A Full Catechism of the Catholic Religion

Deharbe Joseph
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A FULL CATECHISM
OF
THE CATHOLIC RELIGION,
TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF THE REV.
JOSEPH DEHARBE, S.J.,
BY THE
REV. JOHN FANDER;
PRECEDED BY A SHORT HISTORY OF RELIGION
FROM THE
CREATION OF THE WORLD TO THE PRESENT TIME.
WITH QUESTIONS FOR EXAMINATION
Revised, Enlarged, and Edited by
THE RIGHT REV. P. N. LYNCH, D.D.,
Bishop of Charleston.

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John Cardinal McCloskey
Archbishop of New York

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

The original of this Catechism was first published in Germany in 1847, and met with such general favor that in 1853 it had numbered twenty-one editions. It has been approved by all the Archbishops and Bishops of Bavaria, and by nearly all those of the other countries in Germany, and by those of Switzerland. It has been reprinted, with the approbation of Archbishop Purcell, in the United States of America, and it has been introduced into the German schools; in a word, it has superseded nearly all the various German catechisms previously used in the dioceses of those countries, and is now almost the only authorized and standard Catechism of the whole German nation.

This Catechism is founded on History; not only on the History of the Old and New Testament, but on the History of Religion from the Creation of the world to the present time. It clearly shows how our Faith originated and spread, what blessings it produced, how it confounded Infidelity and Heresy, and how it triumphed over all sorts of obstacles and persecutions in every age down to this day. It thus shows how the predictions of the Prophets, and more especially those of the Eternal Son of God, with regard to His Church, have been fulfilled at all times; thus clearly proving which one, among the many societies that now claim Christ for their Founder, is in reality His true Church, holding and professing the True and Divine Religion established by Him.
In presenting this view, the Catechism carries out the advice of St. Augustine, who admonishes catechists ‘to give a brief account to the ignorant of the whole History from the Creation to the present time of the Church,* and to adduce the causes of the various events.’ It is, indeed, to be regretted that this advice of the great Doctor has been so sadly neglected in later times! Why are Protestants so much prejudiced against the Catholic Church, and why is it so difficult to convert them? It is because from infancy the minds of their children have been impressed with a false view of the History of their Religion—a Religion that dates only from the beginning of the sixteenth century. Why should not Catholics with equal, and even greater, effect confirm our children in their attachment to the Church, by showing them how to trace her to the times of the Apostles, and even to the Creation of the world? Is it not, then, of the greatest importance to teach them, together with their catechism, the History of their Religion? History is a safeguard against internal doubts, and a bulwark against all external attacks. He who has, by this means, been fully strengthened in his conviction that the Catholic Church is from God, and that she is the Only True Church, cannot but love her and submit his intellect to her doctrine and his heart to her precepts, and thus remain all his lifetime faithful to her.

After this proof from History that the Catholic Religion is Divine, the Catechism proper commences, and teaches us that we must submit to its doctrine; namely, that we must, 1. Believe what the Church teaches; 2. That we must also practise, that is, do the will of God; and 3. That we can neither believe nor do the will of God without His grace, which we receive by means of the Sacraments and of Prayer. This division is not only dictated by reason, but it embraces also every particular part of the Christian Doctrine; for instance: as Sin is the voluntary breaking of the Commandments, and Virtue the opposite of sin, these two heads belong to

* Usque ad presentia temporae Ecclesiæ (De Catechis. Rudibus, c. 3 and 6).