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BRIEF CATECHISM

OF

BIBLE DOCTRINE.

BY

REV. JAMES P. BOYCE, D. D.,

PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC AND POLEMIC THEOLOGY IN THE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

REVISED EDITION.

PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR,

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PREFACE.

THE author of this brief Doctrinal Catechism knows of no work of the kind in circulation among Baptists. Keach's Catechism, generally called the "Baptist Catechism," is scarcely used at all. No reason can be assigned for this, except that it is too difficult for children. In the present work an attempt has been made to simplify, as far as possible, without sacrificing important truth. The teacher may have to give some further aid, by explaining a few words here and there. The aim has been to bring the truth taught within the comprehension of children of ten to twelve years old and upwards. The desire has been felt to promote catechetical instruction in the family and the Sunday-school. It is believed that there are many who appreciate its value as a means of teaching the truth of God. To the attention of such this little work is commended, with the hope that it may meet their wants. At the same time, Pastors of churches, Superintendents and Teachers of Sunday-schools, and pious parents, are urged to consider how far a partial recourse at least to catechetical instruction may tend to restore the vigorous piety of bygone days.



CATECHISM.

THE BIBLE

1. What book have we that teaches about God?
The Bible.

2. By what other name is it known?
The Scriptures.

3. Into what two parts is it divided?
Into the Old and New Testaments.

4. How came it to be written?
God inspired holy men to write it.

5. Did they write it exactly as God wished?
Yes; as much so as if he had written every word himself.

6. Ought it, therefore, to be believed and obeyed?
Yes; as much so as though God had spoken directly to us.

7. Does it teach us every thing about God?
It does not; no language could teach us the full glory of God, nor could we ever comprehend it.

8. How much does it teach us?
It teaches us all that is necessary about God, our duty to Him, our condition as sinners, and the way of salvation.

6 CATECHISM OF BIBLE DOCTRINE.

GOD.

1. Who is God?

He is the Maker and Supreme Ruler of all things, and the greatest and best of beings.

2. Is there but one God?

There is but one God.

3. For what purpose did He create all things?

That He might show forth his glory.

4. Does He not also delight in the happiness and goodness of his creatures.

Yes; and these ends are secured by the display of his glory.

5. How did He make the worlds?

He made them out of nothing.

6. Of what did He make man?

He formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

7. What may we learn from these acts of creation?

That He is a being of boundless power, wisdom and goodness.

8. Has He all other perfections?

Yes; He has every perfection, and to an equally boundless extent.

9. What is due to this glorious Being?

The supreme love and obedience of all His creatures.

PROVIDENCE.

1. Does God take notice of every thing that takes place?

Yes; nothing comes to pass without His knowledge and permission.

2. When did He determine what things He would do, and what He would permit?

In Eternity; before He had created anything.

3. Has He ever permitted his creatures to do wrong?

Yes; when they have wilfully chosen to do so.

4. Has He not, however, warned them of the consequences of sin?

He has always warned them that He would surely punish them if they should sin.

5. Can God be regarded as approving sin under any circumstances?

On the contrary, the Scriptures teach us that He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.

6. Does He not influence men to do right?

He does; and it is owing to His grace that we do any thing that is good.

7. Does He ever make men do right against their will?

He never does; but He so leads them to see and love what is right, that they choose to do it.

8 CATECHISM OF BIBLE DOCTRINE

ORIGINAL AND PRESENT CONDITION OF MAN.

1. In what condition was man originally created?

He was created in the image of God, and free from sin.

2. How did he fall from that condition?

Satan tempted him to disobey God, and he did so.

3. Did Satan himself tempt Adam?

No; he tempted Eve, and used her as his instrument in tempting Adam.

4. In what form did he present himself to Eve?

In the form of a serpent.

5. What evil effect followed the sin of Adam?

He, with all his posterity, became corrupt and sinful, and fell under the condemnation of the law of God.

6. Have not all men been wilful transgressors of the law in their own persons also?

Yes; as soon as they have become old enough to know what is right and what is wrong.

7. Who has been the only exception to this universal prevalence of sin?

The Lord Jesus Christ.

8. Was He a descendant of Adam in the same way as all others?

He was not.

JESUS CHRIST—A MAN.

1. We have learned that Jesus was a descendant of Adam; was He, then, a man?

He was a man in every respect; but He was without sin.

