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## The Confirmation Instruction of Children

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# The Confirmation Instruction of Children, a Survey

By HAROLD DORN

## I

### SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE CALIFORNIA-NEVADA SURVEY

**Purpose.** We are all interested in improving our confirmation instruction. It was thought that one of the most practical ideas to find out how we might improve our individual techniques would be to make a survey of what our brethren were doing in the field. Such a study would indicate what materials and procedures were in use, our principal difficulties, and such matters that needed special study. The study might also point up new ideas and trends.

**Scope.** The survey did not cover adult instruction. It should be noted, however, that the survey covered the work of a majority of our fellow pastors in the California-Nevada District in elementary instruction, and that the replies were about evenly divided between the two conferences. This study thus presented a fairly accurate picture of elementary-level instruction as it actually existed. Replies to the survey were given voluntarily and should be accepted in the spirit of good faith with which they were given.

**Use of the Catechism.** One of the surprising discoveries in this survey was the fact that while 95 per cent of our pastors indicated that they were using the new or old Catechism as a text, one third did not require at least Part One of the enchiridion to be memorized,<sup>1</sup> and about two thirds did not require all or most all of the Catechism answers to be memorized. However, over 90 per cent of the brethren required at least fifty Bible passages to be learned, with the majority requiring from one third to one half of the texts. Two factors probably affected this: first, 37 per cent listed memorization as their greatest difficulty in instruction; and second, 41 per cent listed parent co-operation as their greatest difficulty. Child abilities, reading difficulties, individual differences, and hours available to the pastor for instruction also weighed heavily in the matter.

*Hours of Instruction.* By combining individual answers to the sections titled "length of class period," "number of class periods per week," "duration of instruction," and "minimum extent of instruction," another interesting discovery was made. The average (median) hours of instruction required for confirmation in eight parish-school congregations was about 150, and in thirty-six congregations without parish school 160. It did not seem to follow that when a congregation had a parish school the children got more confirmation class instruction. The latter did, of course, have the advantage of many more hours of preconfirmation religious training than the Sunday-school-trained children.

*Methods.* Not so long ago the Socratic method of development questioning was held to be the only proper method of catechization.<sup>2</sup> This study indicated that only about one third of our pastors were using the method at all even occasionally. The analytical method fostered by Spener and Francke, which held almost undisputed sway in the 1700's, seems to be still used, at least occasionally, with some degree of satisfaction by about half our pastors.<sup>3</sup> The use of psychological, unit, project, scientific, and problem-solving techniques that call for more than mental activity on the part of the child, while not new to our Synod, seem to have taken ascendancy in about one third of the parishes.<sup>4</sup> Individual replies indicated this was not limited to parochial school instruction. The trend to this learning technique was also indicated in the wide variety of learning activities actually in use. The 29 per cent use of H. J. Boettcher's *Instructor's Manual*, no doubt, has had great influence, and was generally considered helpful.<sup>5</sup>

*Set-Up.* Most parochial school children received their instruction in school, but one pastor also had Saturday sessions, beside weekly classes. The typical set-up in about two thirds of the other parishes seemed to be: a two-hour class period, once a week, usually on Saturday, for 22 weeks a year for two years, with confirmation at Pentecost. Almost all of the other third had classes after school during the week, but one mission pastor listed a Sunday afternoon class as an interesting variation.

*Content Material.* Aside from the Bible and the Catechism, which were used by almost all, about half the brethren also gave

instruction in the hymnal, liturgy, Luther, church history, missions, and Synod. Other curricular material used pertained to the Augsburg Confession, stewardship, the canon of Scripture, church decorum, and sex. The latter, offered in 15 per cent of the churches, was sometimes combined with the study of the Sixth Commandment. One pastor explained an interesting technique: the class was divided into boys and girls; his wife met with the girls privately; he met with the boys.

Some churches were using films for the presentation, with Scriptural emphasis added through free discussion. A few pastors indicated they had special instruction in leading devotions, family altar, ex-corde prayers, the testimony of science and the Scriptures. The latter was deemed important because of the emphasis on evolution in public schools.

