

AN ILLUSTRATION
OF
THE DOCTRINES
OF
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

OF MAN'S CHIEF END AND HAPPINESS.

1 COR. X. 31.—*Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

PSALM lxxiii. 25, 26.—*Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

KNOWLEDGE is a necessary foundation of faith and holiness; and where ignorance reigns in the mind, there is confusion in the heart and life. We have the word of truth in our hands, and many methodical systems of divine truths, amongst which the Shorter Catechism, composed by the Reverend Assembly of Divines at Westminster, in pursuance of the solemn league and covenant, as a part of the then intended uniformity between the three nations, is deservedly reckoned the chief. This I shall endeavour to explain with all possible brevity and perspecuity, that ye may have a view of those divine truths, with the reasons of them. And this I have thought it the more necessary to do, in order that your minds may be established in the truth, as our time is like to be a time of trial, wherein ye may be exposed to many snares, and so be in danger of apostasy.

In the first of the texts which I have read, ye have,

1. The chief end of human actions, the glory of God: that is the scope of which all we think, or speak, or do, should tend; this is the point or common centre, in which all should meet.

2. The extent of it. It is not only some of our actions, but all of them, of what kind soever, that must be directed to this end. This, then, is man's chief duty.

In the second text we have,

1. The Psalmist's chief desire, and what he points at as his only true happiness; that is, the enjoyment of God. He takes God for and instead of all, that in him alone his soul may rest.

2. The reason of this is taken from, (1.) The creature's emptiness, both in body and spirit, ver. 25. (2.) From God's fulness and sufficiency: and this is amplified by the eternity of it, *my portion for ever.*

From both texts the following doctrine natively follows. Doctr. "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever."

In handling this doctrine, I shall speak, I. to the glorifying of God, which is one part of man's chief end.

II. To the enjoyment of God for ever, wherein man's chief happiness consists, and which he is to seek as his chief good.

I. I shall speak to the glorifying of God, which is one part of man's chief end. And here I shall shew,

1. The nature of glorifying God.

2. In what respects God's glory is man's chief end.

3. The extent of this glorifying God.

4. The reason of it.

First, I shall shew the nature of glorifying God. To glorify, is either to make glorious, or to declare to be glorious. God glorifies, *i. e.* makes angels or men glorious; but man cannot make God glorious, for he is not capable of any additional glory, being in himself infinitely glorious, Job xxxv. 7. Hence it is plain, that God gets no advantage to himself by the best works of men, the profit of our holiness redounding entirely to ourselves, Acts xvii. 25. Psal. xvi. 2.

God is glorified, then, only declaratively; he is glorified when his glory is declared. This is done two ways. Objectively, by the creatures inanimate and irrational. Thus the heavens declare the glory of God, Psal. xix. 1. This the creatures do, while they afford matter of praise to God, as a violin is fit to make music, though there must be a hand to play on it ere it can sound. Man declares his glory also actively. And this he ought to do,

1. By his heart, 1 Cor. vi. 20. *Glorify God in your spirit.* Honouring God with the lips, not with the heart, is but a very lame and unacceptable performance. He ought to be glorified by our understanding, taking him up in the glory which the scripture reveals him in, thinking highly of him, and esteeming him above all other

persons or things, Psal. lxxiii. 25. So they that know him not, can never glorify him : and they that esteem any person or thing more than, or as much as him, dishonour him. We glorify him by our wills, chusing him as our portion and chief good, as he really is in himself ; by our affections loving him, and rejoicing and delighting in him above every other.

2. By his lips, Psal. l. 23. 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.' Therefore man's tongue is called his glory, Psal. xvi. 9. not only because it serves him for speech, which exalts him above the brutes, but because it is given him as a proper instrument for speaking forth the glory of God. So that it must needs be a strange perverting of the tongue, to set it against the heavens, and let it loose to the dishonour of God, and fetter it as to his glory.

