

A N

# E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

## A S S E M B L Y ' s

### S H O R T E R C A T E C H I S M :

I N

#### T w o H u n d r e d a n d F i f t y

# L E C T U R E S .

S E R M O N , I .

Q U E S T I O N , I .



*W*HAT is the CHIEF  
END of Man ?

A N S W E R .

Man's Chief End is to  
GLORIFY GOD, and  
ENJOY HIM for ever.

**T**HAT it hath been customary in the Church of Christ from the beginning, to draw up the main and most necessary points of Religion into a Method, which we commonly call a *Body of Divinity*, there needs no more to make it evident, but that of *Paul* in his advice to *Timothy*, 2 *Tim.* 1. 13. *Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.* The great Usefulness of which custom is manifest, in that it is profitable for all sorts of Christians. It is of great use for *Young ones*, that they may be principled in the Truth, and preserved from being drawn away with Error; which is usually occasioned by a confused knowledge, and want of being well settled at first. It is necessary for *Ministers* of the Gospel, for their profitable Preaching, and help to reduce all their Doctrines, to the proper fundamental Article they relate unto. And for *every Professor*, it is exceeding advantageous, to help them in reading the Scriptures, and trying of Doctrines. The reducing these Heads or Articles into a *Catechetical way*,

for the better institution of Youth, is of no late Original. The Primitive Church had its *Catechumeni*, such as were questioned about the Matters of Faith distinctly, in order to their coming to the Lord's Table. Nor are there obscure footsteps for Catechising in the Scripture: The word translated *Instructed*, *Luk.* 1. 4. signifies *Catechised*: the same word is used, *Act.* 18. 25. *Gal.* 6. 6. which word signifies a being taught the Rudiments of any Art whatsoever, and is in the New-Testament applied to the first Elements of the Christian Religion. And that it is commonly received among Professors, appears in that all Churches in all Nations, and among all sorts, have their *Catechisms*.

THERE have been various Methods observed in the compiling of these Systems; But that which hath of late more generally obtained among us, is that of *this Catechism*. The Exposition whereof having once, more glancingly gone over, for the help of Young ones especially; I shall endeavour in this second Essay, more elaborately to open; adding to the clearing up of the sense of the Doctrine, as there is occasion, the removal of Objections, and satisfying Cases of Conscience depending.

TOUCHING the Method of the Catechism in general, we may observe; That the Great Thing which all Rational, and Immortal Creatures have to be mostly inquisitive about, is HAPPINESS: The Substance of this Inquiry may be reduced to Two Heads, or gathered up in two Questions, viz. *What is Happiness*; and *How may it be Obtained*? So that the whole Doctrine hereto related, bears respect either to the End or to the

*Means.* Happiness properly consists in our attaining of our End, and this is reached unto by a right using of Means suitable and proper. The End, tho' it be last in execution, yet is the first in intention; and being that unto which the Means are to be fitted, is that which is first to come into consideration; because, the better that is known, the fitter we are to judge of the other. A Man cannot rationally tell what he is to do, until he first understand what it is for: hence therefore *all Arts and Sciences are wont to be defined by their ENDS*: unto which, all that is delivered under them, is to be Reduced; and the dignity, worth or excellency of every Art, is thereby to be judged of.

*THE Art or Doctrine*, which we have now under Consideration is DIVINITY, or Religion: and not only so, but the *Christian Religion*, or that which is suited to direct and guide fallen Man to Glory. That there is such a Doctrine is not hard to be proved: for if there be an Happiness provided for fallen Man, there must be a Way to bring him to the Enjoyment of it; and consequently a Rule to set him in that Way, and conduct him in it; and that is Religion.

THE special Worth of this Doctrine, shewing it to excel all others, discovers it's self in the End that it points Men to; and that is BLESSEDNESS, than which nothing can be more excellent or desirable.

THE First Question with its Answer is a Key to all the Rest, because they refer to Divinity no further than they refer Hither: it is therefore necessary to state this Case rightly: for which purpose, I shall first take an account of the Thing aimed at in the Question, and then proceed to give the Right meaning of the Answer.

*First.* In the QUESTION, we are warily to note what the Enquiry is about: And here are two Positions.