2. Mention some respects in which He was a man.

He had a human body and soul, and could not only suffer, but was also liable to temptation.

3. Was He ever tempted?

Yes; Satan tried in every way to make Him sin, but could not.

4. Was He made subject to the law of God.

He was, and rendered perfect obedience to it.

5. Had He the same bodily desires and appetites that we have?

Yes; He felt hunger and thirst, and was liable to all sinless infirmities.

6. Was His soul also liable to suffer?

Yes; it was His soul that suffered most severely in fulfilling the work which He came to do.

7. For what did this human nature fit Him?

Not only to die for us, but also to sympathize with us in our trials and temptations.

10 CATECHISM OF BIBLE DOCTRINE.

JESUS CHRIST—GOD.

1. Was Christ merely a man?

No ; He was God also.

2. By what name is He called as such?

The only Begotten Son of God.

3. How is He described in Hebrews?

As the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person.

4. What language does God use to the Son?

Unto the Son He says, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever."

5. Is Jesus Christ called God in any other place in the Bible?

Yes ; in the first Epistle of John, speaking of Him, it says, "This is the true God."

6. Did He ever allow himself to be addressed as God?

Yes ; Thomas said to Him, "My Lord and my God."

7. In what other ways does the Bible teach the Divinity of Christ?

It ascribes to Him the possession of every perfection ascribed to God.

8. Mention some of these.

Omniscience, omnipresence and eternity of existence.

9. Is the work of creation ever ascribed to Him?

Yes ; the Bible says all things were made by Him.

THE TRINITY.

1. Does not the title "Son of God" indicate to us that Jesus is not the only person that is God?

Yes ; it suggests to us the Father.

2. What other person is also called God?

The Holy Spirit.

3. Does this imply that there is more than one God?

No ; the Bible teaches that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Spirit is God, and yet that there is but one God.

4. Can we understand the nature of God as thus revealed to us?

We cannot ; but we can believe and know that it is such as God teaches us.

5. Why can we not understand the nature of God?

Because our minds are limited in power, and the glorious mystery of the nature of God is boundless.

6. Is it in His nature only that God is beyond our knowledge?

No ; He is mysterious also in all His works and ways.

7. What should we learn from this?

To trust Him, both in what he does and what He teaches.

THE MEDIATOR.

1. What is a Mediator?

One who leads persons who are at enmity to become friends, or to be reconciled to each other.

2. Why is Christ called the Mediator?

Because He comes between man and God, and reconciles them to each other.

3. What offices does Christ discharge as Mediator?

The offices of Prophet, Priest and King.

4. Why is Christ called a Prophet?

A Prophet is one who speaks for God, and Christ is the Great Teacher of Divine Truth.

5. Why is He called a Priest?

It was the duty of the Priest to offer sacrifice for sin, and to pray to God to pardon the sinner. Christ is in both these respects the High Priest of His people.

6. In what sense is He a King?

He has no earthly kingdom; but He reigns in the hearts of saints and angels.

7. Is He not King of the universe?

He is, and hence is called the King of kings and Lord of lords.

8. Will this reign ever be acknowledged by all

It will at the judgment-day.

THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

1. What was the sacrifice which Christ offered?

He offered up Himself for sin.

2. In what way did He become the sacrifice?

He took our sin upon Him, and suffered the penalty in our place.

3. When did He suffer that penalty?

When He died upon the cross

4. Did He suffer in both natures?

No ; in the human nature only. The Divine nature cannot suffer.

5. Was not the union of the Divine and the human nature necessary in the work of salvation?

It was necessary ; otherwise the human nature could not have sustained the sufferings it endured.

6. For what else was that union necessary?

To give value and efficacy to sufferings which, but for that union, would have been those of a mere creature.

7. Why would not the sufferings of a mere creature have sufficed?

Because every creature is bound, as his own duty, to do and suffer all that God wills, and therefore can do nothing to secure merit or pardon for others.

8. Of what value is this sacrifice to those for whom He died?

It delivers them from the guilt and punishment of all their sins.

14 CATECHISM OF BIBLE DOCTRINE.

THE OFFER OF SALVATION.