3. By his life, Mat. v. 16. 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' A holy life is a life of light ; it is a shining light, to let a blind world see the glory of God. Sin darkens the glory of God, draws a veil over it. David's sin made the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. The study of holiness says, God is holy ; mourning for every slip says, God is spotless ; walking holily in all manner of conversation, within and without, &c. says, God is omniscient and omnipresent, &c. As when men find a well-ordered family, that tells what a man the master of it is.

SECONDLY, I proceed to show in what respects God's glory is man's chief end.

First, It is man's end,

1. It is the end which God aimed at when he made man, Prov. xvi. 4. 'The Lord hath made all things for himself,' Rom. xi. 36. 'For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' Every rational agent proposes to himself an end in working, and the most perfect the highest end. Now God is the most perfect Being, and his glory the noblest end. God is not actively glorified by all men, and therefore he surely did not design it ; but he designed to have glory from them, either by them or on them ; and so it will be. Happy they who glorify him by their actings, that they may not glorify him by their eternal sufferings.

2. It is the end of man as God's work. Man was made fit for glorifying God, Eccl. vii. 29. 'God made man upright ;' as a well-tuned instrument, or as a house conveniently built, though never inhabited. The very fabric of a man's body, whereby he looks upward, while the beasts look down, is a palpable evidence of this.

3. It is that which man should aim at, the mark to which he should direct all he does, 1 Cor. x. 31, the text. This is what we

should continually have in our eye, the grand design we should be carrying on in the world, Psal. xvi. 8. 'I have set the Lord always before me,' says David.

Secondly, It is man's chief end, that which God chiefly aimed at, the chief end of man as God's work, and that which man should chiefly aim at. God made man for other ends, as to govern, use, and dispose of other creatures in the earth, sea, and air, wisely, soberly, and mercifully, Gen. i. 26. Man was fitted for these ends, and a man may propose them lawfully to himself, seeing God has set them before him; but still these are but subordinate ends to his glory.

There are some ends which men propose to themselves, which are simply unlawful, as to satisfy their revenge, their lust, their covetousness, &c. These are not capable of subordination to the glory of God, who hates robbery for burnt-offering. But there are other ends, which are indeed in themselves lawful, yet become sinful, if they be not set in their due place, that is, subordinate to the glory of God. Now, God's glory is made our chief end, when these three things concur.

1. When whatever end we have in our actions, the glory of God is still one of our ends in acting. We may eat and drink for the nourishment of our bodies; but this must not jostle out our respect to the glory of God. If the nourishment of our bodies be the only end of our eating and drinking, it is sinful, and out of the due order.

2. It must not only be our end, but it must be our main and principal end, that which we chiefly design. When God's glory is our chief end, all other ends that we propose to ourselves will be downweighed by this; all other sheaves must bow to that sheaf: as a diligent servant designs to please both the master and his steward, but chiefly the master. But when, on the contrary, a man eats and drinks (for instance) more for the nourishment of his body than for God's glory, it is plain, that God's glory is not the chief end of the man in that action. Hence we read, 2 Tim. iii. 4. of some that are 'lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.'

3. When it is the ultimate end, the last end, the top and perfection of what we design, beyond which we have no more view, and to which all other ends are made subservient, and as means to that end. Thus we should eat that our bodies may be refreshed; we should desire that our bodies may be refreshed, that we may be the more capable to serve and glorify God in our stations. Thus we are obliged to seek our own salvation, that God may be glorified; and not to seek God's glory only that we may be saved; for that is to make the glory of God a stepping-stone to our own safety.

Thirdly, I come now to show the extent of this duty. Respect to the glory of God is as salt that must be served up with every dish. The great work of our life is to glorify him; it is the end of our first and of our second creation, Isa. xliii. 21. 'This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.' We must be for God, Hos. iii. 3. and live to him. This must be the end.

