it is  
also a **purposive act**, determined by the one “who works all things  
according to the counsel of his will” (Eph 1.11; see also 1.10: a  
Christological purpose).

4) **God’s power is the executive cause of creation.**  
(a) “It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world  
by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens”  
(Jer 10.12; with Gen 1.3ff; Ps 33.9)  
(b) Creation is a work of **divine omnipotence without effort** (Isa 40.28;  
Ps 8.3: “the work of your fingers”). “No clash of Titans here. . . This  
God in Genesis creates **not through conquest but command**”  
(William Brown), contra *Enuma elish*  
(c) Creation is a work of **divine omnipotence therefore creation is stable  
and secure** (Ps 33.9; Jer 31.35-36).  
(d) Creation is a work of **divine omnipotence through which creatures  
not only come to exist but also by which they are empowered to  
act**—i.e., to flourish through the enactment and realization of their  
natures to the glory of God.  
Divine omnipotence is **not tyranny** but **empowerment** (Kathryn Tanner)  
Omnicausality vs. monicausality: God’s power causes *all* things; but God’s  
power is not the *only* cause of all things

5) **God’s glory is the ultimate end or purpose of creation.**  
(a) Rom 11.36; 1 Cor 8.6; Col 1.16: “through him and for him”; Rev 4.11  
(b) **Not adding but manifesting** God’s glory
(c) **Johann Gerhard**: The revelation of God’s *power* in creation causes us to stand in awe of him. The revelation of God’s *wisdom* in creation causes us to trust him. The revelation of God’s *goodness* in creation causes us to adore him “so that in all things God will be praised and blessed forever.”

6) **A secondary end or purpose of creation is the use and benefit of human beings** (Gerhard).

   (a) Ps 104.14-15; Mark 2.27

**B) The act of creation**

1) **Creation is the work of the triune God by which he alone produces all things out of nothing**: Rom 4.17; Heb 11.3; Isa 44.24; John 1.3; Col 1.16 (visible and invisible); Rom 11.36.
   God’s work of creation has **no “material cause”**

2) **Creation is the work of the triune God by which he gives being, order, and fullness to creation**: Genesis 1.1-2; 1.3ff; Psalm 104.

**C) The character of creation**

1) **There is a wonderful diversity of God’s creatures**: Psalm 104.24
   (a) Animates, inanimates, rational, non-rational
   (b) Creatures *flourish* as they enact their *various natures* and realize their *various ends* (contra “ethics of authenticity”)

2) **The infinite perfection of God is refracted in the multitude of finite creatures.**
   (a) The Logos and the logoi

   Thomas Aquinas: “Because it was not possible for his goodness to be represented through any single creature, he produced many different ones, so that what was wanting in one expression of the divine goodness might be supplied by another; for goodness, which in God is single and united, in creatures is multiple and divided. Hence the whole universe shares and represents his goodness less incompletely than any one creature by itself” (*ST* 1.47.1, cited by McFarland)
(b) Creatures are tutors who direct us to the fullness of God’s perfection

Jesus’ predicate “I am” sayings

D) God’s creation of human beings

1) Human beings are the pinnacle of God’s creative work: on the sixth day;

Psalm 8

2) Adam and Eve, our first parents (human origins)

3) The image of God (human nature): made of the earth, but not merely for the earth: created to know and love God, to behold and reflect his glory

4) The vocation of human beings (human calling): a royal priesthood

III) The Doctrine of Providence

Providence defined: Providence is that work of the blessed Trinity whereby he preserves his creatures in existence, empowers them to act in accordance with their various natures, and directs them to their various ends for his own glory and for their good.

A) The agent of providence

B) The act of providence

1) Providence is that work of the blessed Trinity whereby (a) God preserves his creatures in existence (Neh 9.6; Pss 36.6; 145.16; Col 1.17; Heb 1.3), (b) God empowers creatures to act in accordance with their various natures (Acts 17.28; Phil 2.12-13), (c) and God directs creatures to their various ends for his own glory and for their good (Ps 33.9; Isa 46.9-10; Rom 8.28-29; 11.33-36; Eph 1.9-11).

The Bible affirms the existence of both primary and secondary causes

2) 2. The Christian doctrine of providence rests upon biblical teaching about the triune God “who works all things according to the counsel of his will, . . . to the praise of his glory” (Eph 1.11, 12).

(a) Providence is a divine “work” . . .

God is no spectator deity; “providence is in the act”

(b) The scope of God’s work of providence extends to “all things” . . .

(i) All places (Ps 135.6)
(ii) Over all things, good or bad (Deut 32.39; Lam 3.37-38)
(iii) From beginning to end (Isa 46.9-10; cf. 44.6-8)
(iv) The free decisions of human beings (Prov 21.1-2), including sinful human beings (Gen 45.5-8; 50.20)
(v) The rise and fall of rulers (Isa 40.23-24)
(vi) The operations of demonic spirits (Job 1; 2 Chr 18.18-22)

Texts like Acts 17.25, 28; Heb 1.3; Matt 10.29-30 teach that God’s providence concerns “not just the heavenly and incorruptible things.” But “that no thing, whether it be of a higher or lower nature, should be excepted; but rather, with an unwavering faith one must hold and maintain the position that in God resides the providence for all things, both singly as well as together; things that are subject to decay and contingent (or fortuitous, as they call them) as well as things incorruptible and necessary; things that are humble and lowly, as well as of those which have received a more lofty nature” (SPT 11.6).

(c) God’s work of providence is determined solely by “the counsel of his will” . . .

Eph 1.9-11 (purpose, good pleasure, counsel, will, etc.); Rom 11.33-35; Isa 46.9-10; etc.

(d) God’s work of providence ultimately aims at the manifestation of God’s glory and the flourishing of God’s creatures (Ps 148; Rom 11.36), supremely in Jesus Christ and in his church (Eph 1.9-11, 20-23; Rom 8.28-29). General vs. special providence

3) The Christian doctrine of providence is a source of joy for all creatures who know, trust, and love the triune God: Ps 97.1; Rev 19.6

4) The Christian doctrine of providence, far from undermining creaturely action, establishes, enables, and directs confident creaturely action and cooperation with the triune God in the unfolding of his kingdom purpose for his glory and our good: Matt 6.9-13, 25-34; 28.18-20

C) God’s providence toward human beings

1) God moves various creatures in accordance with their various natures.
2) God moves human beings, not only internally, in accordance with their animal natures, but also externally, by means of his Word, in accordance with their rational natures. Psalm 95

IV) Conclusion

HC 27-28 well summarize the doctrine and its practical significance.

Question 27. What do you understand by the providence of God?
Answer. The almighty and ever present power by which God upholds heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaves and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and unfruitful years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, and everything else, come to us not by chance but from God's sustaining hand.

Question 28. How does the knowledge of God's creation and providence help us?
Answer. We can be patient when things go against us, thankful when things go well, and for the future we can have good confidence in our faithful God and Father that nothing will separate us from God's love. All creatures are so completely in God's hand that without the divine will they can neither move nor be moved.