

TO BE A  
CHRISTIAN



*An Anglican Catechism*

APPROVED EDITION

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*An Anglican Catechism*

 **CROSSWAY**<sup>®</sup>

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TO BE A CHRISTIAN: AN ANGLICAN CATECHISM

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## P R E F A C E

Why an *Anglican* catechism? Anglicans are heirs of a rich tradition of Christian faith and life. That tradition stretches from today's worldwide Anglican Communion of millions of believers on six continents back centuries to laymen like William Wilberforce, who led the abolition of the slave trade in England, to the bishops and martyrs of the English Reformation like Thomas Cranmer, and to missionaries like Augustine of Canterbury and Saint Patrick, who spread the Gospel throughout the British Isles.

Throughout these centuries, Anglicans have articulated their faith in reference to classic sources of doctrine and worship. All true doctrine, Anglicans believe, is derived from Holy Scripture, which is the wellspring and ground for testing all that is taught in the Church. Saint Paul instructs the Church, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (*2 Timothy 3:16*). Further, Article 6 of the Articles of Religion states, "Whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the Faith."

Classic sources for the explication and elucidation of scriptural doctrine include the following:

- *The Early Church*. Anglicans have always held in high regard "such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the Scriptures," and which are summarized in the Apostles' Creed, Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, and Athanasian Creed.



- *The Articles of Religion (1571)*. The Articles, also known as the “Thirty-Nine Articles,” summarize the biblical faith recovered at the Reformation and have become the doctrinal norm for Anglicans around the world.
- *The King James Bible (1611)*. The translation of the Bible into English, begun in the sixteenth century by William Tyndale, achieved its classic form in the 1611 translation under King James I and remains the basis for many modern versions, such as the Revised Standard Version and the English Standard Version. In keeping with the principles of the English Reformation that promote worship in language that the people understand (*Articles of Religion, 24*), the Bible has since been translated into many languages. Anglican Christianity has now spread to encompass people of many races and languages all over the world.
- *The Book of Common Prayer (1549–1662)*. The Anglican Prayer Book is known worldwide as one of the finest expressions of Christian prayer and worship. The 1662 Prayer Book is predominantly composed of Scriptures formulated into prayer. It has been the standard for Anglican doctrine, discipline, and worship, and for subsequent revisions in many languages.
- *Music and hymnody*. Hymns, from writers like Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, John Mason Neale, and Graham Kendrick, have formed the spirituality of English-speaking Anglicans around the world. Today, composers in many languages continue in this powerful tradition of catechesis through music.
- *The Lambeth Quadrilateral*. Resolution 11 of the Lambeth Conference (1888) affirmed four marks of Church identity required for genuine unity and fellowship. These are the Holy Scriptures containing “all things necessary for salvation,” the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds as “the sufficient statement of the Christian faith,” two sacraments ordained

by Christ—Baptism and the Eucharist—and “the historic Episcopate, locally adapted.” These serve as a basis of Anglican identity, as well as instruments for ecumenical dialogue with other church traditions.

- *The Jerusalem Declaration (2008)*. This statement from the Global Anglican Future Conference in 2008 has become the theological basis for the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, of which the Anglican Church in North America is a part.

In keeping with this rich, diverse, and historic tradition of doctrine and worship, we receive this catechism and commend its use for the building up of the Church today.

We envision this catechism being used for courses, shorter or longer, based on groups of questions and answers. The degree to which it is used directly for instruction and the amount of memorization asked of individual catechumens are left to the catechist to determine by context and circumstance. What is more, the resources of modern technology open up multiple possibilities for its use in creative new ways.

A catechism is ideally to be used in the context of a relationship between the catechist (the discipleship instructor) and the catechumen (the one being instructed) to foster the process of catechesis (disciple-making). The catechumen is invited by the catechist to a new identity in Christ and into a new community, to the praise of God’s glory, to the practice of stewardship, and to sharing in the ministry of making disciples of all nations.