1. Of our natural actions, 1 Cor. x. 31. eating, sleeping, walking, &c. we are under a law as to these things. We may not eat and drink as we please, more than pray as we please, Zech. vii. 6. All these things must be done in subserviency to the glory of God. These things must be done that we may live, and living may glorify God; and when we can do it without them in heaven, then none of these things shall be done.

2. Of our civil actions, working our work, buying and selling, &c. Eph. vi. 7. Prov. xxi. 4. It was one of the sins of the old world, that they were eating; the word is properly used of beasts eating their food: they had no higher end in it than beasts; and marrying, a thing in itself lawful, but they had no eye to God in it.

3. Of our moral and religious actions, Zech. vii. 5. We must pray, hear, &c. for God's glory.

This is such a necessary ingredient in our actions, that none of them are truly good and acceptable to God without it, Zech. vii. 5. Do what we will, it cannot be service to God, if we do not make him our end; no more than a servant's working to himself is service to his master. God will never be the rewarder of a work, whereof he is not the end; for if a man should build houses to all the country, if he build not one to me, I owe him nothing. Alas! to what purpose serves a generation of good works all killed by a depraved end?

Though it is a duty frequently to have a formal and express intention of the glory of God in our actings, yet to have it in every action is impossible: neither are we bound to it; for then, for that very intention we should be obliged to have another, another for that, and another for that, *in infinitum*. But we should always habitually and interpretatively design the glory of God. And that is done when, (1.) The course of our lives is directed to the glory of God, Psal. l. ult. (2.) When we walk according to the rule of God's word, taking heed that we swerve not in any thing from it. And, (3.) When God's will is the reason as well as the rule of our actions; when we believe a truth, because God has said it; and do a duty, because God has commanded it. If we do not so, God loses his glory, and we lose our labour.

Fourthly, The reason of the point is, because he is the first prin-

ciple, therefore he must be the last end. He is the first and the last, the Alpha, and therefore the Omega. God is the fountain of our being; and therefore seeing we *are* of him, we should be *to* him, Rom. xi. ult. forecited. Man is a mere relative being; God is our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. Our being is but a borrowed being from him, as the rays or beams of the sun are borrowed from the sun: therefore I AM is God's name. Whatever perfection we have is from him; hence he is called 'the only wise, none good but one, that is God:' he gives us the continuance of all these things, and it is on his cost that we live. As when the waters come from the sea unto the earth, and go back again unto it by brooks and rivers; so all we receive and enjoy comes from God, and ought to go back again to him, by being used for his glory. Wherefore to make ourselves our chief end, is to make ourselves a god to ourselves; for a creature to be a centre to itself, and that God should be a means to that end, is to blaspheme, John viii. 50.

II. I shall speak to the enjoyment of God for ever, wherein man's chief happiness consists, and which he is to seek as his chief good. Here I shall show,

1. The nature of this enjoyment.
2. The order of it.
3. That it is man's chief end in point of happiness.

First, I shall shew the nature of this enjoyment. There is a twofold enjoyment of God, imperfect and perfect.

First, There is an imperfect enjoyment of God in this life; which consists in two things.

1. In union with him, or a special saving interest in him, whereby God is their God by covenant. By this union Christ and believers are so joined, that they are one spirit, one mystical body. The whole man, soul and body, is united to him, and, through the Mediator, unto God. This is the foundation of all saving enjoyment of God.

2. In communion with God, which is a participation of the benefits of that saving relation, whereof the soul makes returns to the Lord in the exercise of its graces, particularly of faith and love. This is had in the duties of religion, prayer, meditation, &c. in which the Lord privileges his people with manifestations of his grace, favour, and love, bestows on them the influences of his Spirit, gives them many tokens of his kindness, and fills them with joy and peace in believing.

Secondly, There is a perfect enjoyment of God in heaven, when this world is no more. This consists in,

1. An intimate presence with him in glory Psal. xvi. 11, 'In his

presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore.' God himself shall be with them, and they shall ever be with the Lord, enjoying his glorious presence, brought near to his throne, and standing before him, where he shews his inconceivable glory.

