

A Short Catechism

Jeremy Taylor

Anglican · Post-Reformation · Catechesis

STROMATA 85

Downloaded from *The Stromata* (thestromata.com). Free for personal, educational, and ministry use.

INTRODUCTION

Composed by Jeremy Taylor during the years when Anglican worship was proscribed under the Commonwealth, this catechism was written to keep the rudiments of the faith alive in households cut off from public liturgy and trained clergy. Taylor, later Bishop of Down and Connor and best known for *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*, here strips his characteristic eloquence down to the bone, producing question-and-answer instruction fit for children and new believers. The form is ancient — descending from the patristic catechumenate through Luther and the Book of Common Prayer, but Taylor's particular gift is for compression without coldness. Read it as you would overhear a careful father teaching at table: plain, ordered, and quietly insistent on what must not be forgotten.

A Short Catechism The Institution of Young Persons in the Christian Religion.

QUESTION.

In what does true Religion consist?

ANSWER.

In the knowledge of the one, true God, and whom he hath sent, Jesus Christ, and in the worshipping and serving them.

Quest. What dost thou believe concerning God?

Answ. That there is a God: 2. That he is one. 3. Eternal, 4. Almighty: 5. That he hath made all the world: 6. That he knows all things: 7. That he is a Spirit; not of any shape or figure, or parts, or body: 8. That he is present in all places: 9. That his seat is in Heaven, and he governs all the world, so that nothing happens without his order and leave: 10. That he is the Fountain of Justice, 11. of Mercy, 12. of Bounty or Goodness: 13. That he is unalterably happy, and infinitely perfect: 14. That no evil can come near him: 15. And he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Quest. What other Mystery is revealed concerning God?

Ans. That God being one in nature, is also three in Person; expressed in Scripture by the names of [Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.] The first Person being known to us by the name of [The Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ.] The second Person is called [The Son, and the Word of the Father.] The third is [The Spirit and Promise of the Father:] and these are Three and One after a secret manner, which we must believe, but cannot understand.

Quest. What is this God to us?

Ans. He is our Creator and Father, and therefore he is our Lord; and we are his Creatures, his Sons, and his Servants.

Quest. Wherefore did God create and make us?

Ans. That we might do him honour and service, and receive from him infinite felicities.

Quest. How did God make man?

Ans. By the power of his Word, out of the slime of the earth, and he breathed into him the breath of life.

Quest. Was man good or bad, when God made him?

Ans. Man was made pure and innocent.

Quest. How then did man become sinful and miserable?

Ans. By listening to the whispers of a tempting spirit, and breaking an easie Commandment, which God gave him as the first tryal of his obedience.

Quest. What evils and change followed this sin?

Ans. Adam, who was the first man and the first sinner, did both for himself and his posterity, fall into the state of death, of sickness, and misfortunes, & disorder both of body and soul: we were thrown out of Paradise, and lost our Immortality.

Quest. Was man left in these evill without remedy?

Ans. No. But God pitying his creature, promised, That of the seed of the woman, he would raise up a Saviour and Redeemer, who should restore us to Gods favour, and to the felicity which we lost.

Quest. How did God perform the promise?

Ans. By sending Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, to dye for our sins, to become our Lord and the Author of holiness, and life, and salvation to mankinde.

Quest. Who is Jesus Christ?

Ans. He is the Son of God, the second Person of the holy Trinity, equal with the Father, true God without beginning of life, or end of days.

Quest. How then could he be our Redeemer, and the promised seed of the woman?

Ans. The Son of God in the fulness of time, by the miracles of his Mercy, took upon him humane Nature, and united it after a wonderful manner to his Godhead; so that he was both God and Man: He was born of a Virgin, who conceived him not by any natural means, but by the power of the Holy Ghost, and was called Jesus Christ, and his Mothers name was Mary, of the seed of Abraham, of the family of King David; and all these things came to passe when Augustus Caesar was Lord of the Roman Empire.

Quest. How did Jesus Christ work this promised Redemption for us?

Ans. By his holy and humble life, and his obedient dying a painful death for us upon the Cross.

Quest. What benefits do we receive by the life and death of Jesus Christ?