*Audio-Visual Aids.* About half the brethren were using some sort of audio-visual aid, with many using as much as ten different media. One pastor indicated he tried to "chalk talk" the lesson wherever possible, and work sheets with similar diagrams were distributed to the children on which they could fill in significant thoughts. Two pastors used self-made charts. The blackboard for outlines and diagrams was used by 49 per cent. It was quite surprising to find that almost one fourth of our fellow ministers used original source material and objects. The suggestion that Concordia Publishing House make available for sale ready-made packets of pictures, objects, clipping reprints, and the like, was made by over one fourth the clergy. It was recognized that it was best if the children and pastors collected their own, but many pastors, especially in mission fields, did not have the time nor facilities to do this. It took many years before they were sufficiently supplied to attempt the unit and project method.

Pacific Grove, California

*Helpers.* Over a third of the pastors had either the help of a parish school teacher or a Sunday school teacher. These helped with visual aids, correcting papers, excursions, hearing recitations, gathering pictures and materials for units, and the like, relieving the pastor of much time-consuming detail.

*Achievement.* Testing procedure varied widely, but it was quite

interesting to note that almost one fourth of the pastors were using some kind of comprehensive test at the end of the course. This seems almost a necessity after the research study by Kraeft.<sup>6</sup> About 80 per cent maintained the final oral test before the congregation on the day of confirmation or sometime during the week immediately before. In one church the congregation heard the children's examination at the end of each Chief Part, and in another the congregation accepted the pastor's test as sufficient, without public examination. Since pastors were concerned in the personality growth of the child as a Christian, as well as mastering doctrinal material, one pastor was using a standardized personality test.<sup>7</sup> The survey might indicate that a standardized religious "faith and life" achievement test, on the order of the Stanford Achievement Test in secular subjects, would be welcomed, both as an indication of what the children had actually learned, as well as a skillful tool with which the pastor might check the efficiency of the various teaching methods he was trying.

*Parent, Pastor, Pupil.* Pastors in 41 per cent of the parishes listed their biggest problem as getting parent co-operation. It will be helpful to know that several brethren were attempting to resolve this factor by having private meetings with parents (35 per cent), inviting parents to attend the classes (22 per cent), sending out written reports of some kind (22 per cent), conducting fellowship- or open-house evenings (11 per cent), or giving mimeographed assignments (2 per cent). In dealing with the pupil, one pastor found that periodic picnics, outdoor socials, unified the group and made the instruction more enjoyable. Shyness and self-consciousness in recitation and class work decreased. This also set the stage for greater interest. Another pastor wrote: "The pastor's loving, sincere, living presentation will make the class; its absence will break the class."

*Workbooks.* More than half the brethren used no workbook at all, and 15 per cent had gone to the trouble to make their own. Of the books on the market, Seyer<sup>8</sup> was used in 41 per cent of the classes. An interesting variation was the remark: "I have used workbooks made by class members themselves with good effect. It instills interest and gives incentive by using such workbooks as the theme of a children's service."

*Maturity Factor.* By combining the information about children's ages in confirmation classes, it was discovered that about 60 per cent of our churches included either high-school freshmen or sophomores or both in confirmation instruction. This surprising fact may indicate a possible trend away from the traditional idea of confirming at the end of the eighth grade, as well as the feeling that children learn the material much more quickly and efficiently with wider understanding on a higher mental-maturity level.<sup>9</sup> Two pastors were attempting to deal with variations in mental maturity within the class by giving standardized intelligence tests and setting up special groups for the exceptionally brilliant or exceptionally deficient, and allowing them to proceed at their own rate. Most pastors, however, combined all children in one class.

