

**AN EXPOSITION OF THE SHORTER
CATECHISM: CONTAINING THE
SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN
DOCTRINE,
PART I-II, SECTION II(Q. 1 TO 107)**

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An exposition of the shorter catechism: containing the summary of Christian doctrine, part I-II, section II(Q. 1 to 107) by Stewart Dingwall Fordyce Salmond

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STEWART DINGWALL FORDYCE SALMOND

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AN EXPOSITION

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SHORTER CATECHISM.

PART FIRST. (Q. 1 TO 38).

CONTAINING THE

SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

BY THE EDITOR

Edinburgh:

T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET.

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THE SHORTER CATECHISM.

PART FIRST.

THE SUMMARY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

HISTORICAL NOTE.

The word *Catechism* comes from a Greek term, which means to *utter sound*, and so to *teach by the voice*. A Catechism of religion, therefore, is a book which gives instruction in the principles of the religion; and as it is intended primarily for oral instruction, it takes the form of question and answer.

This one is called the *Shorter Catechism*, in order to distinguish it from another, known as the *Larger Catechism*, which was prepared for learners who have already some knowledge of the doctrines of the Christian religion.

Both were the work of the famous Westminster Assembly. This great gathering of divines was called together by the Long Parliament for the purpose of carrying out the reformation of the Church of England more thoroughly in doctrine, worship, and discipline. It sought to purify it from things not consistent with the Word of God, and to bring it into greater harmony with the Reformed Churches of Scotland and the Continent. It consisted of 151 English members, of whom 124 were clergymen and 30 lay assessors. To these were added certain commissioners from Scotland, who were nominated by the General Assembly of the Church and occupied a distinct position in the Assembly. The Scotch

commissioners who were originally appointed were eight in number, and should be known to the youth of Scotland. Five of them were ministers—namely, Alexander Henderson, rector of the University of Edinburgh, and the successor of John Knox and Andrew Melville as leader of the church; Robert Baillie, Professor of Divinity and Principal of the University of Glasgow, who has been called “the pleasantest of letter-gossips”; George Gillespie, minister at Edinburgh, the youngest of the party, but a man of conspicuous ability in debate; Samuel Rutherford, Professor of Divinity and Principal of St Mary’s College, St Andrews, “the true Saint and Martyr of the Covenant”; and Robert Douglas, who, however, did not take his seat. The remaining three were elders—namely, John, Earl of Cassilis; John, Lord Maitland, afterwards Duke of Lauderdale, who ended by becoming the fierce persecutor of the cause which at first he fervently supported; and Sir Archibald Johnstone of Warriston, one of the judges of the Court of Session, and in many respects a remarkable man.

The Assembly was opened in Westminster Abbey on the 1st July 1643. In accordance with its appointment it laboured diligently at the preparation of a creed, a form of worship, and a system of church government, which might be used in common by the three kingdoms of England, Ireland, and Scotland. It took about five and a half years to finish its proper work, but it sat altogether for nearly nine years. Its last session was held on the 25th March 1652, a few weeks before the remnant of the Long Parliament, known in English history as “the Rump,” was dissolved by Oliver Cromwell. Different parties were represented in it—the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, the Independents, the Erastians or those who held that the Church should be dealt with simply as a department of the State. But the Presbyterians were the strongest party. This Assembly ranks

among the greatest of all the Protestant councils. It has been acknowledged, even by those who have not been in sympathy with its decisions, to have been distinguished in no ordinary measure by piety, learning, ability, and the devout determination to make the Word of God, and that only, the rule of all that should be believed and done in the Church of Christ.

The Shorter Catechism may be regarded as the choicest fruit of the labours of the Westminster Assembly. Many Catechisms had been published before this one. The troubled years between 1600 and 1645 were remarkable for the number they produced. But the Shorter Catechism surpassed them all, and remains the most finished expression of the robust faith of our Puritan forefathers. It seems to have been prepared for the most part, if not entirely, in the year 1647. It was approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on the 28th July 1648, and by the Scottish Parliament on the 7th February 1649. The God-fearing people of these days received it gladly, and it soon became extensively used by others as well as Presbyterians. No Protestant Catechism, indeed, has been accepted so widely, or by so many different branches of the Church of the Reformation, with the exception of Luther's Catechism and the Heidelberg Catechism. It has been rightly classed with these two, and described as "one of the three typical Catechisms of Protestantism which are likely to last to the end of time."

It is as simple in its plan as it is clear, concise, and well-considered in its language. The first three Questions are introductory and deal with the foundations of religion. The body of the Catechism commences at the Fourth Question, and is constructed in two main divisions. The first is a summary of doctrine, and extends to the Thirty-eighth Question. The second is a summary of duty, and extends from