Building on the 2014 working edition of the catechism, this edition (approved 2018) has been enriched by feedback from hundreds of laypersons, clergy, bishops, and theologians of the Church. This input helped create a catechism we trust will be useful, especially for those raised with limited exposure to the Christian faith.

We give thanks for the sacrificial work and scholarship of those listed below, who have served the Church in the creation of the two editions of this catechism.

We pray that this book will be an effective instrument to disciple believers in the truth of the Gospel, so that they may serve Jesus Christ throughout the world (*2 Timothy 2:15*). May this catechism serve to build up the Body of Christ by grounding Christian believers in the Gospel.

On behalf of the College of Bishops  
of the Anglican Church in North America

The Most Reverend Foley Beach  
Archbishop and Primate

The Most Reverend Robert Duncan  
Archbishop and Primate, 2009–2014

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# I N T R O D U C T I O N

Two thousand years ago in Israel, the man who is God incarnate and Israel's Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, led his followers into a life-giving relationship with himself and his divine Father, and was executed by the Roman governor. Risen from the dead, he charged his followers to make disciples throughout the whole world, promising that he would be with them, and equipping them for their mission with his Holy Spirit. Founded upon God's revelation to Israel in the Old Testament, the New Testament presents the essential witness and teaching of Jesus' first disciples, the apostles, who proclaimed his truth with his authority. The faith of Christians today, as in every age, is shaped and defined by this apostolic account of Jesus Christ.

Within a century of Jesus' earthly ministry, Christian congregations could be found throughout the Roman world, from Spain to Persia and from North Africa to Britain. By this time, the *catechumenate* for those wishing to become Christians had become established Christian practice. From the Greek *katēcheō* ("instruct"), the catechumenate was a period of one-to-three-years' instruction (*catechesis*) leading to Baptism at Easter. This ancient pattern of Christian disciple-making continued for some centuries before falling into disuse as nominal Christianity increasingly became a universal aspect of Western culture.

The Reformation era of the sixteenth century saw a vigorous renewal of catechesis for both adults and children among both Protestants and Catholics. But catechesis has been in serious decline since the eighteenth century, and much of the discipline of discipling has been abandoned altogether in today's churches.

This *catechism* (a text used for instruction of Christian disciples) is designed as a resource manual for the renewal of Anglican catechetical practice. It presents the essential building blocks of classic catechetical instruction: the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments (or Decalogue). To these is added an initial section especially intended for those with no prior knowledge of the Gospel. Each section is presented in the question and answer form that became standard in the sixteenth century because of its proven effectiveness. Each question and answer offers essential teaching together with biblical references for group or individual study.

In one respect, this catechism breaks new ground for Anglicans. The historic 1662 Catechism in the English Book of Common Prayer is brief and specifically designed to prepare young people for confirmation and church membership. However, this present work is intended as a more comprehensive catechetical tool for adult (or near-adult) inquirers, and for all Christians seeking deeper grounding in the full reality of Christian faith and life.

As such, this catechism attempts to be a missional means by which God may bring about both conversion to Christ and formation in Christ (or regeneration and sanctification, to use older words). This vision of comprehensive usefulness has been before the minds of the writing team from the beginning.

Our guidelines in drafting have been as follows:

1. Everything taught should be compatible with, and acceptable to, all recognized schools of Anglican thought, so that all may be able confidently to use all the material.
2. Everything taught should be expressed as briefly as possible, in terms that are clear and correspond to today's use of language. There should be as little repetition as possible, though some overlap is inevitable.

3. All the answers and questions should be as easy to explain and to remember as possible.

We offer this catechism to the Church with the prayer that it may serve to build up the Body of Christ by helping many to come to full Christian faith and faithfulness in today's increasingly post-Christian world.