1. To whom does God offer the salvation in Jesus?
He has ordered it to be offered to every creature.
2. Upon what condition?
Upon that of repentance and faith.
3. Are not these terms easy?
They are so easy that all who refuse are without excuse.
4. Do all men accept them?
They do not; they universally reject them where left without Divine influence.
5. Has God thus left all mankind?
He has not; but effectually calls many to the knowledge and belief of His truth.
6. What agent accomplishes this work?
The Holy Spirit.
7. Do those who accept the Gospel deserve any reward for so doing?
No; for their acceptance is entirely due to the grace of God.
8. How will God punish those who reject it?
Far more severely than He will those who have never heard it.
9. Upon what grounds will he punish any who have never heard the gospel?
Because they, too, are sinners, and have disobeyed the law of God written in their hearts and in nature

ELECTION.

1. What name is given to those whom God effectually calls to salvation?

They are called the Elect or the chosen ones of God.

2. Why are they so called?

Because God, before the foundation of the world, chose them unto salvation through Christ Jesus.

3. Did God make this choice because He foresaw that these persons would be pious and good people?

He did not; for the goodness and piety of any are due to the influences of the Spirit.

4. Was it, then, because He foresaw that they would believe?

On the contrary, it is through His choice that they are led to believe.

5. What, then, was the ground of that choice?

His own sovereign will.

6. How may we know if we be of the Elect of God?

Only by perceiving that the Holy Spirit has led us to repentance and faith and loving obedience to God.

7. Ought we not diligently to watch for such assurance of our calling and election?

Yes, and besides this we ought to pray earnestly to God to give His Spirit thus to work in us.

REGENERATION AND SANCTIFICATION.

1. What is the first work that the Spirit accomplishes in those who are saved?

The work of Regeneration.

2. What is meant by our Regeneration?

Our being born again.

3. What does the Spirit do in the act of Regeneration?

He gives us a new heart, inclined to love and practise holiness.

4. How does Regeneration affect the mind?

It enlightens the mind to understand savingly the Word of God.

5. Is Regeneration necessary to salvation?

Yes; "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

6. Are we made perfectly holy in Regeneration?

No, this is only attained in our perfect Sanctification.

7. What is meant by our Sanctification?

It means our being made holy or free from sin.

8. Is such perfection attained in this life?

It is not.

9. What, then, is the Sanctification which we have experienced?

It is a change produced by the influences of the Spirit, by which we gradually increase in the love and practice of holiness.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH.

1. What is Repentance.

It is sorrow for sin, accompanied by a determination, with the help of God, to sin no longer.

2. Do we truly repent every time we are sorry for sin?

No; our sorrow may be from wrong motives.

3. Suppose our sorrow arises merely from the fear of detection or punishment?

In that event, it is not true repentance.

4. What kind of sorrow, then, is involved in true repentance?

A sorrow which makes us hate sin because it is sin, and because it is wrong to commit it.

5. What is Faith?

It is believing what the Bible tells us about Jesus, and trusting our salvation in His hands.

6. Is this belief an act of the mind only?

No; it is with the whole heart, so that we are led to love and obey Christ.

7. Are there many who believe the Bible who do not exercise faith?

Yes; the greater part of those who have the Bible believe it with the mind, but do not trust with the heart also

JUSTIFICATION.

1. What is Justification?

It is an act of God, by which He fully acquits us of all sin.

2. Is it based upon any works of our own?

It is not; by our own works we could never secure it.

3. Is it not, however, intimately connected with some act of ours?

Yes, with the exercise of faith.

4. Is it due to our faith in Christ?

It is not; that faith becomes the instrument only, not the cause of our justification.

5. To what, then, is it due?

Simply to the merits and sufferings of Christ, which are accounted by God as ours.

6. What do the Scriptures mean when they say that we are justified by faith?

In part, they are teaching that our justification is not by works.

7. What else do they mean?

They also speak thus, because in the act of faith the believer takes hold of the meritorious work of Christ, which is the true ground of justification.

8. Why does the Apostle James say that we are justified by works and not by faith only?

He refers to the fact that every one that has true faith also performs good works.

GOOD WORKS.

1. Has not God offered life and happiness upon the performance of good works?

He has.

2. Have any of mankind ever been justified in that way?

None have been thus justified.

3. Why is this?

Because, having a sinful nature, no man can perform good works in an acceptable manner.

4. Since, then, we are saved by faith alone, does God still require good works?

He does, and gives us grace to help us do them.

5. Are they to be performed with any hope of attaining salvation?

They are not; for we can never perfectly perform them in this life.

