

# THE SOLDIER'S CATECHISM

Robert Ram (–1656), Rector of Spalding (1626–1656)

1644

*Q. What profession are you of?*

A. I am a Christian and a soldier.

*Q. Is it lawful for Christians to be soldiers?*

A. Yea, doubtless. We have arguments enough to warrant it.

- (1) God calls Himself a Man of War and Lord of Hosts
- (2) Abraham had a regiment of 318 trained men
- (3) David was employed in fighting the Lord's battles
- (4) The Holy Ghost makes honourable mention of David's worthies
- (5) God taught David to fight
- (6) The noble gift of valour is given for this purpose
- (7) The New Testament mentions two famous centurions
- (8) The Baptist does not require soldiers to leave their profession
- (9) Many comparisons are taken from this calling in the New Testament
- (10) There have been many famous Martyrs of this profession.

*Q. What does our Saviour mean then by those words, Matthew 5:19?*

A. (1) Christ there only forbids private revenge and resistance, (2) Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture; we know that other places of Scripture do warrant taking up of arms in some cases.

*Q. What side are you of, and for whom do you fight?*

A. I am for the King and Parliament; or, in plainer terms,

- (1) I fight to recover the King out of the hands of a Popish, malignant company that have seduced His Majesty with their wicked counsels and have withdrawn him from his Parliament.
- (2) I fight for the laws and liberties of my country, which are now in danger to be overthrown by them that have laboured to bring into this Kingdom an arbitrary and tyrannical government.
- (3) I fight for the preservation of our Parliament, in the being whereof (under God) consists the glory and welfare of the Kingdom. If this foundation be overthrown, we shall soon be the most slavish nation in the Christian world.
- (4) I fight in the defence and maintenance of the true Protestant religion, which is now violently opposed and will be utterly suppressed in this Kingdom, and the Popish religion again advanced, if the armies raised against the Parliament prevail.

*Q. But is it not against the King that you fight in this cause?*

A. No, surely. Yet many do abuse the world with this base and absurd objection. Our only aim is

- (1) To rescue the King out of the hands of his and the Kingdom's enemies, and to maintain his honour and just prerogatives.
- (2) We endeavor to defend that which the King is bound to defend, both by his oath and office.
- (3) We take up arms against the enemies of Jesus Christ who in His Majesty's name make war against the Church and people of God.
- (4) If the King will join himself with them that seek the ruin of his people and the overthrow of religion, surely both we and all good subjects may lawfully stand in the defence of both, as the people did against King Saul in the case of Jonathan, I Kings 14:49.
- (5) We do no more then what our brethren of Scotland did when they came into this Kingdom with an army some three or four years since, whose action the King and both Houses have cleared from all rebellion, and they remain justified in what they then did to all posterity by an act of Parliament.

*Q Has not the King published many protestations that he will maintain our laws, liberties, and religion? Why then do we fear the subversion of them?*

- A. (1) Many things have been published in His Majesty's name which in all probability he never saw or knew of.
- (2) Though the King himself may intend really and well, yet the sons of Zeruah<sup>1</sup> are too strong for him.
- (3) It is not to be imagined that a Popish army will defend the Protestant religion, or lawless libertines the laws of the land.
- (4) We find by woeful experience that he has many ways failed in diverse of those large promises and protestations, notwithstanding that God has been so often called to witness.
- (5) They say it is a maxim now at Court that faith is not to be kept with heretics, and such do some there account all true Protestants.

