

**A PLAIN, BUT FULL
EXPOSITION OF THE
CATECHISM OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND**

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A Plain, but Full Exposition of the Catechism of the Church of England by William Nicholson

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WILLIAM NICHOLSON

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EXPOSITION

OF THE

CATECHISM

OF THE

Church of England.

Enjoyed to be Learned of every Child,
Before he be brought to be confirmed by the Bishop.

Collected out of the best Catechists,
By the Right Reverend Father in God
WILLIAM Lord Bishop of *Glocester*.

Negligentia magna Parochi in docendo ad salutem necessaria, nempe Symbolum, Decalogum, et Pater Noster, mortalis est. Ubi passim magnus abusus est eorum, qui contenti docuisse Symbolum Latinè, non explicant populo rudi mysteria fidei, præsertim Trinitatis, Incarnationis, tantoperè ad salutem necessaria,

Væ Parochis, væ Episcopis, væ Prælati.
Eman. Sa Aphorism., voce Parochus.

L O N D O N,

Printed by *T. H.* and *W. H.* and are to be sold
by most Booksellers in *London*. 1686.

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 1629, when he was instituted to the rectory of Llandilo 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.

ÆTERNITATI S.
 IN SPE BEATÆ RESURRECTIONIS
 HIC REVERENDAS EXUVIAS DEPOSUIT
 THEOLOGUS INSIGNIS, EPISCOPUS VERE PRIMITIVUS,
 GULIELMUS NICHOLSON.
 IN AGRO SUFFOLCIANO NATUS,
 APUD MAGDALENSES OXON. EDUCATUS,
 OB FIDEM REGI, ET ECCLESIE AFFLICTÆ PRÆSTITAM,
 AD SEDEM GLOCESTRENSEM MERITO PROMOTUS, 1669,
 IN CONCIONIBUS FREQUENS, IN SCRIPTIS NERVOSUS,
 LEGENDA SCRIBENS, ET FACIENS SCRIBENDA.
 GRAVITAS EPISCOPALIS IN FRONTE EMICUIT,
 OMNES TAMEN BLANDE, ET HUMANITER EXCEPIT,
 PAUPERIBUS QUOTIDIANA CHARITATE BENEFICUS,
 COMITATE ERGA CLERUM, ET LITERATOS ADMIRANDUS,
 GLORIÆ, AC DIERUM SATUR,
 IN PALATIO SUO UT VIXIT PIE DECESSIT. FEB. V.
 ANNO { ÆTATIS } LXXXII.
 { DOMINI } MDCLXXI.
 ELISABETHA CONJUX PRÆVIT, IN HOC SACELLO SEPULTA,
 APRIL. XX. AN. DOMINI MDCLXIII.

OWENUS BRIGSTOCK DE LECHDENNY
 IN COMITATU CAERMARTHEN, ARMIGER,
 PRÆDICTÆ ELIZABETHÆ NEPOS,
 HOC GRATI ANIMI MONUMENTUM, (EXECUTORE RECUSANTE)
 PROPRIIS SUMPTIBUS EREXIT
 AN. MDCLXXIX.

TO THE
RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

GILBERT,*

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 consonant 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 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.

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

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 defensative 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 sermonizing hath justled out this necessary instruction^b 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 reformed Churches beyond sea, and were it but for that only, those who bear so great affection to their practice in other things, might, methinks, cast one good look towards it. I wish^d, saith a discreet and learned author, that they of the presbyterian inclination would more listen to these their friends, and if not for conformity's, yet for Christianity's sake, not suffer preaching so totally to usurp and justle out this most necessary office, that, as an inmate, it should expel the right owner. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri*, taught they may be from those puritans of the Church of Rome, the Jesuits, who take it for their glory that they are the most diligent catechists, and far to encourage the children that come to be catechized, from their desks and pulpits, do usually scatter their ἀποφόρητα among them. This is the work upon which I would advise and beseech my fellow-labourers to spend themselves, and their pains especially; and to ease

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

^c Confess. Belgica, Ca. 68. Synod

Dordr. p. 31.

^d Hamon Le Strange, Alliance of Divine Offices, Annot. on c. 4.

their labour, and to help them onward in this good work, it is supposed these observations may be very instrumental.

Now of all the Catechisms I have seen, in this one thing I must give the prerogative to this of our Church, and commend it to babes in Christ, for whose sake it was composed; that in the entrance into it the child is put in mind of his solemn vow and promise made unto God in his Baptism, which consists in his abrenunciation, the profession of his faith, and observation of the commandments; and after to give hearty thanks for his matriculation, or engraving into Christ, in which most Catechisms are altogether defective. Further, all the answers following are brief, but full, and fitted for weaker memories, requiring only explication, but not addition. Quintilian was wont to say that they who were to bring up children must deal by them as men do with narrow-mouthed bottles, instil their principles, as they do the water, by little and little, for if it be over-hastily done, more will flush over and be lost than poured into the vessel.

[Instit.
Orat.
Lib. 1. § 2.]

This I have endeavoured here, and if well, I implore your lordship's countenance; if short of your expectation, I humbly beg your lordship's candour to bring your mantle and cast over and cover my defects. And of this I have good hope, because since the first hour that it was my happiness to be known to your honour, you have been pleased to look upon me with a fatherly eye. That eye which you cast upon all men that are worthy of your favour. These live in you, and live by you, among which you have set me up to be a prime example. In all gratitude I do acknowledge, that next to His Majesty, for whose goodness to me I can never return sufficient thanks, your endeavours from an obscure man have advanced me to a place of honour and dignity in the Church, which, that I may manage with prudence and sobriety, to the honour of God, the good of His people, the peace and re-union of this distracted Church, God Almighty assist me with His grace, and you and all good men with their prayers. Did I intend to run out into encomiums, I have an ample field; this one may suffice for a large testimony of your sufficiency, wisdom, sincerity, and piety, that the most excellent of princes, and the best of men shines upon you in so full a lustre, as if he hoped by you and those he hath chosen to

assist you, to dispel all the clouds that have darkened the face of our Church these twenty years. The burden is both weighty and troublesome, which that it may be undergone with prudence, and borne with patience, is the hearty prayer of him who is

Your Lordship's, in all due observance,

WILL. GLOCESTER.

London, June 20, 1661.