





By my Grandfather

the Rev^d Thos: Barnard
Rector Wittersfield

Mordant Barnard

To be preserved by my children
& their descendants.

M.B.

An Exposition of the Church Catechism.

Lecture the first which is introductory.

Being desirous to employ the talents, and abilities with which God has blessed me for the advantage of the members of this congregation, and to discharge according to the measure of my capacity every part of the ministerial function, it cannot be supposed that I could be unmindful of the great duty of catechising, in a parish whose peculiar circumstances, and situation seems to render it extremely necessary, and the omission, and neglect of it wholly inexcusable. I propose therefore by the divine assistance, during the continuance of this solemn season, to instruct as many of the younger sort as moved by their own good principles, and dispositions, or influenced by the advice or commands of their Parents, or masters, shall, confor

mably to the expectations, and injunctions of
our holy church offer themselves to be well
principled, and grounded in the true faith
of christ, as they are taught it by the Church
of England in her Catechism, set forth for
that purpose. — most earnestly beseeching
you, who are the parents of children, and
masters, and mistresses of families, that you
do your parts also to set forward this great
labour of love, that you contribute what in
you lies, early to instill into tender, and un-
derbaunched minds the true principles of our
most holy religion, and sow in them the good
seed of the word of god, which thro the
divine blessing, may hereafter spring up
unto eternal life — for without your espe-
cial assistance, great part of the intent
of this highly useful christian practice of
catechizing, must be lost, and defeated, and
if you stir not up the minds of your children,
and servants to this holy exercise, the neg-
lect of it will soon be visible, in the idle, and
unfruitful lives, the vain, and vicious courses of
a thoughtless, and irreligious generation, and

you will contribute to make the world worse,
to wound the cause of christianity, to lose
precious, and immortal souls by not pressing
home upon them the necessity of an early Pi-
ety, which (under God) must be owing only
to their being well instructed, in the duties of their
christian calling in their youth — Indeed,
so much depends upon right informing young,
and tender minds in the principles of their du-
ty, so much depends upon teaching them in ve-
ry early life, the state they are called to, the
professions they have made at their Baptism,
the faith they have owned, the difficulties
they have to encounter, and the helps, and as-
sistances God is ready to vouchsafe them; that
the total ignorance of it in some, an inatten-
tion to it in others, and a transitory and in-
-effectual impression of it which is made upon
the minds of more, is evidently among the
first, and reigning causes of that spiritless,
and lukewarm religion, of that external,
and nominal christianity, which alone dis-
tinguishes so many of the members of the pu-
rist, and most apostolical church upon earth
— But the fatal evil stops not here, for to

to the neglect of this great duty of catechi-
zing are we in a great measure to attribute
all the dissoluteness, and national iniquity,
which for a whole century has been growing
among us, and which in a deplorable man-
ner distinguishes our own age, by the sad
marks, and characters of infidelity, and
Atheism on one hand, and by those of liber-
tinism, and the most abandoned flagiti-
ousness on the other — And no wonder if a
corrupt nature left to itself, unprincipled
in the doctrines of religion, untaught in the
school of Christ, and unpractised in early habits
of virtue, and piety should be destitute of the
preventive grace of God, should be given up to a
reprobate mind, and left to work all manner
of wickedness greedily; no wonder, I say if
those who either thro' the neglect of their
Parents, and masters, or their own Idleness, and
inattention have never been well grounded in
the principles of our most holy religion while
they were young, should never afterwards be-
come acquainted with the terrors, or comforts
of the Lord, but live as if there was no diffe-
rence in things, no prospect beyond the grave,

no god in the world, no approver of human actions, no judge of the behaviour of a reasonable, and accountable creature — If therefore it is a duty to endeavour to amend mens lives, and manners, if it be incumbent upon us to shew a care, and concern for God, honor, and glory, if the souls of those whom divine providence has committed to our charge will in some measure be required of us, we cannot any other ways answer the expectation of our god in these important particulars, then by endeavouring betimes to reason their minds with religious impressions, to teach them the scriptures, and the doctrines deducible from them in an easy and comprehensible manner at the dawn of their reason, that in the more mature, and adult stages of their being, they may not depart from them — for let the Atheist, and Freethinker advance what they will, the dignity, and freedom of the human mind can alone be preserved by being early tinged with religious impressions, and if we take not care betimes to sow in them the good seed of the word of life, the Enemy will come, and scatter over them the tares of vice, and corruption, and render the soil other-