*Q How can you that are soldiers for the Parliament answer that place in Paul, Romans 13:1,2,3, etc.<sup>2</sup>*

- A. (1) That place requires not obedience to any unlawful commands, neither does any other place in Scripture. We are no further to obey man than may stand with the will of God.
- (2) They are grossly mistaken which say the King is the highest power. Indeed, he is the highest person in his dominions, but the laws and courts of the Kingdom are above him in power, and the King himself is limited and subject to the meanest court in the land. Therefore surely the high court of Parliament must needs be the higher power, which not to obey is to resist the ordinance of God.
- (3) Suppose the King were the higher power, yet if he shall intend or permit the ruin of his subjects, both nature and grace allows people to preserve themselves.
- (4) If the King be the higher power by constitution, yet is the power now in other hands by usurpation. The Queen, Jermyn,<sup>3</sup> Bristol,<sup>4</sup> Digby,<sup>5</sup> Cottington,<sup>6</sup> Windebank,<sup>7</sup> Porter,<sup>8</sup> and many others have for a long time and do still manage the greatest affairs of the Kingdom, so that it were a miserable thing to be subjected in conscience (as the text imports, if some men's exposition might pass for orthodox divinity) to such enemies and incendiaries both of Church and Commonwealth.

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*Q What do you think then of those Protestants which sit still and do not put forth themselves in these times?*

- A. (1) Either they are not convinced of the necessity.
- (2) Or they are but lukewarm professors.
- (3) Or they are of base and private spirits.
- (4) Or they are faint-hearted cowards.
- (5) Or they are secret enemies of God and His cause.

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<sup>1</sup> I Chronicles 2:16

<sup>2</sup> Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. <sup>2</sup>Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. <sup>3</sup>For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: <sup>4</sup>For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. <sup>5</sup>Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. <sup>6</sup>For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. <sup>7</sup>Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. (Romans 13:1-7, KJV)

<sup>3</sup> Henry Jermyn (c. 1604–1684), Baron Jermyn of Saint Edmundsbury and Secretary to Queen Henrietta Maria

<sup>4</sup> John Digby (1580–1653), Earl of Bristol

<sup>5</sup> George Digby (1612–1677), eldest son of the Earl of Bristol and Royalist Secretary of State (1643–1645)

<sup>6</sup> Francis (c. 1579–1652), Baron Cottington, Royalist Lord High Treasurer (1643–1646)

<sup>7</sup> Sir Francis Windebank (1582–1646), Royalist Secretary of State (1632–1640)

<sup>8</sup> Endymion Porter (1587–1649), Groom of the Bedchamber

*Q What say you then of those Protestants which fight on the other side and join with the enemies of our religion, Parliament, and country?*

- A. (1) I say that they are unworthy the name of Protestants.  
(2) I say that they maintain the cause of Anti-Christ.  
(3) That they are the shame and blemishes of religion.  
(4) That none of their weapons shall prosper, Isaiah 54:17.<sup>1</sup>  
(5) That God will utterly undo them, Zephaniah 3:19.<sup>2</sup>  
(6) That their swords shall enter into their own hearts, Psalm 30:15.<sup>3</sup>  
(7) That all the blood that has been shed lies upon their score.  
(8) That they are in the high-way to perdition without repentance.

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*Q What is that you chiefly aim at in this war?*

- A. (1) At the pulling down of Babylon, and rewarding her as she has served us, Psalm 137:8.<sup>4</sup>  
(2) At the suppression of an anti-Christian prelacy, consisting of archbishops, bishops, etc.  
(3) At the reformation of the most corrupt, lazy, infamous, superstitious, soul-murdering clergy.  
(4) At the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and the purity of His ordinances.  
(5) At the bringing to justice the enemies of our Church and state.  
(6) At the regulating of our courts of justice, which have been made the seats of iniquity and unrighteousness.  
(7) At the upholding of our Parliaments, which are the subject's best inheritance, and the crown of our nation.  
(8) At the preservation and continuing of the Gospel to our posterity, and the generations to come.

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*Q Do not many of them that you count your enemies stand for religion as well as you?*

- A. (1) Surely they are mad that think the Papists will fight in the defence of the Protestant religion.  
(2) They are very simple that expect any care of the true religion from the prelates and their party, who have been the grand persecutors of it.  
(3) Neither is it to be imagined that men so loose, lewd, and wicked as most of your Cavaliers are should really intend the preservation of religion or anything else that is good.  
(4) We know the Earl of Newcastle pretends that he fights for religion, yet his army is for the most part Popish. And he said not long since that men might talk of religion, and so forth, but religion of itself was but an airy thing.  
(5) Their rage and madness against those that they know to have been most zealous and forward in the maintenance and profession of the Protestant religion does sufficiently show how cordially they stand for religion.  
(6) Indeed they stand for religion, but just as the Ephesians stood for Diana, Acts 17.  
(1) They stand for a Popish prelacy.  
(2) They stand for an ignominious clergy.  
(3) They stand for the soul-starving service book.  
(4) They stand for a company of stinking ceremonies.  
(5) They stand for abominable monuments of idolatry.  
(6) They stand for un-Christian liberty.

