

**THE SYSTEM OF THEOLOGY
CONTAINED IN THE
WESTMINSTER SHORTER
CATECHISM OPENED AND
EXPLAINED**

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The system of theology contained in the Westminster shorter catechism opened and explained
by A. A. Hodge & J. Aspinwall Hodge

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A. A. HODGE & J. ASPINWALL HODGE

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THE SYSTEM OF THEOLOGY

CONTAINED IN THE

WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM.

OPENED AND EXPLAINED.

PART I.—BELIEF CONCERNING GOD.

BY

REV. A. A. HODGE, D. D.

PART II.—DUTY REQUIRED OF MAN.

BY

REV. J. ASPINWALL HODGE, D. D.

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PREFACE.

THERE is an increasing desire to know what are the doctrines of Christianity as revealed in the word of God. Laymen, as well as ministers, are recognizing the necessity of having clear views of God's plan of salvation, and of being able to impart them to others.

To quicken and satisfy this desire seems to have been a cherished purpose of Rev. A. A. Hodge, D. D., both as pastor and professor. In the home, church, classroom, by the press and on the platform, he sought to popularize theology. His success was manifest in the numbers who sought to hear him, and in their increasing interest in his instructions. He therefore readily assented when asked to prepare a concise text-book for theological instruction. He naturally determined to make a brief exposition of the Shorter Catechism, for it was prepared by the learned divines of the Westminster Assembly, it is the most comprehensive and accurate statement of Christian doctrine, it is a part of the constitution of our Presbyterian Church, and it is adapted to popular instruction, having been prepared for the young that they might be early taught the truth at home and in the church. Dr. Hodge's sudden death left the work incomplete. He had, however, written Part I., the most important, which sets forth "what

man is to believe concerning God." His cousin, J. Aspinwall Hodge, has endeavored to carry out his plan in preparing Part II., which teaches "what duty God requires of man." The whole is now published for general use in the Church, to enable parents to make home instruction intelligent and correct, to encourage the formation of adult classes in the Sabbath-schools for the study of the doctrines of the Church, to furnish our elders with a clear and brief exposition of the system of doctrine which they are required sincerely to receive and adopt, and to give our candidates for the ministry, at the very beginning of their course, a general view, with clear outlines, of God's nature and his gracious plan of salvation, and of man's condition and duty, which they are to devote their lives to study and to preach.

It is earnestly hoped that these ends may be accomplished, and that many will be led "to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever."

J. A. H.

HARTFORD, CONN.

THE SYSTEM OF THEOLOGY

CONTAINED IN

THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM EXHIBITED AND EXPLAINED.

PART I.

FROM the fourth century the instruction of children and of candidates for baptism comprehended the memorizing and the explanation of the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer, together constituting the rule of our faith, of our duties, and of our worship. These became ever after the main materials of elementary religious instruction and the basis of the numerous catechisms which sprang up after the Reformation.

LUTHER'S Small Catechism embraces five parts: I. The Ten Commandments. II. The Creed. III. The Lord's Prayer. IV. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism. V. The Sacrament of the Altar.

CALVIN'S Catechism (Geneva, 1541) was divided into five parts as follows: I. Of Faith, an exposition of the Creed. II. Of the Law, the Ten Commandments. III. Of Prayer. IV. Of the Word of God. V. Of the Sacraments.

The ANGLICAN (Episcopal) Catechism observes the

following order: The Creed; The Ten Commandments; The Lord's Prayer; Baptism; The Lord's Supper.

The ROMAN Catechism, prepared by the order of the Council of Trent, follows the order of—1, The Creed; 2, The Sacraments; 3, The Ten Commandments; 4, The Lord's Prayer.

The HEIDELBERG Catechism observes the following order: *First Part.* Man's Misery. *Second Part.* Man's Redemption, and under this the Creed and the Sacraments. *Third Part.* Of Thankfulness, including the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer.

Our own Catechism, prepared by the learned divines of the Westminster Assembly, is a much more accurate and comprehensive statement of Christian truth than any of these. Dr. Schaff says that "it is one of the three typical Catechisms of Protestantism which are likely to last to the end of time. It is fully equal to Luther's and to the Heidelberg Catechism in ability and influence, it far surpasses them in clearness and careful wording, and is better adapted to the Scotch and Anglo-American mind, but it lacks their genial warmth, freshness, and childlike simplicity." Richard Baxter called it "the best Catechism I ever saw, a most excellent sum of the Christian faith and doctrine, and a fit test to try the orthodoxy of teachers." It like the others is also founded on the traditional group of lessons, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer, common to all Church Catechisms. It observes the following order:

I. INTRODUCTION. Questions 1-3.

II. WHAT ARE WE TO BELIEVE? Questions 4-38.

III. WHAT DUTY IS REQUIRED OF US? Questions 39-81.

IV. THE LAW FAILS BECAUSE OF SIN, all men are guilty and helpless. Questions 82-84.

V. MEANS AND CONDITIONS OF SALVATION. Questions 85-107.

Internal Means. Faith and Repentance. Questions 85-87.

Outward Means. The Word, the Sacraments and Prayer. Questions 88-107.

I. THE INTRODUCTION. Questions 1-3.

Q. 1. *What is the chief end of man?*

A. *Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.*

Q. 2. *What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?*

A. *The WORD OF GOD, which is contained in the Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.*

Q. 3. *What do the Scriptures principally teach?*

A. *The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.*

The Shorter Catechism presupposes natural religion. The light of nature and the "law written on man's heart" teach us that there is a God, and that he is a powerful, wise, and righteous person. The "chief end" of man is God's ultimate design in his creation, which is manifested and proved by man's moral and rational constitution, and the intuitions with which he is endowed by his Creator.

All religion, revealed as well as natural, rests ultimately upon man's moral and religious constitution. Our in-