I. IT is about Mans END. Man is therefore properly & peculiarly concerned in it: It belongs to every rational Creature to know what he was made for, and what is his proper Work. Till a Work-man knows his End, he cannot work prudently: for how should he be able to chuse and use Means, except he knew for what? The reason why the most of Men lead such foolish Lives, and do so many impertinent Actions, is because they know not what they live for, nor whereto their actions tend: And if they would be persuaded to compare their Works with their End, they would readily call themselves Fools. Now when Man's END is enquired after, we are to observe,

1. *Negatively*, THE Question is not about that which the most of Men do *practically* make their End, or propound to themselves as their Design. The Design of Divinity is to tell us what is *Right*; and by that it gives us light to discover that which is *Wrong*. Fallen Man is therein unhappy, because he hath lost his Right End, and is fallen upon others, which are so various, that they are also endless, Eccl. 7. 29. *Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright: but they have sought out many inventions.*

2. *Positively or Affirmatively*: THERE are

are three things especially intended in it.

1. *WHAT is that End, which Man is by the Precept commanded to aim at? Or, What is it that God would have Man to make his End?* Mans being fallen short by sin, doth not nullify the Rule: his Duty still abides: the Force of the Command is not Enervated: whether he doth so or no practically, yet it is his Duty to make this his End; God appointed him so to do, and it is his Sin to do otherwise; for which reason those two things are put together, Rom. 3. 23. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*

2. *WHAT is that End which doth most properly suite the Nature of Man? What is most proper and rational for him to follow? and in the making choice whereof, he can only discover true Wisdom?* According to that, Job 28. 28. *And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.* For, as when God wrought the works of Creation, he had a Design in every Creature which he made; so he therein displayed his Infinite Wisdom, in that he suited all the Creatures Natures and Ends one to another. This then is the End which Man, if he knows himself, and his Natural Constitution, will propose to himself, as being made for it, and all his faculties were suited to it, before such time as Sin had depraved them.

3. *WHAT is that End which, if attained by him, will make him Happy?* Man is a Creature that was made capable of Happiness: which no other inferior Creature, can ever attain unto. Hence God was pleased to appoint him such an End, as in the attainment whereof he might be Blessed for ever. Every other thing by reaching it's End, attains to it's Goodness; but Man by his, gains his Felicity: Hence that, Isa. 56. 2. *Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it: that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.* Jam. 1 25. *But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.* And if he falls short of it, he makes himself Miserable.

II. IT is Man's CHIEF End, which is here enquired after. The Question takes it for granted, that a Man may have *Diverse* Ends, which he proposeth to himself in his actions; and that not only practically, through mistake, but lawfully and regularly. There are various Designs, and diversities of Operations which Man is appointed to: and hence there are divers Arts and Sciences, which he hath to guide him therein, and every Art hath its distinct End. But we are here given to understand, that Divinity or Religion hath its peculiar Glory and Preference, in that its business is to treat of Man's Chief End. That a Man may and must have *Diverse* Ends in his Operations, appears for *Two* Reasons.

1. *Because there is many times a Subordination of Means*: It is so in every Art: there being a great many Steps to be taken in the Way to that End, which is firstly and principally aimed at: Yea, Nature it self follows such an order

Hof. 2. 21, 22. A man doth one thing for another, and *that* for another; and so till he rests in something, beyond which he hath no respect: which Subordination produceth manifold Ends; because *that* for which another thing is done, bears the respect of an End unto that which was done for it. Thus a Carpenter cuts one piece of Timber for a Ground-fel, another for a Post, &c. though all be for the House.

2. **B E C A U S E** a Man bears Divers Capacities or Relations, to which he is to refer his relative Actions, and to aim at the Discharge of them. A Man may be a Member of a Civil or Ecclesiastical Society; and he is as such, to seek the Good and Prosperity of that Society; and what he doth, as such a Member, ought to look that way. He may have the care of a Family upon him, to provide for, and discharge many Offices to; and hence must make that his End in many things which he doth: To this purpose is that of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 7. 33, 34. Man hath a bodily Life to take care for, Food and Raiment to provide, and for this is appointed his Labour in his particular Calling; and he is to make it his next End, Eccl. 6. 7. *All the labour of man is for his mouth.*

N O W among all these Ends that a Man propounds to himself, there is and must be One that is *chief*; One that is preferable to all the rest, and bears the bell away from them: and the Reason is, because there is something that he was specially and ultimately made for: & will further appear, if we consider what are the NOTES, by which our Chief End is to be judged of, which are more principally these Three:

1. **T H A T**, in the Attainment whereof, a Man's Best and highest Good doth consist. It is a Rule in Logick *Finis et Bonum convertuntur*; the End & Goodness of a thing are the same. If then there be Degrees of Goodness in the things aimed at, there must be Degrees in the Ends: If one thing be Better than another, & consequently if there be a Best Good, there is a Chief End. For that which is Best, can be but One; and that there is so, is intimated in that of Christ, Mat. 19. 17. *There is none good but one*, i. e. eminently, superlatively good; Goodness itself, compared to whom the Goodness of all other things disappears.