## II

### WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

*The Real Test* of our whole educational set-up to win souls and ground them firmly against falling away in the crucible of life is indicated in the statistical yearbooks. Look at the Synodical record: in 1950 we lost 28 per cent of our communicants by defection, or about 1 in 4; in 1949 we lost 32 per cent, or almost 1 in 3.<sup>10</sup> Check the California-Nevada District figures: in 1950 we lost 28 per cent, 1 in 4; in 1949 we lost 38 per cent, over 1 in 3. J. Edgar Hoover commented about American churches saying: "Seven out of eight children quit church and Sunday school before they reach 15 years of age."<sup>11</sup> We have no statistics on this last matter, nor do we know precisely how many of our 26 per cent defections were children we confirmed, but since confirmations make up a large proportion of our gains in communicant membership, it may not be exactly unfair to ask ourselves, "Watchman, what of the night?"

*The Spotlight* is on morality these days. The nation's spiritual plight has been recognized as never before in the R. F. C. scandal, five-per-center fiasco, West Point discharges, bribery of athletes, Kefauver investigation, football farce, moral investigation of legislators, adolescent dope-addiction, failure of public schools to teach morals, and the like. In the latter matter, Bernard Iddings Bell

recently described our school system as "undisciplined, irresponsible, irreligious. We Americans decline to recognize the necessity of living faith. . . . Our vast technological might will not long save us from those nations which put their trust in something greater than themselves."<sup>12</sup> We trust in science and educate top technicians, only to see some of them act the role of moral idiots, turning traitor in favor of Communism. Treaties, leagues of nations, subject-matter education, mass production, financial wizardry, military might, scientific superiority, all earthly achievement, in turn, hang upon a slender thread of moral and spiritual integrity. Louis B. Saelzler, editor of the *Cleveland Press*, recently wrote an editorial reprinted from coast to coast. He commented: "Why has moral deterioration set in among us that brings corruption, loose behavior, dulled principles, subverted morals, easy expediences, sharp practices? What corrupts our top people? We lead in everything—almost. Maybe the farmer of years ago, looking with troubled eye at the skies upon which he depended so much for providential kindness, had a greater faith than we who rise vertically many miles into the air to find out what really goes on Up There."<sup>13</sup> In an age that has largely forgotten God, could the present turn of events offer greater opportunity to the Church?

*Our Challenge* is aptly put by the now sainted Dr. W. A. Maier: "If it is a fact, as educational experts assure us, that 80 per cent of the Nation's youth are not properly prepared by our schools to assume their responsibilities in life, then more than 90 per cent of the young people in our American churches are not adequately trained in spiritual matters, for life beyond the grave. . . . God looks to the churches for intensified youth training along spiritual lines. . . . Unless an inner reawakening shows itself in an energetic, testifying clergy and laity . . . we face persecution and the confiscation that has uprooted thousands of churches or invited government to control religion."<sup>14</sup> The state of the nation, the future of the Church, the percentage of defection makes evident the need for constant re-evaluation of the Church's means to save and keep souls. Confirmation, of course, ranks high among all the media to win souls and ground them firmly against falling in life.

## III

## DO CHILDREN LEARN FOR TOMORROW?

**Knowledge.** Rom. 16:17 says: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the *doctrine* which ye have *learned*." It is written, Acts 2:42: "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' *doctrine*." Boettcher comments: "The foremost objective is, evidently, still knowledge, understanding, insight. We dare not slight knowledge, lest we fall into emotionalism. Every pastor and teacher prays for well-indoctrinated members."<sup>15</sup> Whatever their methods or seeming achievement in teaching, sincere Scripture-teaching pastors comfort themselves with the promise: "*My Word* shall not return void," Is. 55:10-11.