Ans. We are instructed by his Doctrine, encouraged by his excellent Example, we are reconciled to God by his Death; He hath given us an excellent Law, and glorious Promises, and himself hath received power to make good all those Promises to his servants, and fearfully to destroy them that will not have him to reign over them.

Quest. What Promises hath Jesus Christ made us in the Gospel?

Ans. He hath promised to give us all that we need in this life; That every thing shall work together for our good; That he will be with us in tribulation and persecution; He hath promised his Graces and his holy Spirit to enable us to do our duty; and if we make use of these graces, he hath promised to give us more; He hath promised to forgive us our sins; to hear our prayers; to take the sting of death from us; to keep our souls in safe custody after death; and in his due time to raise our bodies from the grave, and to joyn them to our souls, and to give us eternal life, and joyes that shall never cease.

Quest. How is Jesus Christ able to do all this for us?

Ans. When he had suffered death, and was buried three dayes, God raised him up again, and gave him all power in heaven and earth, made him Head of the Church, Lord of Men and Angels, and the Judge of the Quick and Dead.

Quest. By what means doth Jesus Christ our Lord convey all these blessings to us?

Ans. Jesus Christ had three Offices, and in all he was Mediator between God and Man; He is our Prophet, our Priest, and our King.

Quest. What was his Office as he was a Prophet?

Ans. This Office he finished on earth; beginning when he was thirty years old to preach the Gospel of the Kingdome, Faith and Repentance.

Quest. When began his Priestly Office, and wherein does it consist?

Ans. It began at his death; for he was himself the Priest and the Sacrifice, offering himself upon the Altar of the Cross for the sins of all the world.

Quest. Did his Priestly Office then cease?

Ans. No: he is a Priest for ever; that is, unto the end of the world, and represents the same Sacrifice to God in heaven, interceding and praying continually for us, in the virtue of that Sacrifice, by which he obtains relief of all our necessities.

Quest. What doth Christ in heaven pray for on our behalf?

Ans. That our sins may be pardoned, our infirmities pitied, our necessities relieved, our persons defended, our temptations overcome, that we may be reconciled to God, and be saved.

Quest. How is Jesus Christ also our King?

Ans. When he arose from his grave, and had for forty dayes together conversed with his Disciples, shewing himself alive by many infallible tokens, he ascended into heaven, and there sits at the right hand of God; all things being made subject to him, Angels, and Men, and Devils, Heaven and Earth, the Elements, and all the Creatures; and over all he reigns, comforting and defending his Elect, subduing the power of the Devil, taking out the sting of death, and making all to serve the glory of God, and to turn to the good of his Elect.

Quest. How long must his Kingdome last?

Ans. Till Christ hath brought all his enemies under his feet, that is, till the day of Judgement: in which day shall be performed the greatest acts of his Kingly power; for then he shall quite conquer Death, triumph over the Devils, throw his enemies into Hell-fire, and carry all his Elect to never-ceasing glories; and then he shall deliver up the Kingdome to his Father, that God may be all in all.

Quest. How is Christ a Mediator in all these Offices?

Ans. A Mediator signifies one that stands between God and us. As Christ is a Prophet, so he taught us his Fathers will, and tyes us to obedience: As he is a Priest, he is our Redeemer, having paid a price for us, even his most precious blood, and our Advocate pleading for us, and mediating our Pardon and Salvation: As he is a King, so he is our Lord, our Patron, and our Judge; yet it is the Kingdome of a Mediator, that is, in order to the world to come, but then to determine and end. And in all these, he hath made a Covenant between God and us of an everlasting interest.

Quest. What is the Covenant which Jesus Christ our Mediator hath made between God and us?

Ans. That God will write his Laws in our hearts, and will pardon us, and defend us, and raise us up again at the last day, and give us an inheritance in his Kingdome.

Quest. To what Conditions hath he bound us on our part?

Ans. Faith, and Repentance.

Quest. When do we enter into this Covenant?

Ans. In our Baptism, and at our ripe years, when we understand the secrets of the Kingdome of Christ, and undertake willingly what in our names was undertaken for us in our infancy.