2. In seeing him as he is, 1 John iii. 2. They shall have a full, a satisfying, and never-ending sight of God, and of all his glorious perfections and excellencies, and they shall be ravished with the view thereof for ever.

3. In a perfect union with him, Rev. xxi. 3. He will be their God. They were united to God in Christ here by the Spirit and faith, and made partakers of a divine nature, but then only in part; but in heaven they shall perfectly partake of it. There shall be a most close and intimate union between God and them: God shall be in them, and they in God, in the way of a glorious and most perfect union, never to be dissolved.

4. In an immediate, full, free, and comfortable communion with him, infinitely superior to all the communion they ever had with him in this world, and which no mortal can suitably describe.

5. *Lastly*, In full joy and satisfaction resulting from these things for ever, Mat. xxv. 21. The presence and enjoyment of God and the Lamb, shall satisfy them with pleasures for evermore. They shall swim for ever in an ocean of joy, and every object they see shall fill them with the most ecstatic joy, which shall be ever fresh and new to them, through all the ages of eternity.*

Secondly, Let us consider the order of this enjoyment.

1. It is a part of man's chief end, and, in conjunction with glorifying of God, makes it up. And these two are put together, because no man can glorify God, but he that takes God for his chief good and supreme happiness.

2. Glorifying of God is put before the enjoying of him, because the way of duty is the way to the enjoyment of God. Holiness on earth must necessarily go before felicity in heaven, Heb. xii. 14. There is an inseparable connexion betwixt the two, as between the end and the means; so that no person who does not glorify God here, shall ever enjoy him hereafter. The connexion is instituted by God himself, so that the one can never be attained without the other. Let no person, then, who has no regard for the glory and honour of God in this world, dream that he shall be crowned with glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life, in the heavenly man-

* The reader may see a more full account of the happiness of the saints in heaven, in the author's book, *Fourfold State*, state 4, head 5, Vol.

sions. No; the pure in heart, and they who glorify God now, shall alone see God, to their infinite joy in heaven.

THIRDLY, I shall shew, that the enjoyment of God is man's chief end in point of happiness, the thing that he should chiefly seek. For this end,

1. Consider what man is. He is, (1.) A creature that desires happiness, and cannot but desire it. The desire of happiness is woven into his nature, and cannot be eradicated. It is as natural for him to desire it as it is to breathe. (2.) He is not self-sufficient: he is conscious to himself that he wants many things, and therefore he is ever seeking something without himself' in order to be happy. (3.) Nothing but an infinite good can fully satisfy the desires of an immortal soul: because, whatever good he finds in the creature, he can still desire more, and will continue to desire it; and where it is not to be found, there his happiness is marred. So that man's happiness is neither to be found in himself nor in any creature, or created good.

2. Consider what God is.

1st, God is the chief good. Some persons, as angels, &c. and some things, as grace, glory, &c. are good; but God is the chief good, for he is the fountain good, and the water that is good is always best in the fountain. All other goodness is but second-hand goodness, derived and dependant; but God is original, underived, and independent goodness, the cause and source of whatever is good in heaven and earth. Now, where the more goodness is, there the more it is to be sought. And therefore, seeing God is the chief good, the enjoyment of him is the chief end which man should aim at in seeking.

2dly, God is all good. (1.) There is nothing in him but what is good; he is entirely without imperfection. (2.) All that is good is in him; so that the soul, finding him commensurate to its desires, needs nothing besides him; and therefore should not, and cannot, fully rest in any person or thing but God, who alone is able to satisfy all its desires, and afford it that happiness which it earnestly pants after.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. O how does reigning sin pervert the spirit of man, turning it quite away from its chief end! How many are there who make themselves their chief end! They are conjured within the circle of self, and out of it they cannot move. Like beasts they grovel on the ground, seeking themselves, and acting for themselves only or chiefly, pursuing the enjoyment of earthly things; but look not to God, Phil. iii. 19. Their own advantage is the chief motive and

aim they have in their natural, civil, and religious actions, either their own pleasure, profit, or honour and glory. And they never think of, never propose the glory and honour of the infinite Majesty of heaven in any thing they do.

