

the end, I just gang ower them backwards. ' 'G' over them backwards!' the secret and the measure of the dying saint's familiarity with the little book she had learned in childhood.

Dr. Schaff has said, "The Shorter Catechism is one of the three typical catechisms of Protestantism, which are likely to last to the end of time;" while Thomas Carlyle said, "The older I grow—and I now stand on the brink of Eternity—the more comes back to me the first sentence in the Catechism which I learned when a child, and the fuller and deeper its meaning becomes:—

"What is the chief end of man?"

"Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever."

THE HISTORY OF THE SHORTER CATECHISM.

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(Published in the Scottish Christian Herald, 1876.)

Catechisms were, at a very early period, drawn up and used by all, or nearly all, of the Reformed Churches of Europe. The earliest which we recollect to have been mentioned, as used by the Scottish Reformers, had been drawn up by Calvin. But in 1590 we find the General Assembly adopting measures for securing a general and national Catechism. "Anent the examination before the communion," say they, "it is thought meet for the common profit of the whole people, that an uniform order be kept in examination, and that an short form of examination be set down, by their breithers, Messrs. John Craig, Robert Pont, Thomas Buchanan, and Andrew Melvill, to be presented to the next Assembly." In 1591 a form was laid before the Assembly by Mr. Craig, but it was remitted, with instructions "to contract in some shorter bounds." The abridged form was accordingly laid before the Assembly of 1592, and approved. The following directions were also added:—"Therefore, it is thought needful, that every pastor travel with his flock, that they may buy the samen buick, and read it in their families, quhereby they may be the better instructed; and that the samen be read and learnt in lector's (reading) schools, in place of the little Catechism (Calvin's). This 'catechism,' or 'Form of Examination,' which is commonly called Craig's Catechism, consists of twelve heads or chapters, having the following titles:—"Of our miserable bondage through Adam—Of our redemption by Christ—Of our participation with Christ—Of the Word—Of our liberty to serve God—Of the Sacraments—Of Baptism—Of the Supper—Of discipline—Of the Magistrate—Of the table in special (meaning the Protestant mode of observing the Supper)—The end of our redemption." Under each of these are a number of questions and answers, amounting in all to ninety-six; and the latter are remarkably short and pertinent, and usually accompanied with at least one Scripture proof.

When the Solemn League and Covenant was projected, contemplating, as it did, an ecclesiastical union between the three kingdoms, measures were also adopted for preparing a uniform Confession, Directory, and Catechism. And it is important to observe, that the plan afterwards executed by the Westminster Assembly, was first proposed in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Towards the end of 1610, several Scottish commissioners, of whom Henderson was one, went to London to treat on matters then pending between the King and the Presbyterian party. Henderson returned in the July following, and found the General Assembly holding an adjourned meeting at Edinburgh, and anxiously waiting his arrival. He was immediately elected Moderator, and laid before them a letter from the Presbyterians in and about London, in which they complain of the spread of schismatical opinions, and earnestly crave the advice and assistance of the Assembly. In replying to this letter, the Assembly says, among other things, "We have learned by long experience, ever since the time of the Reformation, and specially after the two kingdoms have been—in the great goodness of God to both—united under one head and monarch, but most of all, of late, which is not unknown to you, what danger and contagion in matters of kirk government, of divine worship, and of doctrine, may come from the one kirk to the other, which, beside all other reasons, make us to pray to God, and to desire you, and all that love the honour of Christ, and the peace of these kirks and kingdoms, heartily to endeavor, that there might be in both kirks, one Confession, one Directory for Public Worship, one Catechism, and one Form of Kirk Government." And agreeably to this, we find Henderson suggesting to the same Assembly, only twelve days before the writing of this letter, the propriety of drawing up such a Confession, Catechism and Directory: thus leaving scarcely any reason to doubt that the thing itself was projected by Henderson, and first laid before the General Assembly; but that the Assembly had itself been long favourable to such a measure; and was immediately incited to it by what had taken place in England. The Assembly accordingly approved highly of the measure and urged