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<sup>1</sup> No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD. (Isaiah 54:17, KJV)

<sup>2</sup> Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. (Zephaniah 3:19, KJV)

<sup>3</sup> Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. (Psalm 37:15, KJV)

<sup>4</sup> O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. (Psalm 137:8, KJV)

*Q What is the reason, then, that there be so many lewd and wicked men in the Parliament's army?*

- A. (1) Because commanders-in-chief are not more careful in choosing godly officers.  
(2) Because honest religious men are not more forward to put forth themselves in this service of God and His church.  
(3) Because order and discipline is not more strictly executed by superiors.  
(4) Because officers in towns and countries aim to press the scum and refuse of men and so, by easing themselves, pester our armies with base, conditioned people.

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*Q Is it well done of some of your soldiers (which seem to be religious) to break down crosses and images where they meet with any?*

- A. I confess that nothing ought to be done in a tumultuous manner. But seeing God has put the sword of reformation into the soldier's hand, I think it is not amiss that they should cancel and demolish those monuments of superstition and idolatry, especially seeing the magistrate and the minister that should have done it formerly neglected it.

*Q But what say you to their tearing and burning the Books of Common Prayer in every place where they come?*

- A. Much may be said in their justification who show themselves so zealous against that book.  
(1) It has been the fomentor of a most lazy, lewd, and ignorant ministry.  
(2) It has been the nurse of that lamentable blindness and ignorance which has overspread many parts of this Kingdom.  
(3) It is a great cause of our present calamities, for who are they that side with our Popish enemies but Common-Prayer men.  
(4) It is become the most abominable idol in the land; people generally do dote upon it as much as the Ephesians upon Diana, and prefer it before preaching in many places, being strangely enraged for the want of it.  
(5) It is high time, therefore, to remove this brazen serpent and grind it to powder, seeing it is the occasion of so much evil.  
(6) It is very likely, therefore, that God has stirred up the spirits of some honest soldiers to be His instruments for the destruction of that idol.  
(7) It belongs to the Parliament's soldiers, upon the matter, to remove all scandalous things they meet with, having covenanted and engaged themselves in the work of reformation.

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*Q Is there any great need of skill and cunning in this profession?*

- A. Yes doubtless, for David does thankfully acknowledge the Lord's goodness in teaching his hands to war and his fingers to fight, Psalm 18:34.<sup>1</sup>  
(1) Great wisdom, policy, and experience is required in commanders.  
(2) And no less skill and dexterity in common soldiers; they must know how to handle their arms, how to keep ranks, etc.  
(3) Certainly a few well-trained soldiers are better than a multitude of raw, inexperienced men.

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*Q What arguments have you to prove that such honour and respect should be done to our soldiers?*

- A. (1) They that fight against the Church's enemies, are God's helpers against the mighty.  
(2) They are the instruments of justice and the executioners of God's judgments, Psalm 149:7,9.<sup>2</sup>  
(3) They show themselves men of public spirits and true lovers of their country.  
(4) They show themselves valiant and courageous, which are very high deserving qualities.

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<sup>1</sup> He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. (Psalm 18:34, KJV)

<sup>2</sup>To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; <sup>8</sup>To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; <sup>9</sup>To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD. (Psalm 149:7-9, KJV)

- (5) No men undergo such hardship and hazard as the soldier does.
- (6) None deserve better than they, either of Church, common-wealth, or posterity.

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Robert Ram, *Souldier's Catechisme, Composed for the Parliament's Army* (1644):21-22.