

THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND CATECHISM



WITH SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

THE FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

OTHERWISE CALLED
THE REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH

A CATECHISM
WITH SCRIPTURAL REFERENCES

Authorised by the General Council
of the Free Church of England 2010/2019

COMMENDATION BY THE BISHOP PRIMUS

Christians are people who are to be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in them (1 Peter 3:15). In the Free Church of England it is our constant endeavour to help people of all ages to understand their faith and the great Scriptural truths to which we hold firm.

Over the years one of the teaching tools that we have used has been the *Catechism with Scriptural Proofs* prepared many years ago by Bishop Philip Eldridge. This was based on the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer, but with Scriptural references added, so that people can see for themselves that all that we teach is based on the Word of God.

Bishop Eldridge's Catechism is now out of print, so the Doctrine and Worship Committee has prepared a revised version, suitable for the needs of the 21st century. The core of this is identical with the older Catechism, but some new sections have been added to show the teaching of the Free Church of England on a number of issues that were not covered in the earlier edition. The traditional 'Question and Answer' format has been retained, but clergy and lay teachers may of course adapt the form of presentation to suit their particular situation.

I wish to thank my colleagues on the Doctrine and Worship Committee for the care they have taken in preparing this Catechism. The text has been approved by the General Council as an official publication of the Free Church of England. I warmly commend it to all our people, and to those who wish to know more about what we believe. It is my prayer that its contents may illuminate and equip many in witnessing to our Lord Jesus Christ.

+ Kenneth Powell

Bishop Primus March 2010

I
THE CALL OF GOD: THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

1. Question. What is your Christian name?

Answer. N.

2. Q. Who gave you this name?

A. My parents and godparents at my Baptism; when I was dedicated to God and made a member of the visible Church of Christ. (Luke 1:59-60, 2:21; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

3. Q. What is required of every member of Christ's Church?

A. Repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. (Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38; Acts 16:31, 20:21; Romans 10:9)

4. Q. What do you mean by repentance?

A. I mean a change of mind and heart, through God's gift of grace, whereby we turn with sorrow from our sins to love and serve God. (2 Corinthians. 7:10-11; Luke 3:8, 11, 14; Acts 26:20; 1 Thessalonians. 1:9)

5. Q. What do you mean by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ?

A. I mean believing and trusting in Jesus Christ as God made flesh for our sakes (John 1:14; 1 John 4:2-3), through whose blood we receive forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7), and through whose righteousness we are accounted and made righteous before God (2 Corinthians. 5:21; Romans 5:19). I am to show my faith in a life of discipleship that brings forth good works that glorify God (Matthew 5:16, James 2:14-17, Ephesians 2:8-9).

6. Q. What was undertaken by those who brought you to be baptised?

A. They undertook to teach me three things. First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the attractions and emptiness of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; (Eph. 5:11; 1 John 2:15-17)

Secondly, that I should put my whole trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour; (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Thessalonians. 2:15) and believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith (Matthew 28:20). And, thirdly, that I should keep God's holy will and commandments, and serve him faithfully all the days of my life. (Matthew 7:21; Eph. 2:10)

II
CHRISTIAN BELIEF

7. Q. Where do you find a summary of this Christian faith which you are bound to receive and hold fast?

A. I find a summary of the Christian faith in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

8. Q. On what authority does the Church accept these Creeds?

A. On the authority of Holy Scripture from which these truths were taken by the Fathers and Councils of the Church by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (John 14:26; 16:13-14; Acts 15:28)

Repeat the Apostles' Creed.