Henderson to undertake the drawing up of the documents required. And to render this the more easy, they allowed him to refrain from preaching, and to avail himself of assistance. But he declined the task, as being too arduous. The subject is repeatedly mentioned in the Assembly's correspondence during the intervening period; but it does not appear that anything was done before the meeting of the Westminster Assembly in 1643. This Assembly met under the authority of the English Parliament, but chiefly at the instance of the Scottish Church. It was composed of 121 divines, with thirty lay assessors, and five commissioners from the Church of Scotland, and continued its sittings for upwards of five years.

The matters laid before this Assembly were numerous and important, and some of them are detailed with great minuteness. It unfortunately happens, however, that our information respecting the drawing up of the Catechism is meagre and imperfect. The late Dr. Belfrage, of Falkirk, appears to have been at great pains in collecting whatever was accessible on this point. We have made some further inquiries, but have hitherto found scarcely anything beyond what he seems to have examined and abridged. The sum of what we have been able to gather, either from his work or original authorities, may be stated in a few words. In 1647, while the Assembly was engaged discussing the different articles of the Confession, committees were appointed to reduce these into the form of two Catechisms: a "larger," which was to serve as a text-book for pulpit exposition, according to a usage of the churches on the Continent; and a "shorter," for the instruction of children. It appears, however, that before the Confession had been finished, some progress was made in composing the Catechism, and that the reducing of it to a conformity with the Confession was an after thought. "We made long ago," says Baillie, "a pretty progress in the Catechism, but falling on rules and long debates, it was laid aside till the Confession was ended, with the resolution to have no matter in it but what was expressed in the Confession." And, accordingly, much curiosity has been excited respecting the author of the original draft. Dr. Belfrage, after detailing various opinions, and assigning reasons for his own, alleges Dr. Arrow-smith to be the most likely person. After weighing the evidence by which this and several other opinions have been supported, we have not been able to come to any other conclusion, than that the matter is altogether uncertain. After the Catechism had been finished by the committee, it was laid before the Assembly and approved of, first in so many successive portions, and afterwards as a whole. On the 5th of November it was approved of by the Parliament, and would have been licensed by the king, had not certain hindrances occurred. It was next laid before the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. This was in July, 1648. And the following was the deliverance of the Assembly: "The General Assembly, having seriously considered the Shorter Catechism, agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines sitting at Westminster, with the assistance of commissioners from the Kirk, do find, upon due examination thereof, that the said Catechism is agreeable to the Word of God, and in nothing contrary to the received doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Kirk; and therefore approve the said Shorter Catechism, as a part of the intended uniformity, to be a Directory for catechizing such as are of weaker capacity." The year following it was also ratified by an act of the Scottish Parliament. And from that time it has continued to be in common use, generally in Scotland, and among Presbyterians and several other denominations in England and Ireland; and has latterly obtained a firm footing in the United States, in most of the British colonies, and at not a few missionary stations far hence among the heathen. And it is remarkable, that amidst all the controversies which have occurred, it has been almost universally approved by every part of orthodox believers. "Amidst the jealousy and rivalry of contending parties," says the late pious and judicious Dr. Belfrage, "it has been a centre of union, in which the faith and charity of good men have met; and in seasons of innovation, when a veneration for what is ancient is derided as the freak of imbecility or prejudice, when 'the march of intellect' is the pretext for every change, however presumptuous or violent, and when all the foundations of the earth seem out of course, this summary of the truth remains uninjured and revered; and it will continue to be an exhibition and defence of pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, to the latest age."—*Presbyterian Journal*

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COMPILED BY WILLIAM H. S. J.

Assembly's Shorter Catechism, received from the late Reviser and Vindicator; being, a large defense of that most excellent compend of Divinity, etc., London, printed for Joseph Davidson, at the Golden Lion in the Poultry, 1735.

An example of plain catechizing upon the Assembly's Shorter