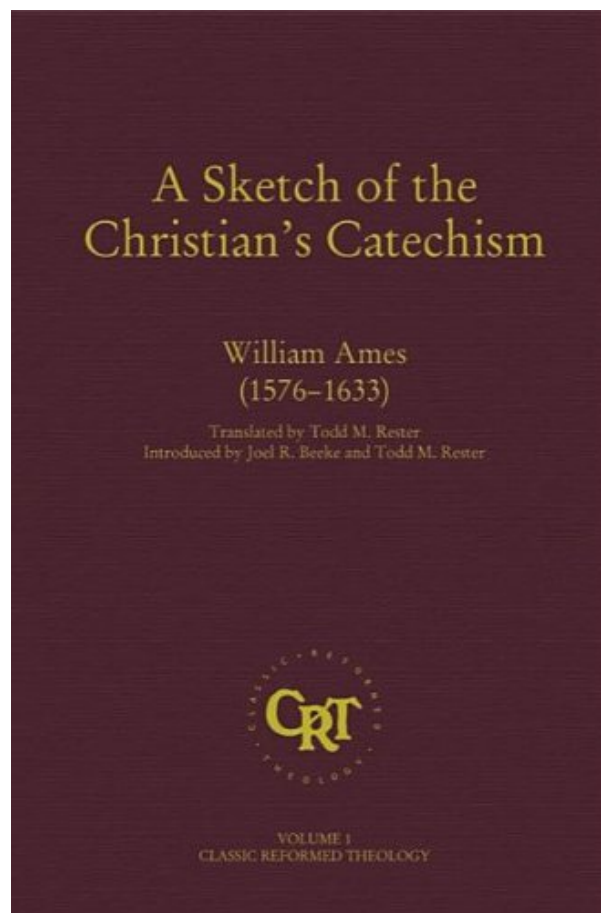


# A SKETCH OF THE CHRISTIAN CATECHISM (CLASSIC REFORMED THEOLOGY) BY WILLIAM AMES



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# A Sketch of the Christian's Catechism

William Ames  
(1576–1633)

Translated by Todd M. Rester  
Introduced by Joel R. Beeke and Todd M. Rester



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## **Review**

This new edition of Ames's *Sketch of the Christian's Catechism* is welcome indeed. William Ames, 'the learned doctor' of seventeenth-century Puritanism, was preeminently the teacher that showed Christianity as combining both doctrine and practical living. The new translation with historical introduction will be helpful to scholarly and general readers. --Keith L. Sprunger, Bethel College

## **About the Author**

William Ames (1576-1633) was educated at Christ's College, Cambridge, where William Perkins was his tutor. He attended the Synod of Dort as an English observer and there began to develop his reputation as a brilliant theologian. From 1622, he was professor of theology at the University of Franeker in Holland, where he attracted students from all over Protestant Europe.

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Ames's method in this book is not an analysis of the Catechism itself. Rather, he chooses a particular text of Scripture that supports the main thoughts for a given Lord's Day. While the exposition is directly from the Bible, Ames's doctrinal conclusions interact with the corresponding Questions and Answers of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Joel R. Beeke and Todd M. Rester's introduction provides valuable background on Ames and his work. Rester's fresh translation from the Latin opens several avenues of interest for modern day English readers. Historians of 16th and 17th century thought will value the critical English translation of a much neglected text, and the fact that it demonstrates the interaction between English Puritanism and the Dutch Further Reformation.

Reformed pastors will also take interest in this, as it provides another important resource on a classic doctrinal standard.

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A unique exposition of the Heidelberg catechism

By N. Anderson

This is a unique way of expanding upon and teaching from the catechism. I was not familiar with Ames

before buying this, but biographical sketches can be found with little difficulty. Briefly, for understanding this work, he was an English Puritan who fled to Holland and spent the rest of his life there as a minister and teacher in a university. This book was written in Latin for his seminary students and was last translated into English in 1659.

Ames has an intensely logical way of approaching scripture. Apparently this method is even more clear in other works by him but even here there is an inexorable sense of logical progression, like reading Spinoza or Aristotle. And while the work expands on the outline provided by the Heidelberg catechism, it does so obliquely, and does not directly print the questions or answers from that work, and it proceeds from different proof texts. Though not stated, I think this is to demonstrate the whole counsel of scripture pointing towards these answers. So for instance, while the question in the catechism for Lord's Day 1 is "What is your only comfort in life and death", Ames uses Psalm 4 to sketch five related lessons: 1) the highest good ought to be considered and sought above all other things in our entire life, 2) the highest good of people in this life cannot be obtained from goods, 3) the true and highest good consists in the union and communion we have with God, 4) the joy that believers gain from the communion that they have with God overcomes, by its own sweetness, all human delights and happiness, and 5) this joy and holy consolation convey a certain security to the consciences of the faithful.

Overall, a clear, logically didactic work, full of wonderful examples of exegesis, and which should be beneficial to any Christian. The current edition is a quality hardback with clear typesetting, and is very easy to read.

Highly recommended.

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A Sketch of the Christian Catechism (Classic Reformed Theology

By D. Myers

These classics always rate high in my opinion.

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