A. I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

9. Q. What do you learn from the Creeds?

A. First, I learn to believe in God the Father (Romans 1:7), who is the creator and ruler of the universe (Acts 14:15-17), and has made me, and all things for his glory; and that in his love he sent his Son to reconcile the world to himself. (John 3:16-17)

Secondly, in God the Son, who became man of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26-33; Gal 4:4) and died for my sins and those of all mankind (1 John 2:2; Rev. 5:9; 1 Peter 1:18-19); who was raised victorious over death and was exalted to the throne of God as our advocate and intercessor (1 John 2:1; Hebrews 7:25); and that he will come as our judge and saviour (Acts 1:11, 10:42, 17:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Thirdly, in God the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father (John 15:26); who inspires all that is good in mankind; who spoke through the Prophets (2 Peter 1:20-21); who came in his fullness at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4); who makes God's people holy (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13) and blesses them with gifts to use to his glory (1 Corinthians 12:7-11); and who enables me to grow more like Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29; Galatians 4:19).

III CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE

10. Q. The third promise made at your Baptism binds you to keep God's commandments all the days of your life. Where has God made these commandments known?

A. God has made his commandments known in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, especially in the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

11. Q. Repeat the ten Commandments found in the Law of Moses (shortened from Exodus 20:1-17)

A. I am the Lord your God; you shall have no other gods but me. You shall not make for yourself any idols, nor bow down to them and worship them:
You shall not dishonour the name of the Lord your God.
Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.
Honour your father and your mother.
You shall not commit murder.
You shall not commit adultery.
You shall not steal.
You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.
You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbour.

12. Q. What is our Lord's summary of this Law?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "The first commandment is this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength". The second is this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself". There is no other commandment greater than these.' (Mark 12:28-31)

13. Q. What do you learn by these Commandments?

A. I learn two things: my duty towards God, and my duty towards my neighbour.

14. Q. What is your duty towards God?

A. My duty towards God is to worship him as the only true God (Matthew 4:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:9); to love, trust and give thanks to him and obey him; and by the witness of my words and deeds to bring others to serve him (Romans 15:16), to allow no person or created thing to take his place, but to use my time, my gifts and my possessions as one who must give an account to him (Matthew 25:14-30), to keep the Lord's day for worship (Hebrews 10:25), prayer and rest from work, to take up my Cross and follow Christ in penitence and faith (Luke 9:23-26), living in thankful remembrance of his death, and to heed the voice and promptings of the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19), to be a faithful steward of God's creation (Genesis 1:29-30, 2:15; Psalm 104).

15. Q. What is your duty towards your neighbour?

A. My duty towards my neighbour is to love them as myself (Matthew 22:39), and to behave towards everyone as I would want them to behave towards me (Matthew 7:12); to love, respect and help my father and mother (Proverbs 1:8; 1 Timothy 5:4); to honour, obey and pray for the Queen and all who are in authority under her (1 Timothy 2:1-3; Romans 13:1-7); to be respectful to all, and without envy; to hurt nobody by word nor deed; to be true and just in all my dealings; to bear no malice nor hatred in my heart (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15); to keep my hands from picking and stealing, and my tongue from lying, slandering and harmful gossip; to be clean in thought, word and deed (Ephesians 4:25-29), controlling my bodily desires

through the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within me (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4), and if called to the state of matrimony to live faithfully in it (Hebrews 13:4); not to covet nor desire other people's possessions; but to work honestly and well, and to give generously to those in need (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12). Thus I acknowledge God's reign in human society, and try to live as a citizen of his Kingdom, fighting against evil wherever I find it, in myself, or in the world around me.

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

GRACE

16. Q. How can you carry out these duties and overcome temptation and sin?

A. I can do these things only by the help of God and through his grace (Philippians 4:13; Hebrews 4:16).

17. Q. In what ways do you receive these gifts of God's grace?

A. I receive these gifts of God's grace within the fellowship of the Church, when I humbly worship and pray (James 4:6), when I read the Bible, when I receive the Sacraments, and as I live my daily life to his glory.

THE CHURCH

18. Q. What is the Church?

A. The Church is the People of God (Exodus 6:7) and the Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23, 5:23; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 12:5), the temple of the living God (2 Corinthians 6:19), a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 5:10) through which he continues the proclamation of the Kingdom (Romans 10:14-15) and his reconciling work on earth (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). Its members enter it by faith and baptism, and are one company with those who worship God in heaven. It is the community in which the living Tradition received from the Apostles is transmitted until the end of the world (Ephesians 2:20; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 2 Timothy 1:13-14, 2:2).