6. From what motive then?

From a spirit of love and obedience.

7. What, then, is the position of works in God's way of justification?

They are the fruits and evidence of a change of heart and of love to God.

8. With what motive should we let men see our good works?

With the hope that thus they may be led to glorify God.

ASSURANCE AND PERSEVERANCE.

1. What is meant by assurance of salvation?

It is an undoubting conviction of our acceptance in Christ.

2. Do all the people of God attain it?

It is not attained by all.

3. Is not assurance an essential of saving faith?

It is not; doubts and fears assail believers sometimes to the end of life.

4. Is it not desirable to attain this grace?

It is not only very desirable, but we are expressly commanded to seek for it.

5. Do any in whom the work of grace has begun ever finally fall?

They do not.

6. How do we know this?

We learn it from the Scriptures; moreover, salvation is the work of God, who cannot fail in what He undertakes.

7. Do not such persons sometimes fall into grievous sin?

They do; and years may elapse before they are finally rescued therefrom.

8. Can a child of God be contented in this state?

No; the renewed nature God has given him must be disturbed at the presence of sin.

9. What is his plain duty when he finds himself in this condition?

Still to trust in his Saviour, praying to Him for pardon and for help to avoid sin.

THE FUTURE LIFE.

1. What do the Scriptures teach about the immortality of the soul?

They teach that the soul will never die, but will live forever.

2. Do not our bodies die?

They do, and after death return to dust.

3. Will these bodies ever be raised to life again?

They will, at the judgment-day.

4. What is the judgment-day?

It is the day God has appointed in which to judge the world.

5. By whom will He do this?

By his Son, Jesus Christ.

6. What will be done with the wicked?

He will send them away into everlasting punishment.

7. Into what place will He send them?

Into Hell, the place of torment.

8. What will He do for the righteous?

He will give them life everlasting.

9. Where will they live?

In Heaven with Jesus—the home of all the good.

10. Who alone of mankind will be the righteous?

Those who have attained to the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

BAPTISM.

1. What duty has God intimately associated with Faith?

The profession of that faith in the ordinance of Baptism.

2. What is Baptism?

It is the immersion of the body in water, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

3. Why is it done in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost?

To denote that the person baptized thus professes to believe these three to be God, and to devote himself to His service.

4. What does the use of water in Baptism represent?

The washing away of our sins by the cleansing influences of the Holy Spirit.

5. What does the act of immersion represent?

The union of the believer with Christ in His death.

6. Do the Scriptures assign this union as a reason why we are to profess Christ by immersion?

They do; they tell us that it is on this account that we are buried with Christ by baptism unto death.

7. Who alone are the fit subjects of Baptism?

Those who exercise faith; for they only can properly profess to have experienced the things which Baptism represents.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1. What other ordinance has Christ established?

The Lord's Supper.

2. In what does this ordinance consist?

In eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Christ.

3. Who alone are authorized to receive it?

The members of His churches.

4. In what way is it to be observed?

As a church ordinance, and in token of church fellowship.

5. Is there any established order in which these ordinances are to be observed?

Yes; the believer must be baptized before he partakes of the Lord's Supper.

6. What does the Lord's Supper represent?

The death and sufferings of Christ.

7. Does the mere partaking, either of Baptism or the Lord's Supper, confer spiritual blessings?

No; they are worthless, if not injurious, to those who do not exercise faith.

8. But how is it when they are partaken of by those who do exercise faith?

The Spirit of God makes them, to such persons, precious means of grace.

9. Whom has Christ appointed to administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper?

The authorized ministers of His churches.

THE SABBATH.

1. What is the Sabbath ?

It is one day of the week, which God requires to be kept as a day of rest, and holy to Him.

2. What day of the week did the Jews observe ?

The seventh, which we commonly call Saturday.

3. What day do Christians keep ?

The first day of the week or Sunday.

4. Why do Christians keep Sunday as the Sabbath ?

Because it was on that day of the week that Christ rose from the dead.

5. What name is given to it on this account ?

The Lord's Day.

6. Did the Apostles and the Christians of their day observe the first day of the week ?

They did ; and that is our authority for observing the first instead of the seventh day.

7. What truth was the Sabbath appointed to commemorate ?

The completion of God's work of Creation.

8. What additional truth does the Christian Sabbath teach ?

The triumphant completion of the still more glorious work of Redemption.