Quest. What is the Covenant of Faith which we enter into in Baptism?

Ans. We promise to believe that Jesus Christ is the Messias, or he that was to come into the world; That he is the Anointed of the Lord, or the Lords Christ; That he is the Son of God, and the Son of the Virgin Mary; That he is God incarnate, or God manifested in the flesh; That he is the Mediator between God and Man; That he died for us upon the Cross, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven, and shall be there till the day of Judgement, that then he shall be our Judge; In the mean time he is the King of the World, and Head of the Church.

Quest. What is the Covenant of Repentance?

Ans. We promise to leave all our sins, and with a hearty and sincere endeavour to give up our will and affections to Christ, and do what he hath commanded (according to our power and weakness.)

Quest. How if we fail of this Promise through infirmity, and commit sins?

Ans. Still we are within the Covenant of Repentance, that is, within the promise of pardon, and possibility of returning from dead works, and mortifying our lusts; and though this be done after the manner of men that is, in weakness, and with some failings, yet our endeavour must be hearty, and constant, and diligent, and our watchfulness and prayers for pardon, must be lasting and persevering.

Quest. What Ministeries hath Christ appointed to help us in this duty?

Ans. The Ministry of the Word & Sacraments, which he will accompany with his Grace and his Spirit.

Quest. What is a Sacrament?

Ans. An outward Ceremony ordained by Christ, to be a sign and a means of conveying his grace unto us.

Quest. How many Sacraments are ordained by Christ?

Ans. Two: Baptism, and the Supper of our Lord.

Quest. What is Baptism?

Ans. An outward washing of the body in water, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: in which we are buried with Christ in his death, after a Sacramental manner, and are made partakers of Christs death, and of his Resurrection, teaching us, That we should rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness.

Quest. What is the Sacrament of the Lords Supper?

Ans. A Ceremony of eating bread and drinking Wine, being blessed or consecrated by Gods Minister in publick Assemblies, in remembrance of Christs death and Passion.

Quest. What benefits are done unto us by this Sacrament?

Ans. Our souls are nourished by the body and blood of Christ; our bodies are sealed to a blessed Resurrection, and to Immortality; our infirmities are strengthened, our graces increased, our pardon made more certain, and when we present our selves to God, having received Christs body within us, we are sure to be accepted, and all the good prayers we make to God for our selves & others are sure to be heard.

Quest. Who are fit to receive this Sacrament?

Ans. None but baptized Christians, and such as repent of their sins, and heartily purpose to lead a good life.

Quest. What other Ministeries hath Christ ordained in his Church, to help us, and to bring so many great purposes to pass?

Ans. Jesus Christ hath appointed Ministers and Embassadors of his own to preach his Word to us, to pray for us, to exhort and to reprove, to comfort and instruct, to restore and reconcile us, if we be overtaken in a fault, to visit the sick, to separate the vile from the precious, to administer the Sacraments, and to watch for the good of our souls.

Quest. What are we tied to perform towards them?

Ans. To pay them honour and maintenance, to obey them in all things according to the Gospel, and to order our selves so, that they may give account of our souls with chearfulness and joy.

Quest. Which are the Commandments and Laws of Jesus Christ?

Ans. They are many, but easie; holy, but very pleasant to all good mindes, to such as desire to live well in this world, and in the world to come: and they are set down in the Sermons of our blessed Lord, and of his Apostles; but especially in the 5. 6. 7. Chapters of S. Matthew.

Source: The Golden Grove, Jeremy Taylor. London: Printed by J.F. for R. Royston at the Angel in Ivie-lane, 1655. Text sourced from Project Canterbury (anglicanhistory.org).

Transcribed from the 1655 first edition by Project Canterbury (Anglican History Project, anglicanhistory.org). Taylor composed The Golden Grove during his years of enforced exile in Wales under the Interregnum, when Anglican worship had been suppressed and he was living under the protection of Richard Vaughan, Earl of Carbery, at the estate from which the book takes its name. The text is in the public domain; Taylor died in 1667. No translator is involved; this is Taylor's own English.

<https://www.thestromata.com/texts/a-short-catechism>