

## **Catechism, Sec 1: Man's Relation To God Through the Scriptures**

by B. S. Poh

### **Q1. What is the chief end of man?**

**A. Man's chief end is to glorify God<sup>1</sup>, and to enjoy him for ever<sup>2</sup>.**

- 1. 1Cor. 10:31, Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*
- 2. Ps. 73:25-26, Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

### **Comments:**

1. The “chief end” is the chief purpose for which we are made. The “end” of man, therefore, is more than the “objective” or “purpose” of man. Rather, it is the “purpose for which he is made”, i.e. man is designed to fulfill a purpose. We are created by God to show forth His praise while on earth, and to live happily with Him in heaven. The parts of a machine work smoothly when they are in their respective places, and doing what they are meant to do. So also, man will be happy only when he submits himself to God, learns of His will, and obeys Him.
2. However, we know that many people want to live as they like instead of seeking to please God. Like nuts and bolts that are fitted in the wrong places, they grind along in life, causing harm and pain to themselves and to others. Over and above this, they are provoking God and incurring guilt upon themselves. Some people appear to be selfless, doing many acts of charity and showing concern for mankind and the environment. However, they are doing all these because of their own reasons, which are centred upon man.
3. Only a person who knows God, through faith in Jesus Christ, is capable of living a God-centred life. Only such a person can glorify God. “To glorify God” does not mean “adding glory to God”, which is impossible because God is already perfect. Rather, it means to reflect His glory. A Christian glorifies God because he lives in accordance to His word, with the view of pleasing Him.

### **Q2. What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify him?**

**A. The Word of God, namely the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments<sup>1,2</sup>, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him<sup>3,4</sup>.**

**Notes:** Instead of the original wordings, “The word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament...” we have dropped the expression, “which is contained” because of the wrong views of Liberalism and Barthianism.

1. *Eph. 2:20, Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.*
2. *2 Tim. 3:16-17, All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*
3. *Acts 17:11, These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.*
4. *1 Jn. 1:3, That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

### **Comments:**

1. God speaks to us today by His word, the Bible. He no longer speaks by voices, dreams, or visions (Heb. 1:1; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is more correct to say, “The Bible says...” or “God says in His word...” rather than, “God spoke to me...” as though direct revelation has been given to you personally. The Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of the Bible is the same Spirit who causes sinners to be born again. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Holy Spirit communicates God’s will to His people by applying the Bible’s teaching to them. The more we understand the Bible’s teaching, the easier it is for us to make decisions in life.
2. The Bible consists of 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. We reject the books called “the Apocrypha”, which the Roman Catholic church has added to the Bible. The Bible is God’s perfect, or complete and sufficient, revelation to man. Adding anything more to it is like adding poison to a glass of pure water. Similarly, we do not accept the so-called “revelations” or “holy books” of others as inspired writings of God. Both Liberalism and Barthianism claim that God’s word is “contained” in the Bible in a sense different from the Reformed position. Liberalism holds to the view that some parts of the Bible are the words of man, introduced in the process of copying and transmission. Neo-orthodoxy, also known as Barthianism (after the theologian Karl Barth) believes that the Bible is the word of man, and becomes God’s word only when some parts of it “speaks” to the man, i.e. affects him in a deeply personal way.
3. The Bible alone should be our authority in all matters of faith and practice. This is the Reformation principle of “sola scriptura”. God’s word is sufficient to guide the individual Christian and the church in our service to Him. The Christian should not allow church traditions, personal preferences and man-made laws to dictate his faith and obedience to God. The church should not allow human traditions, pragmatism, and expediency to nullify the sole authority of the Bible. Traditions are practices that have been handed down through the years. Pragmatism is the idea that what appears to work must be right, regardless of the underlying principles or the doctrinal implications. Expediency is the idea that what can solve the problem is all that matters, regardless of whether it is right.

### **Q3. What do the Scriptures mainly teach?**

**A. The Scriptures mainly teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man<sup>1-3</sup>.**

**Notes:** The word “principally” has been changed to “mainly”.

1. *2 Tim. 1:13, Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*
2. *Eccl. 12:13, Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all.*
3. *Mic. 6:8, He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*

**Comments:**

1. In order to achieve the chief end of our life, we need to know God and His will, and we also need to do what He requires of us. One part, or division, of the Catechism shows what we are to know. The gospel, i.e. the good news of salvation, is covered. This includes the knowledge of: (i) God, our Creator; (ii) man, the sinner; and (iii) salvation, in Jesus Christ. Another part of the Catechism covers what we are to do. The Christian life is covered. This includes: (i) the Ten Commandments, which concern holy living; (ii) the means of grace, which concern the sustenance of our faith; and (iii) the Lord's Prayer, which concerns our prayer life.
2. There are many things that are not taught in the Bible, e.g. how a computer works, when the Republic of China was founded, what Jesus Christ looked like, etc. However, the Bible alone reveals the way of salvation to sinners, and builds up the faith of believers so that they are able to serve God well (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:22-23). The catechism and the confession of faith do not possess any authority in themselves, unlike the Bible which is God's word. They are only tools to help us learn the Bible's teaching. They are useful because the doctrines which have been drawn from the Bible are laid down systematically.
3. The Catechism is designed to help the individual Christian in his faith, while the Confession of Faith is designed to help the church in upholding the faith. The church is as strong as its members. It is not good enough to have able church leaders who make a stand for the truth. It would be good if the members are strong in the faith - knowing what they believe, and living out what they believe. Let us be strong Christians, and let us train our children to be strong in the faith!

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