wise kindly enough, productive of nothing,
but what is disgraceful to our nature, and dis-
pleasing to our God — If impressions of Vir-
-tue, and religion be not early cultivated in
the minds of men, the characters of vice, and
wickedness will soon appear in them; and
it will cost us much of our time, and pains
in future life, to bring them back to a temper
and disposition fit for the reception of God's
truth, and proper for the admission of religi-
ous principles — But were the voice of Na-
ture, and the reason of the thing silent in
this important particular, yet is the com-
mandment of God very express to instill betimes
the principles of religion into youthful minds.
— Thou shalt love the Lord thy God (says Mo-
ses) with all thine heart, and with all thy
soul, and with all thy might, and these words
which I command thee this day, shall be in
thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligent-
ly thy children — agreeably to which says Solo-
mon, train up a child the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart from
it — St. Paul in like manner exhorts fathers
to bring up their children in the nurture, and
admonition of the Lord, and Timothy is in

a particular manner commended by him that
of a child he was versed in the holy scriptures
— and accordingly this custom of early in-
structing the minds of youth to religious senti-
ments, has been the practice of the faithful
in all ages — God says of Abraham as a token
of praise, and approbation, that he knew he
would command his children, and his house-
hold after him, and that they (thru his Pa-
rental care and instruction) would keep the
way of the Lord, to do justice, and judgement
— David thus pathetically bespeaks his son
Solomon, and thou Solomon my son know
thou the god of thy fathers, and serve him
with a perfect heart — It was also the espe-
cial command of Christ to his apostle St. Pe-
ter, that he should particularly take care to feed
his Lambs, to instruct namely the tender, and fee-
ble minds of those precious souls, whose early
age required all that great apostles care,
and diligence, to keep them from the Vanities
and corruptions of the world — Under the
Jewish dispensation, every town had a religi-
ous officer whose province it was to be an in-
structor of babes; this employment was incor-
porated into the primitive church, and he who
was called the Catechist in it, did during the

continuance of the solemn season of Lent in-
struct, and prepare the minds of those who were
desirous of being admitted to Baptism, or the Sup-
per of the Lord - may even in many of the most
antient Christian Churches, Catechetical schools
were erected some (as supposed) by the Apostles
themselves, others by their first, and best fol-
lowers, the intent of which Seminaries were
to propagate Christianity, by instilling in the
minds of youth the first rudiments, and prin-
ciples of it — and agreeably to the nature
of the thing, in conformity to the express com-
mand of God, and in imitation of the pa-
-rest, and apostolical Churches, our holy Mo-
-ther the Church of England, ever accommo-
dating herself to these three great rules of
action, has drawn up, and set forth her Ca-
-techism, or an instruction to be learned of eve-
ry person before he be brought to the Bishop to
be confirmed — a form indeed very short,
but very comprehensive, easy and intelligible
to the lowest capacity, yet full of the most
wholesome, and spiritual doctrine and instruc-
tion to the greatest, and most improved under-
standing — a form drawn from the pure and

genuine sources of holy scripture, not corrupted by unwarrantable, and unnecessary additions, not teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, but speaking from the oracles of God, and delivering the plain and unalterable terms of eternal life — a form lastly, drawn up with that care, and caution, that candor, and lenity, that true spirit, and temper of christianity, as to give no just offence, to afford no real cause of scruple to any sect, or party of men, who profess that holy faith by comprehending the essentials of it, by setting forth to them the whole of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church of Christ, by teaching those things, and those alone, which the scripture makes necessary for salvation, and that in so small a compass, that a common memory may retain it, but with that fullness, and sufficiency, that the most adult, and perfect christian may find in it matter of advice, and instruction, of comfort, and consolation of help, and assistance in the manifold occasions of christian, and spiritual life —
— This Catechism is excellent in itself,

so accommodated to the various Capacities
and Uses of Mankind, I propose by Gods As-
sistance to explain, and illustrate to you, not
vainly pretending to go beyond, and exceed
the Labours of other great, and pious men
who have commented upon it. not presuming
to offer any new interpretation of its doctrines,
or undiscovered proofs of its truth, but inter-
ding in a plain, and intelligible manner, with
modesty, and humility to propose such expla-
nations of all its several parts, as have the con-
currence of their joint opinions, as are agre-
able to the general tenor of the doctrines
of the Church of England, and are particu-
larly warranted, and confirmed by the word
of God himself in holy scripture — and may
the great Author of early piety, the adora-
ble lover, and instructor of the souls of men
give his divine blessing to our intended la-
bours, and sanctifye this well designed
attempt of the meanest of his servants to the
furtherance of the salvation of all those
who assist and are present at it thro the
merit and mediation of Jesus Christ our
Lord — amen —