

**A CATECHISM, OR FIRST
INSTRUCTION
AND LEARNING OF
CHRISTIAN RELIGION**

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A Catechism, or First Instruction and Learning of Christian Religion by Alexander Nowell

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ALEXANDER NOWELL

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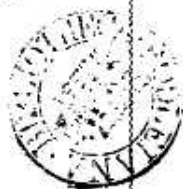
BY ALEXANDER NOWELL, D.D.,
DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S, LONDON.

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BY THOMAS NORTON, CLERK.

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ORIGINAL PREFACE.

TO THE Most Reverend Fathers in God, my Lords Matthew Archbishop of Canterbury and Edmund Archbishop of York, and to the Reverend Father in God Edwin my Lord Bishop of London, and to all the other Reverend Fathers my Lords the Bishops of all the several Dioceses in England.

May it please your good Graces and Fatherhoods to permit me, with all humility and reverence, to render you in this Preface an account of my purpose and doing in publishing this Catechism by me translated, and offered to the Church of England under protection of your names.

Whereas there was very lately a Latin Catechism printed, wherein the sum of Christian Religion was set forth, in short questions and answers, yet not containing bare and naked affirmations only, but shewing also some causes and reasons to the same annexed, and well furnished with places of Scripture noted in the margin for proof thereof: in which Catechism there hath also great labour and diligence been bestowed about the purity of the Latin tongue, that such as were studious of that language, specially the youth, might at once with one labour learn the truth of religion and the pureness of the Latin tongue together: that Catechism I have thought good to translate into English, as well for the use of such as understand no Latin at all, as also for their commodity, who, having a little sight in that language, desire some more perfection therein. For which cause I have not used that liberty in rendering the sense at large, which the order of translation doth permit unto me, but have willingly, for the benefit of the meaner learned, tied myself very much to observing of the words themselves, but so yet that I had always regard to the natural property and easiness of our native tongue.

This Book, as it will be profitable to such as do understand English only, so will it bring double profit to those, who, being somewhat skilled in the Latin tongue and desiring skill, will compare the Latin book with the English, whereby they may at once learn, as I said, the truth of religion and the purity of the Latin tongue. And lest the reader, desirous to compare any of the parts of sentences of

the Latin and English books, might be hindered, I have procured that the English print answereth the Latin, page for page, throughout the whole books, so that any sentence may at the first easily be found in both the books. This exercise, in my opinion, is most meet for the use of such Ecclesiastical Ministers and studious youth as have not yet the perfect knowledge either of religion or of the Latin speech, who by experience may find (as I think) more profit hereby than they would suppose upon the first view. Neither is this conference of translations, by them who be very well learned judged unprofitable for such as are competently learned.

The book hath also one further use, of very good exercise for those that desire to see more at large how the doctrine herein taught is confirmed by the word of God, the only rule of true religion, that is, if such as shall read it to learn truth, but specially Ecclesiastical Ministers, whose charge is to teach truth, shall resort to the places of Scripture noted in the margin, and read them in the Bible at large, and then mark how each thing here affirmed is there well confirmed, and how the doctrine here delivered is not only in all parts fully approved by God's holy word, but also for the most part uttered in the very words of the text, so far as may be with respect of pureness of the Latin phrase. By which mean they shall also be occasioned to be better acquainted with the Scriptures themselves, and with the true and natural understanding of them. And therein be it remembered, that the last numbers in the quotations, shewing the divisions within the chapters, are gathered according to the great Bible last printed. This exercise, whoso shall essay shall find it of marvellous great profit, both for conceiving truth to the satisfying of conscience, and for delivering truth to the discharge of duty.

It may perhaps be marvelled of some, why, throughout the book, as well in the Latin as in this translated, the Master asketh, the Scholar answereth, and ever the declaration of the matter is put in the scholar's mouth, so as some may muse why the scholar may seem to be made wiser than the master. This objection hath easy answer, and such answer as it hath I thought meet to disclose. It may not be thought that the master here inquireth of the scholar as *desirous to learn of him*, nor that the scholar informeth the *master as presuming to teach him*. But the master op-

ORIGINAL PREFACE.

poseth the scholar, to see how he hath profited, and the scholar rendereth to the master, to give account of his memory and diligence. And that it may appear that this order of opposing by the master and rendering by the scholar for good reason might seem to the Author more convenient than the other form, which some other writers of Catechisms have used, that is, of inquiring by the scholar, and teaching by the master (without prejudice alway or condemning the other), it may be remembered that the end and purpose of Catechism is in good and natural order fitly applied to serve the good use of Confirmation by the Bishop at which time the Bishop which confirmeth doth not teach, but examine, and in his whole manner of opposing useth such form as here in like sort the Catechumenus or child is prepared unto. Which is also not done without example, for the same manner is in the short Catechism now used in the Church of England at Confirmation.