On behalf of the Committee for Catechesis  
of the Anglican Church in North America

The Reverend Canon J. I. Packer





# CONCERNING SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

This catechism's Scripture references, which follow each question and answer, support its sound teaching with passages from both the Old and New Testaments. The references generally follow a lectionary-style approach, with passages drawn from the Old Testament, the Psalms, the Gospels, Acts, and the New Testament Epistles. These references are not merely "proof texts" demonstrating that an answer is scriptural. Rather, they are for deeper reflection, study, and exposition of the truth taught by the answer. In addition to the direct commands, clear principles, and explicit teachings of Scripture, they often include important stories, types, and images that reveal or point to Jesus Christ. In this way, the catechism upholds the Anglican belief that the entirety of Scripture professes Jesus Christ as Lord.

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## PART I

# BEGINNING WITH CHRIST

## INTRODUCTION

This catechism is designed to teach you what it means to be a Christian. It shows you what is essential for Christian faith and life. It will open for you the door to knowing Jesus Christ and experiencing the wonder of God's love through him. If you follow its teaching, it will help you to become a citizen of God's kingdom and fully involved in the life and mission of his Church. And it will anchor you in the reality of God's unquenchable joy, beginning in this life and ever increasing in the life to come.

However, one can understand these things and still remain apart from them. In order to know God's love for you, you need to know and love Jesus Christ, and commit yourself to him as his lifelong disciple in his community, the Church. This opening section of the catechism will help you to take that step, if you have not done so already.

Whether or not you were raised in the Church, to be a Christian requires a deliberate, personal commitment to Jesus Christ, much like the commitment a person makes in marriage. Being a Christian is a process of continuing forward in faithfulness to Jesus from that point on. In order to make this commitment to Jesus, you need to know the essentials about who he is and what he has done for you. This is the Gospel ("good news") of Jesus Christ.

## THE GOSPEL

God created the world and made us to be in loving relationship with him. Though created good, human nature became fatally flawed, and we are now all out of step with God. In Bible language, we are sinners, guilty before God and separated from him.

The good news of the Gospel is that God took loving action in Jesus Christ to save us from this dire situation. The key facts of this divine remedy are these: God the Father sent his eternal Son into this world to reconcile us to himself, to free us to love and serve him, and to prepare us to share his glory in the life to come. Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit, lived a perfect life, died for our sins, and rose bodily from the dead to restore us to God. Given authority by his Father, Jesus now rules in heaven as King over all things, advancing God's kingdom throughout the world. In the fullness of time, Jesus will return to establish his kingdom in its glory on earth, and all things will be renewed.

Reigning in heaven over all things, Jesus Christ continues to draw sinners to himself. He enables us by his Holy Spirit to turn wholeheartedly from our sinful and self-centered ways (repentance), and to entrust ourselves to him to live in union and communion with him (faith). In spiritual terms, sin is the way of death, and fellowship with Christ is the way of life.

### TURNING TO CHRIST

Turning to Christ brings us into fellowship with God. Baptism, which is the rite of entry into the Church's fellowship, marks the beginning of this new life in Christ. The apostle Peter, proclaiming the Gospel, said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (*Acts 2:38*).

Through faith, repentance, and Baptism we are spiritually united to Jesus and become children of God the Father. Jesus said: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (*John 14:6*). As we come to the Father through Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit enlightens our minds and hearts to know him, and we are born again spiritually to new life. To continue to live faithfully as Christians, we must rely upon the power and gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to God’s people.

When the disciple Thomas encountered the risen Jesus, he acknowledged him by saying, “My Lord and my God!” (*John 20:28*). To be a Christian you must, like Thomas, wholeheartedly submit to the living Christ as your Lord and God. Knowing the Lord Jesus means personally believing in him, surrendering your life to him through repentance and Baptism, and living as one of his joyful followers.

A clear way to make this commitment of faith and repentance is to offer to God a prayer in which you

- confess your sins to God, being as specific as possible, and repent by turning from them;
- thank God for his mercy and forgiveness given to you in Jesus Christ;
- promise to follow and obey Jesus as your Lord;
- ask the Holy Spirit to help you be faithful to Jesus as you grow into spiritual maturity.