19. Q. How is the Church described in the Creeds?

A. The Church is described as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.

20. Q. What do you mean by these words?

A. By these words I mean that: the Church is *One*, because, in spite of its visible divisions, it is one family under one Father (Ephesians 4:3-4), whose purpose is to unite all people in Jesus Christ (John 17:21), who is the Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18); the Church is *Holy* because it is set apart by God for himself, through the Holy Spirit (Exodus 31:13; 1 Peter 1:16; Ephesians 5:25-26); the Church is *Catholic* because it is universal, for all nations and for all time, holding the Christian faith in its fullness (Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 1:22-23); the Church is *Apostolic* because it is sent to preach the Gospel to the whole world, and receives its divine authority from Christ through his Apostles. (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:19-20; Revelation 7:9, 21:14; Galatians 1:1).

21. Q. What is the Free Church of England?

A. The Free Church of England is part of the ancient Church of this land and a branch of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, whose doctrine she proclaims and whose ministry she maintains.

WORSHIP AND PRAYER

22. Q. What do you mean by the worship of God?

A. To worship God is to respond to his love, first by joining in the Church's offering of praise, thanksgiving, prayer and spiritual sacrifice (1 Peter 2:5), and by hearing his holy Word (1 Timothy 4:13); secondly by acknowledging him as the Lord of my life and offering my life in return as a living sacrifice. (Romans 12:1)

23. Q. Why do we keep Sunday as the chief day of Christian worship?

A. We keep Sunday as the chief day of Christian worship because it was on this day – the first day of the week – that our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead (Luke 24:1; John 20:1; Acts 20:7).

24. Q. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is the lifting up of hearts and minds to God. We adore him, we confess our sins and ask to be forgiven, we thank him, we pray for others and for ourselves, we listen to him and seek to know his will.

Repeat the Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

or

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread; forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

25. Q. What do you ask God in this prayer?

A. I ask my heavenly Father, who is the giver of all goodness, to send his grace to me, and to all people; that we may worship him, serve him, and obey him, as we ought to do. And I pray that God will send us all the things that we need for both our souls and bodies; and that he will be merciful to us, forgiving us our sins and giving us grace to forgive others; and that he will help us withstand temptation, and will save and defend us from all dangers, whether spiritual or physical. Finally, I acknowledge the wonder of his sovereign power. And to all this I say, Amen, so be it.

26. Q. What is temptation?

A. Temptation means 'testing'. God allows us to be tested so that we may learn to rely on him and grow spiritually (Genesis 22:1; Deuteronomy 13:3; James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6-7). Temptation is not sin,

and when we are tempted, God offers us a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13). Jesus was tempted in every respect as we are, but never sinned (Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 4:1-11).

THE BIBLE**27. Q. What is the Bible?**

A. The Bible is the name given to the collection of Sacred Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments or Covenants, of which God is the Inspirer and Author (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21, 3:15-16). It is the record of his revelation of himself to mankind through the patriarchs (Romans 15:8), prophets (Acts 3:24) and his people Israel, and above all in his Son, Jesus Christ (Acts 17:11; Hebrews 1:1-2). With the sending of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, recorded in the apostolic testimony, God's definitive self-revelation is now fully complete (Luke 21:8, 33; Revelation 22:18-19).

28. Q. How was the Bible given to us?

A. The Bible was given to us by the Holy Spirit who first inspired and guided the writers (2 Peter 1:21), and then led the Church to receive their writings as Holy Scripture (1 Timothy 4:13; Colossians 4:16; 2 Peter 3:2).

29. Q. How should we read the Bible?

A. We should read the Bible with the desire and prayer that we may know Christ better (John 5:39) and that through it God will speak to us by his Holy Spirit, and enable us to know him and do his will (Psalm 119:9-16).

THE GOSPEL SACRAMENTS**30. Q. What do you mean by a Sacrament?**

A. By a sacrament I mean a celebration of redemption, in a manner commanded by Christ, in which material things become signs and pledges of God's grace, and outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace which we receive when we receive the sacrament in faith.

