

**AN EXPOSITION OF THE
CATECHISM OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649059645

An Exposition of the Catechism of the Church of England by William Nicholson

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Cover @ 2017

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WILLIAM NICHOLSON

**AN EXPOSITION OF THE
CATECHISM OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

AN
EXPOSITION OF THE CATECHISM

OF THE

Church of England.

BY THE
RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,
WILLIAM NICHOLSON,
SOMETIME LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER.

A NEW EDITION.



OXFORD,
JOHN HENRY PARKER;
AND 377, STRAND, LONDON.

MDCCLXXIX.

[The present edition is reprinted from the second, which appeared in the Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology in 1842, the only variations being that, for the sake of convenience in the smaller size, the Scripture references are placed at the foot of the page, and the Notes at the end of the volume ; the latter are referred to by the letters A, B, C, &c., inserted in the text within brackets.]

OXFORD:
PRINTED BY I. SHRIMPTON.

MEMOIR OF BISHOP NICHOLSON.

THE following Memoir of the Author of this Exposition, is mostly abridged by Bishop Heber, from Wood's *Athenæ*, in note (k) to his *Life of Bishop Taylor*.

William Nicholson was the son of Christopher Nicholson, a rich clothier of Stratford, near Hadleigh, Suffolk. He was brought up as a chorister at Magdalene College, Oxford, where he was afterwards Bible Clerk, and eventually became tutor to Lord Percy, and Chaplain to his father, the Earl of Northumberland. In 1616 he was elected Master of the Free School at Croydon, where his discipline and powers of instruction were much celebrated. He resigned this

situation in 1623, when he was instituted to the rectory of Ilandilo Vawr, in Caermarthenshire; and he afterwards became a Canon Residentiary of St. David's, and Archdeacon of Brecknock. In 1643 he was named as one of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, probably by the interest of the Earl of Northumberland, but he never took his place among them; and his Livings being shortly after sequestered, he again (now in partnership with Bishop Taylor) taught school for his maintenance, in which way of life he continued till the Restoration.

In 1660—1, he was appointed Bishop of Gloucester, by the interest of Lord

Clarendon, whom Wood insinuates that he had bribed. But as his character appears to have stood high with all parties, and as he had a strong and legitimate claim on the patronage of the government, for his unshaken loyalty, and bold and pertinacious defence of the Church during its most helpless and hopeless depression, it seems most reasonable, as well as most charitable, to ascribe his preferment rather to his merits than to simony.

Wood says of him, "He

was a right learned Divine, well seen and read in the Fathers and Schoolmen, but, above all, most excellent he was in the critical part of grammar, in which faculty none in his time, or perhaps before, went beyond him. His writings shew him to be a person of great erudition, prudence, modesty, and of a moderate mind."

He died Feb. 5, 1671, and was honoured by the following epitaph by the excellent George Bull, afterwards Bishop of St. David's.

INTEMITATI S.
 IN SPE BEATÆ RESURRECTIONIS
 HIC REVERENDAS EXUVIAS DEPOSUIT
 THEOLOGUS INSIGNIS, EPISCOPUS VETER PRIMITIVUS,
 GUILIELMUS NICHOLSON.
 IN AGRO HUFFOLCIANO NATUS,
 APUD MANDALINENSES OKON. EDUCATUS,
 OB FIDEM REGI, ET ECCLESIE AFFLICTE PERSISTENTEM,
 AD SEDEM GLOUCESTRENSSEM MERITO PROMOTUS, 1660,
 IN CONCIONIBUS FREQUENS, IN SCRIPTIS NERVOSES,
 LEGENDA SCRIBENS, ET FACIENS SCRIBENDA.
 GRAVITAS EPISCOPALIS IN FRONTE EMICUIT,
 OMNES TAMEN BLANDUS, ET HUMANITAS NEXUSIS,
 PAUPERIBUS QUOTIDIANA CHARITATE BENEFICUS,
 COMITATE REGA CLEBUM, ET LITERATOS ADMIRANDUS,
 GLORIA, AC DIGNUS SATOR,
 IN PALATIO HOC ET VIXIT PIS DECEM DIE. FEB. V.
 ANNO {ÆTATIS } LXXII.
 {DOMINI } MDCLXXI.

MEMOIR OF BISHOP NICHOLSON.

v

ELIZABETHA CONJUX FAMILIARIS, IN HOC SACELLO SEPULTA,
APRIL, XX. AN. DOMINI MDCLXXIII.

OWENUS BRISTOCK DE LECHEDESTY
IN COMITATU CARMARTHEN, ARMIGER,
FRATRICIS ELIZABETHÆ NEPOS,

HOC GRATI ANIMI MONUMENTUM, (EXECUTORIS RECUSANTE)
PÆPREDI SUMPTIBUS EREXIT
AN. MDCLXXIX.

TO THE
RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,
GILBERT,¹
BY GOD'S ESPECIAL PROVIDENCE,
LORD BISHOP OF LONDON, AND DEAN OF HIS MAJESTY'S
CHAPEL.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR
LORDSHIP,

THAT I present this work to your view is not for any worth I conceive in it; for it is fitted for such capacities as the Church ordained the original which it explains. And then it cannot be expected that I should search into those depths that ought to be presented to so learned, so grave, and so ripe a judgment. But you are a chief and principal father, and propugnator of that religion professed in the Church of England, which is every way conso-

nant to the doctrine and discipline of the primitive times, of which the foundations are laid down and discovered in this Catechism, in the polishing of which I have bestowed my pains; and therefore this hath encouraged me to present my conceptions to your quick eye, and to submit them to your censure, being resolved to stand or fall, as your wisdom shall pass sentence.

Some years are passed since these brief and plain collections were published, and the occasion the following epistle will speak

¹ [Sheldon; consecrated Bishop of London in 1660, and translated to Canterbury in 1663.]

out. With approbation they have been received, and the whole impression sold off; so that being called upon by eminent men in the Church to publish them again, I thought it my duty to invoke your lordship's patronage, and that you would be my buckler, as you have been hitherto, against any that should dare to oppose these solid and fundamental truths, which none will be so impudent to contradict but branded heretics and hot-brained fanatics. These in great swarms, as angry wasps, buzz and hum about our hives, and that they invade not, and steal not the honey from our bees, there cannot be any better defensive provided than an injunction for frequenting catechizing, without which sermons, as now in fashion, upon desultory texts, will be of little use.

And lamentable experience hath taught us that this is an undeniable truth.

For ever since sermonising hath justled out this necessary instruction¹ enjoined on the Lord's day, and every holiday to be done by every rector, vicar, and curate, half an hour or more before evening prayer, our people have been possessed with strange errors in religion, and hurried on by the spirit of giddiness, of faction, of rebellion. It is therefore my heart's desire, that both the Queen's injunction, the practice of the canon, and that command of his gracious Majesty's wise and pious grandfather, King James, of blessed memory, were imposed afresh, and strictly called upon to be observed, viz. that afternoons' lectures were converted into explanations of some necessary rudiments of the Catechism; a custom which is yet in use in the most of the ²reformed Churches

¹ Queen Elizabeth's Injunctions, 1559. Injunct. 44. et Canon 59. anno 1603. Rubric after Confirmation.

² Confess. Belgicæ, Ca. 63. Synod. Dordr. p. 51.