One example of such a prayer is the following:

Almighty Father, I confess that I have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions (especially \_\_\_\_\_). I am truly sorry and humbly repent. Thank you for forgiving my sins through the death of your Son, Jesus. I turn to you and give you my life. Fill and strengthen me with your Holy

Spirit to love you, to follow Jesus as my Lord in the fellowship of his Church, and to become more like him each day. **Amen.**

## NEXT STEPS

To be a Christian is to be included in God's family, the Church. No one should try to be a Christian alone. If you are making this commitment for the first time—or have not been a practicing Christian for some time—here are some further steps to take:

- Share your commitment as soon as possible with one or more Christians and with an ordained minister, so they can pray for you.
- If you are not connected with a church, join a biblically faithful one. If you are connected but not involved, look for ways to deepen your participation.
- If you are now becoming a follower of Jesus Christ and have never been baptized, it is important that you speak with a minister about preparing for Baptism. It is also important to pray for God's help and spiritual protection.
- If you are a baptized Christian but have not been living out your faith, it is appropriate for you to confess your sins and reaffirm your faith in the presence of a minister.
- In order to grow in your new life in Christ, it is vitally important that you be involved in regular worship, Bible study, prayer, and Christian fellowship.

Coming to personal faith in Christ is a momentous decision that is often not made quickly. If you are not yet ready to take this step, but you continue to seek after God, you may want to pray a prayer like the following:

O God, please reveal yourself to me. Draw near to me as I seek you. Open my eyes to see your truth. Show me those things in

my mind and heart that keep me from faith in you. Help me to know and trust Jesus Christ. And lead me to those people who can help me as I seek to know you.

God will always answer such prayers made with patience, persistence, and humility. As you explore this catechism, continue to pray that you will come to know God more fully.

In order to provide clarity and further detail, and for the purposes of teaching and learning, these things will now be set out in question and answer form.

## SALVATION

### 1. What is the human condition?

Though created good and made for fellowship with our Creator, humanity has been cut off from God by self-centered rebellion against him, leading to lawless living, guilt, shame, death, and the fear of judgment. This is the state of sin. (*Genesis 3:1-13; Psalm 14:1-3; Matthew 15:10-20; Romans 1:18-23; 3:9-23*)

### 2. What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the good news that God loves the world and offers salvation from sin through his Son, Jesus Christ. (*Psalm 103:1-13; Isaiah 53:4-5; John 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5*)

### 3. How does sin affect you?

Sin alienates me from God, my neighbor, God's good creation, and myself. Apart from Christ, I am hopeless, guilty, lost, helpless, and walking in the way of death. (*Genesis 3:14-19; Psalm 38; Isaiah 53:6; 59:1-2; Romans 6:20-23*)



**4. What is the way of death?**

The way of death is a life without God's love and Holy Spirit, a life controlled by things that cannot bring me eternal joy, leading only to darkness, misery, and eternal condemnation. (*Genesis 2:16–17; Deuteronomy 28:15–19; Proverbs 14:12; John 8:34; Romans 1:24–25*)

**5. Can you save yourself from the way of sin and death?**

No. I have no power to save myself, for sin has corrupted my conscience, confused my mind, and captured my will. Only God can save me. (*Psalms 33:13–19; Isaiah 43:8–13; John 3:1–8; Ephesians 2:1–9*)

**6. How does God save you?**

God forgives my sins and reconciles me to himself through his Son, Jesus Christ, whom he has given to the world as an undeserved gift of love. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (*John 3:16; see also Psalm 34; Zechariah 12:10–13:2; Romans 3:23–26*)

**7. Why does God save you?**

Because he loves me, God saves me from sin and judgment, so that I may love and serve him for his glory. (*Psalms 98; Isaiah 42:5–9; John 3:17; Romans 5:8–10; 2 Corinthians 5:18–21; Ephesians 1:3–14*)

**8. Who is Jesus Christ?**

Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the Savior of the world. Fully divine, he took on our human nature, died on the Cross for our sins, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and now rules as Lord and King over all creation. (*Numbers 21:4–9; Psalm 110; John 3:13–15; Philippians 2:5–11; Colossians 1:15–20*)