2. **T H A T** to which all other Ends ought to serve, as so many Means: For that which is subordinate, always looks forward, and points to that which is supreme. That End, to which every other End pays contribution, and no farther truly benefits the Man, than as it helps him to the Enjoyment of that, is the Chief; and that there is such an one is certain. It is a received Maxim, *that all Arts are Handmaids to Divinity*; and what are they but Rules to direct Man how to attain his subordinate Ends? Man labours that he may eat, he eats that he may live: and if that be all his Happiness, merely to live, what is he better than a Beast? The Apostle plainly assures us, that there is One Point in which all Human Actions center, and that must needs be Man's Chief End, 1 Cor.

10. 31. *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

3. **T H A T** which is only an End, and not a Mean. All subordinate Ends are also Means respectively: as they look backward, they are Ends; but as they look forward they are Means; but that which is the Chief serves to no other. It is that in which Man ought to rest, and in the Fruition of it to count himself as happy, as he is capable of being made; he is to take it for his full Portion. So he, Lam. 3. 24. *The Lord is my portion saith my soul*... Such an End there must be, or Man can never be Blessed; because he could never come to his Resting Place, but must be left in a Labyrinth, and carried on in an endless Pursuit of Happiness.

H E R E that Great C A S E belongs, *viz.*

*H O W* shall a Man know that his Ends be Right?

T H E foregoing Discourse well ponder'd, will give light to the Resolution of it; from whence may be gathered these satisfactory CONCLUSIONS. *If our Ends be Right,*

1. *W E* have an End, which we pay the Respect of a Chief End unto. There is One so by Appointment; and except we look upon One as so practically; we must needs be in an Error. That Man that hath no more Love to, nor is specially carry'd out after One more than all other, hath no Chief, and therefore is on a false bottom: Hear the Psalmist, Psal. 72. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I'd give besides thee.*

2. *W E* have made choice of that to be our Last End, which God hath Commanded us so to do. There is but One; and if we be not fallen upon that, we labour under a Delusion: for there is no other, the Obtaining whereof is able to render us truly Happy. God hath not left it to Man's Arbitrary Choice, to set up what End he will; but hath shewn him what is good and directed him to fix upon it; Leut. 30. 19. *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life & death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.*

3. *W E* pursue all other Inferiour Ends for the sake of the Last, but the Last for it's Own sake. Religion doth not disallow these, but only regulates them: It gives them their place, and, if we do so too, we do well. And this is done, when we endeavour so to follow them, as to help and encourage us in following that, and not to hinder us; When we labour, both to carry that on notwithstanding the other, and to forward that by the other; And when we have brought them thither, there we rest. Hence that, 1 Pet. 4. 11. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise & dominion for ever & ever, Amen.*

4. *W E* are more moderate and indifferent in our Pursuit of all Other, but most intemperate in prosecution of This. As to the Former, Paul guides us to a right acting about them, 1 Cor. 7. 29, 30. *And thus I say, brethren, the time is short.*

*short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none ; And they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoyce, as though they rejoyced not ; and they that buy, as though they possessed not. As to the Latter, the Scripture describes our Pursuit of it, by the hungry, thirsting, longing, panting, fainting of the Soul after it, Psal. 42. 1, 2. As the Hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall I come and appear before God !*

5. *WE can cheerfully suffer Disappointment in our Other Ends, and count our selves Gainers by the Loss, if it promote the Chief. So did Paul, Phil. 3. 7. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. And Chap. 1. 18, 19. So the Hebrews, Chap. 10. 34. And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in your selves that ye have in heaven a better & an enduring substance. And so John the Baptist, Joh. 3. 29, 30. He that bath the bride, is the bride-groom : but the friend of the bride-groom, which standeth & beareth him, rejoyceth greatly because of the bride-grooms voice : this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.*

A N D let it be our Care to be well resolved in this Case ; it being the Foundation of our everlasting Consolation : If we miss it in the right placing of our End, we lose the Benefit of all the Means. As it is the First Question in Divinity, *What is Man's Chief End ?* and all refers to it ; so it is the First Enquiry, that every man should make of his own Soul, *What is the Ultimate End that I am reaching after ?* This for the sense of the Question.

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## SERMON, II.

HAVING thus stated the QUESTION,