Now surely there are no greater means of advancing true religion, and rooting out of errors, than these two, that is to say, Catechism or good instruction of youth, and good information of Ecclesiastical Ministers in sound truth and the proofs thereof, howsoever perhaps they may lack some full furniture of other learnings. And therewith, for my part, I have long thought it a much better way toward removing of heresies and superstitions (whereof Rome hath brought us and left us plenty) to deal first with plain setting out of truth as not in controversy, without dealing at the beginning with the strife of confutation. For so both discretion and charity in the teacher is easilier kept; and truth once being settled, error will fall of itself: so that he which hath once thus with conference of God's word conceived a certain and stayed judgment of truth, shall either wonder how absurd errors have been received, or shall with less perill hear them talked of.

These things all considered, and how this book serveth to all these good ends, and therewithal remembered how it hath pleased Almighty God of his great goodness and love, and to the singular benefit of this his Church of England, under the Queen's most excellent Majesty the most honourable instrument of advancing his religion and glory in her dominions, and of bringing truth and peace to the consciences of her subjects, to ordain your Graces and Fatherhoods the chief Pastors and Governors of his flock for doctrine and all

Ecclesiastical duties, the first author of this book in Latin had a very good reason to offer his work unto you, that as the people of God's flock in England are under your charge, so they might receive so great a benefit as this is under your name, and thereby you, our governors on the one part, might be the rather moved to further so good intention, and we all under your governance, on the other part, be made more ready to receive it with better assurance of good allowance, and to thank God, the giver of all good things, and guider of all good doings and purposes; and (as meet is) that we and our posterity, so long as an English child or other shall in this Catechism learn Christianity, may keep in thankful remembrance the happiness of these good times, the blessed memory of Her Majesty, and the good names of you, God's good Ministers, now chief Pastors of this his flock, in whose time (to your and our comfortable consideration be it spoken) God hath so liberally spread among us the light of his Gospel, and (praised be he, and happy be ye therefore!) hath made you his faithful dispensers of so great a grace.

The same reasons that so moved the first author have also moved me to offer my translation unto you, comprising herein, as patrons, all the Fathers and Lords of the Clergy, but specially and by name your Graces my Lords the Archbishops, to whose provinces the whole realm pertaineth, and your Fatherhood my Lord of London, to whose diocese London, a light to the rest of England, belongeth, and to whom myself, dwelling within your charge, do owe particular duty.

This my intent and labour being to do good to as many and largely as I possibly could, if I shall understand to be with the readers taken in good part and used to their benefit (as the rather by your good means and names it may be), I shall think my travail very well bestowed, holding myself in the mean time contented with the conscience of a good meaning, bent to do good so far as my skill and power would extend. The success hereof I commit to God; the judgment I submit to you, for whom and whose zeal I praise God, and pray to him for your preservation to the benefit of his Church.

Your most humble,

T. NORTON.

Howell's Catechism.

CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION AND LEARNING.

—o—
THE MASTER—THE SCHOLAR.

MASTER. Forasmuch as the Master ought to be to his The Master's duty. Scholars a second parent and father, not of their bodies, but of their minds, I see it belongeth to the order of my duty, my dear child, not so much to instruct thee civilly in learning and good manners, as to furnish thy mind, and that in thy tender years, with good opinions and true religion.¹ For Godliness in Childhood. this age of childhood ought no less, yea, also much more, to be trained with good lessons to godliness, than with good arts to humanity: wherefore I thought meet to examine thee by certain short questions, that I may surely know whether thou have well bestowed thy study and labour therein, or no.

SCHOLAR. And I for my part, right worshipful Master, shall willingly answer your demands, so far as I have been able with wit to conceive or keep in memory, and can at this present call to mind and remember, what I have heard you teach me out of the Holy Scriptures.

M. Go to therefore, and tell me what religion it is that thou professest.

S. The religion that I profess, right worshipful Master, is Christian Religion. the same whereof the Lord Christ is the Author and Teacher, and which is therefore properly and truly called the Chris- Christian, tian religion, like as the professors are also named Christians. named of Christ.

M. Dost thou then acknowledge thyself to be a follower of Christian godliness and religion, and a Scholar of our Lord and schoolmaster Christ?

S. I do so acknowledge indeed, and² do unfeignedly and freely profess it: yea I do settle therein the sum of all⁴ my felicity, as in that which is the chiefest good that can come to man, and such as, without it, our state should be far more miserable than the state of any brute creatures.

M. Well then, I would have the substance and nature of

¹ Deut. iv. 9. 13. Psalm lxxviii. 3, 4, &c. Matt. xix. 13. 2 Tim. iii. 13.

² Acts xi. 26. ³ Rom. x. 9, 10. ⁴ Psalm i. xxxiii. 12. John iii. 18. 36.