31. Q. What are the Sacraments instituted by Christ in the Gospel?

A. Christ in the Gospel has appointed two Sacraments for his Church, as needed by all for the fullness of life: Baptism (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16), and the Lord's Supper (which is also called Holy Communion and Eucharist) (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

32. Q. What is the outward visible sign or form in Baptism?

A. Water (Acts 8:36-7, 10:47); in which we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

33. Q. What is the inward and spiritual grace?

A. Union with Christ in his death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4), the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), and a new birth into righteousness (John 3:5) within the royal priesthood of God's people, the Church (1 Peter 2:5, 9; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

34. Q. What is required of persons to be baptized?

A. Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith (Mark 16:16), whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament (Acts 2:38-39; 1 Peter 3:21).

35. Q. Why are infants baptized, when they cannot repent and believe?

A. In conformity with Scripture and the Tradition of the Church, infants are baptized because, though not yet old enough to make the promises for themselves, others, making the promises for them, can claim their adoption as children of God (Acts 10:24, 47, 16:15, 33; Mark 10:13-16; 1 Corinthians 7:14).

36. Q. What is the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper?

A. The Lord's Supper was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ on the night before his crucifixion to be a continual memorial (anamnesis) of his sacrificial death (Romans 3:23-25), and of and of the benefits which we receive from it. It is also called the Eucharist, the Church's sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise

(Colossians 1:12-13; Acts 2:42, 46-7; Hebrews 13:15; 1 Peter 2:5,9); and Holy Communion because through it we have fellowship (communion) with Christ and with the whole Church. (1 Corinthians 10:17)

37. Q. What is the outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper?

A. Bread and wine, which the Lord commanded us to receive (Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

38. Q. What is the inward part, or thing signified?

A. The Body and Blood of Christ, God and Man, which are truly received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper. (John 6:53; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:26-30).

39. Q. What is meant by receiving the Body and Blood of Christ?

A. Receiving, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, the life of Christ himself into our lives. (Ephesians 3:16-17; John 6:51-63).

40. Q. What are the benefits that we receive by partaking?

A. The strengthening and refreshing of our souls to eternal life by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine (John 6:51, 54-56; Psalm 104:15), and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet (Luke 22:14-18; Revelation 19:9)

41. Q. What is required of those who come to the Lord's Supper?

A. To examine themselves (1 Corinthians 11:28-29), and sincerely to repent of their sins (Matthew 8:8); to have a living faith in God's mercy through Christ (Hebrews 10:19-22), remembering his death with thanksgiving; to be steadfastly resolved to lead a new life of self-offering (1 Corinthians 5:7-8; Romans 12:1); and to be in charity with all men (Matthew 5:23-24).

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

42. Q. What do we mean by Ordination?

A. Ordination is the setting apart to the sacred ministry of the Church by the laying-on of hands by a bishop with prayer for the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:3, 6:6, 14:23, 20:28; I Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 4:14).

43. Q. What main Orders of Ministers are there?

A. Three: Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons, which the Church has received and continued since earliest times (Philippians 1:1; Acts 15: 4, 6, 22, 21:18).

44. Q. What is the work of a Bishop?

A. After the pattern of Jesus our Apostle, High Priest, Shepherd and Overseer (Hebrews 3:1, 1 Peter 2:25) to be a chief shepherd in the Church (Acts 20:28); to guard and teach the faith (1 Timothy 6:20); to ordain and confirm (2 Timothy 1:6); to be the chief minister of the Word and Sacraments in his Diocese (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:2-4); and to intercede for the people committed to his charge (Hebrews 7:24-25; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12).

45. Q. What is the work of a Presbyter?

A. To share the ministry of the Bishop by giving him counsel and assisting him in building up the People of God (Acts 15:22; 1 Peter 5:1); most especially by preaching the Word of God (2 Timothy 4:2); by teaching and baptizing; by presiding at the Holy Communion; by pronouncing God's forgiveness and blessing (John 20:23); and by caring for the people entrusted by the Bishop to his charge (Acts 14:23).