2. This may fill the best with shame and blushing. O how much is God dishonoured by our hearts, lips, and lives! O what self-seeking mixes itself with our best actions! How eagerly do we pursue created things, and how faintly the enjoyment of God! How absurd is such conduct! and how dishonourable to a holy God! It is a saying upon the matter, that God is not the chief good, that he is not a suitable portion for the soul, and that the creature is better than God. How should we be ashamed of ourselves on this account, and labour earnestly to make God the chief and ultimate end of all our actions, and the enjoyment of him our chief happiness!

3. Behold the excellency of man above other creatures on earth! He is made for a noble end, to glorify and enjoy God, while other creatures were made for him. How sad is it, that men should thus forget their dignity, and turn slaves to those creatures which were made to serve them! And how deplorable and lamentable is it, that men, in place of making God their ultimate end, and placing their chief happiness in him, should make their belly, their lusts and idols, their God, and place their chief felicity in the gratification of sensual and brutish pleasures; as the drunkard does in his bottle, the unclean person in his whore, the miser in his wealth, and the ambitious man in titles of honour. Alas! our hearts by nature are set on the earth that we tread upon, and our desires reach up to those things that we should make stepping-stones of. Let us earnestly implore divine grace to cure this disorder of our hearts, and give them a bias to more excellent things, and the enjoyment of that which will survive the grave, and not perish with the wrecks of time, and the dissolution of the world.

4. The soul of man is immortal, seeing to enjoy God for ever is its ultimate and supreme happiness. God is immortal, and so must the soul be too, which can never be satisfied but in this never-dying being. The body too must rise again, seeing God is the God and portion of the whole man. Now, God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Can that thinking and immaterial substance which eagerly desires happiness, and can find it no where but in the immortal God, perish with the body, and all its thoughts and desires be extinguished in the grave? No; its chief happiness will subsist for ever, and so will the soul too. And both soul and body, which were united to God here, shall continue to be united to him for ever, after the resurrection. Let us then seek to be united to God here, that we may be happy with and in him for ever.

5. When God and the creature come in competition; we must renounce the creature, and cleave to God only, Luke xiv. 33. God is the chief good, and to glorify and adhere to him at all times, and in all cases, and amidst all trials, is our great duty, a duty absolutely required of us. If we are reduced to that dilemma, that we must either give up with the creature, or any worldly goods or possessions, or even life itself, or give up with and deny God and his cause, we must give up with and abandon the former, and not prefer them to the glory of God, which we ought always to study as our main end, and account our chief happiness and joy.

6. Here is a rule to try doctrines by, and also practices. Whatever doctrine tends to glorify God, and promote his honour in the world, is certainly from God, and is to be embraced. And whatever practices have that same tendency, they are good, and deserve to be imitated. Whereas any doctrine that tends to dishonour God, to rob him of his glory, and set the crown upon the creature's head, to depreciate the free grace of God, exalt the power of nature and of free-will, in opposition to the efficacious and irresistible grace of God, as the doctrines of the Pelagians, Papists, Arminians, and others do, is not from God. Neither is any doctrine or opinion that robs the Son of God of his essential dignity, supremacy, independency, and equality with the Father, to be received, because it is not of God, who will have all men to honour the Son even as they honour the Father.

Lastly, Let this then be your main and chief work, to glorify God, and to seek to enjoy him. And hence see the absolute need of Christ, and faith in him; for there is no glorifying of the Father without the Son, 1 John ii. 23. and no enjoying of God, but through him. No sacrifice is or can be accepted, unless offered upon this altar; and there is no coming into the chamber of presence, but as introduced by Christ.