**9. Is there any other way of salvation?**

No. The apostle Peter said of Jesus, “There is salvation in no one else” (*Acts 4:12*). Jesus is the only one who can save me and reconcile me to God. (*Psalm 2; Isaiah 42:1-4; John 14:5-6; 1 Timothy 2:5-6*)

**10. How should you respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ?**

As soon as I receive and believe the Gospel, I should repent of my sins, put faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord, and prepare to be baptized. “Now is the day of salvation.” (*2 Corinthians 6:2; see also Psalm 32; Isaiah 55:6-7; Acts 2:37-39*)

**11. What does it mean for you to repent?**

To repent means that I have a change of heart, turning from sinfully serving myself to serving God as I follow Jesus Christ. I need God’s help to make this change. (*Psalm 51:16-17; Isaiah 57:15-19; Acts 3:19-21; 1 John 2:1-2*)

**12. What does it mean for you to have faith?**

To have faith means that I believe the Gospel is the truth: that Jesus died for my sins, rose from the dead, and rules over my life. Therefore, I entrust myself to him as my Savior, and I obey him as my Lord. (*Psalm 40:1-10; Proverbs 3:5-8; John 1:9-13; Romans 10:9-10; Hebrews 11:1, 6*)

**13. How can you repent and put your faith in Jesus Christ?**

With God’s help, I can acknowledge and turn from my sins, receive the gift of God’s grace in Jesus Christ, and embrace the new life he freely gives me. [One way to do this is by sincerely praying in the way described in the “Turning to Christ” section above, p. 20.] (*Psalm 86:1-7; Joel 2:32; Acts 16:30-34; Romans 10:11-13; Hebrews 12:1-2*)

**14. What should you do as the sign of your repentance and faith?**

After receiving instruction in the faith, I should be baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, thus joining his Body, the Church. If I have already been baptized, I should confess my sins, seek the guidance of a minister, affirm the promises made at my Baptism, and take my place as a member of the Church. (*Psalm 51:5-7; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 1 Peter 3:18-22*)

**15. What does God grant in your new life in Christ?**

God grants me reconciliation with him (*2 Corinthians 5:17-19*), forgiveness of my sins (*Colossians 1:13-14*), union with him in Christ (*Romans 6:3-5*), adoption into his family (*Galatians 4:4-7*), citizenship in his kingdom (*Ephesians 2:19-21; Philippians 3:20*), new life in the Holy Spirit (*Titus 3:4-5*), and the promise of eternal life (*John 3:16; 1 John 5:12*).

**16. What does God desire to accomplish in your life in Christ?**

God desires to free me from captivity to sin and transform me into the image of Jesus Christ, by the power of his Holy Spirit. (*Exodus 33:18-23; 34:29-35; Psalm 27:4, 7-14; Matthew 17:1-9; Romans 6:5-11; 2 Corinthians 3:12-18*)

**17. By what means will God transform you into the image of Jesus Christ?**

The first Christians “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (*Acts 2:42*). Following this pattern, I will be transformed within the life of the Church through reading Scripture and receiving the sacraments, through worship and prayer, and through fellowship with God’s people and loving witness to the world. (*Deuteronomy 6:1-9; 2 Chronicles 7:1-3; Psalm 1; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25*)

*A Prayer for God's Love*

Almighty God, you so loved the world that you gave your only Son, that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life: Pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love by your Holy Spirit, that we may delight in the inheritance that is ours as your sons and daughters, and live to your praise and glory, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**



## A Catechism Grounded in Christian Truth for Today's Increasingly Post-Christian World

- 360+ questions and answers that instruct new believers and church members in the core beliefs and practices of the Christian faith
- Scripture references that support each question and answer
- Summarizes essential teaching along with biblical references for group or individual study
- Covers the full range of Christian doctrine and life, drawing from the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and other important sources from church history
- Edited by J. I. Packer and Joel Scandrett

CATECHISM