46. Q. What is the work of a Deacon?

A. After the pattern of Jesus the Servant (Matthew 20:28, Luke 22:27, John 13:14) to serve the People of God by helping the Bishop and Presbyters in the conduct of worship and in pastoral care (Acts 6:6, 8; 1 Timothy 3:8-10).

47. Q. Who may be admitted to these three ministries?

A. In conformity with Scripture and the Tradition of the Church, the Free Church of England admits only baptized males to these ministries (1 Corinthians 14:33-37; Ephesians 5:22; 1 Timothy 2:12), after their calling has been tested and accepted by the Church (1 Samuel 3:1-21; Acts 9:1-16; 1 Timothy 4:14).

48. Q. Are these the only ministries in the Church?

A. No. The Holy Spirit bestows on men and women many gifts and ministries to be used in building up God's Church (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 11:3; Ephesians 4:11).

OTHER MINISTRIES OF GRACE

49. Q. What is Confirmation?

A. Confirmation is the ministry by which, through prayer with the laying on of hands by the Bishop, the Holy Spirit, promised to the baptized, gives strength for the Christian life (Acts 8:17, 19:6; John 7:37-39; Luke 2:12; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Titus 3:5; 1 John 2:20).

50. Q. What is required of persons to be confirmed?

A. It is required that persons to be confirmed should have been baptized, be sufficiently instructed in the Christian faith, be penitent for their sins, and be ready to confess Jesus Christ as Saviour and obey him as Lord.

51. Q. What is Holy Matrimony?

A. Holy Matrimony is the exclusive commitment of a man and woman to each other in conjugal love (Genesis 2:20-25; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5). It is intended to be a life-long union (Matthew 19:3-12), in which children may be born and nurtured (1 Corinthians 7:12-14). A pattern for marriage is shown in Christ's love for the Church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

52. Q. What is the ministry of Healing?

A. The seeking of God's grace for the healing of mind, spirit and body, in response to faith and prayer, by the laying on of hands and/or by anointing with oil (Mark 16:18; James 5:14-16).

53. Q. What is the ministry of Absolution?

A. The pronouncing of God's mercy and his forgiveness of sins to those who have made confession of their sins with the intention of amending their lives, by those whom the Church has authorized to do so (John 20:22-23; James 5:16; Psalm 51:7-9; 1 John 1:9-10).

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

54. Q. What is the hope in which a Christian lives?

A. A Christian lives in the certain hope of the Advent of Christ, the judgement, and resurrection to life everlasting.

55. Q. What are we to understand by the Advent of Christ?

A. By the Advent or Second Coming of Christ we are to understand that Christ, through whom God has created and redeemed all things, will return unmistakably into human history to make all things perfect and complete in his eternal kingdom (Matthew 24:23-27; Acts 1:11, 10:42; Romans 14:9; 1 Corinthians 16:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; Revelation 22:7, 20).

56. Q. What are we to understand by the judgement?

A. By the judgement we are to understand that all people will have to account for their lives to God (Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:16, 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10), who will condemn and destroy all that is evil, and bring his servants into the joy of their Lord (Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10).

57. Q. What are we to understand by resurrection?

A. By resurrection we are to understand that God who has overcome death by the resurrection of Christ, will raise from death in a body of glory all who are Christ's, that they may live with him in the fellowship of the saints (Luke 24:39; John 5:29, 6:54; 1 Corinthians 15:35-37, 42-44, 52-58; Colossians 2:12, 3:1; Revelation 6:9, 7:9).

58. Q. What, then, is our assurance as Christians?

A. Our assurance as Christians is that neither death nor anything else will be able to separate us from God's love in Jesus Christ

(Romans 8:38-39) and that we shall experience a new heaven and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1) in which there is no more suffering (Revelation 21:4), and in which all things will be united in Christ (Ephesians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 15:28; 1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 13:12; Revelation 22:4-5).

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost,
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be
world without end. Amen.