**Fantasy.** In the Parable of the Sower, Mark 4:3-20, Jesus made it clear that while the Word has divine power, some seed of the Word falls in wayside hearts, some in stony hearts, some in thorny hearts. Just memorizing so much doctrine and Scripture texts is no guarantee of fruitful harvest. For some, "Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the Word," v. 15. For others, they "endure but for a time," v. 17. The presumption that much hearing and memorization always bears fruit, *ex opere operato*, is pure fantasy. Actual research corroborates this. Even where children are thoroughly trained in parochial school and confirmation class, the Rommelman study showed that the majority of children do not remember 11 simple texts proving 11 basic doctrines of the Christian faith two years after confirmation.<sup>16</sup> The Kraeft study, primarily revealing that elementary children at the time of confirmation are not yet mature in doctrinal knowledge, also indicated a surprising lack of actual learning of many basic teachings of the Bible. Errors ranged up to 62 per cent of the 1,562 children tested. He observed further: "In a similar study among young people attending Lutheran high school from one to four years it was found that quite a number of these errors still persist, though in not so large a percentage of cases."<sup>17</sup> What might have happened without the doctrinal post-confirmation instruction in high school is too easy to guess. Attainment in memory work is no sure-fire panacea, though learning the Scripture by heart is commanded by God: "These words shall be in thine heart," Deut. 6:6. More efficient



ways of memorizing, more motivation for retention, more frequent reviews and practical application may change the picture of tomorrow.

*Transfer of Training.* No one doubts that the Pharisees knew the Word of God, and that they had memorized reams of Scripture. Hillel said: "He who acquires knowledge has attained eternal life." The Pharisees said: "This people who knoweth not the Law are cursed," John 7:49. Yet Jesus declared: "Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones . . . how often would I have gathered thee . . . but ye would not," Matt. 23:27-37. Learning so many Scripture passages is no magic guarantee of a transfer from mental knowledge to living faith. Catechists have to call for decisions like Elijah: "How long halt ye between two opinions?" 1 Kings 18:21. Or like Joshua: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve," Joshua 24:15. What is true about faith is also true about sanctification. "Be ye *doers* of the Word and not hearers only," James 1:22. Jesus said: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man that built his house upon a rock," Matt. 8:24. Thus "one's ability to apply knowledge is not in direct proportion to one's knowledge of facts."<sup>18</sup> "Teachers must decide what are the values, ideals, attitudes, knowledge, and skills for students to get in their educational experiences. The teacher must understand how students learn these things most significantly, how students transfer their learning to a large variety of situations."<sup>19</sup> Transfer is not automatic. It must be planned out and learned experientially.

*Vicarious Learning.* We expect children to learn from the experiences of others and the narratives in the Bible. However, it has been often said, "The one thing we learn from history is that people do not learn from history." It is a fateful fact that most adolescent children are possessed with the idea that Mother and Father are not up to date, that he can do better than his forefathers with his own better understanding, that he certainly will not make the mistakes of the patriarchs of old. We need only look to the repeated apostasy of Israel, which, in spite of warnings and bitter experiences, seemed never to learn. Peter is also a case in point.

Though warned by Jesus against denial, he did not take it to heart and learn vicariously. There are other examples in Scripture, however, that indicate vicarious learning. One is Joseph, who shunned temptation, saying: "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Gen. 39:9. Though temporarily imprisoned, he was amply rewarded by being given a great position. He learned vicariously. If our teaching is to be effective, we cannot avoid this provocative problem of how to lead children to learn vicariously. Just citing Bible narratives here and there is not the end of learning but the beginning. If Scripture is to be "*profitable* for instruction," 2 Tim. 3:17, children must be led to understand why sometimes it is not, *viz.*: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit," Gal. 5:17. Special techniques are needed to bring about the necessary tie-in for effective vicarious learning, such as introspection (e. g., a period of silence while children with folded hands and closed eyes try to resolve the question, "Why do I not sometimes do as I am told?"), recall (recall experiences when they got into trouble and why, like Peter, Luke 22:61), background of pleasurable experiences (encourage them to tell how they follow God's Word and were blessed), guidance (pastor is interested in their personal problems and heartaches, and makes it easy for them to share confidences in private conference), prayer life (urge writing a prayer which includes a text to be used privately every evening before going to bed about their greatest weakness, e. g., anger. "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation," Mark 14:38), thought problems, socio-drama.

#### IV

#### A LIVING SOUL

*The Whole Child.* Jesus set the pattern for our religious instruction when He said: "Teach them to *observe* all things whatsoever I have commanded you," Matt. 28:20. Observe — live — think — feel — know — desire — will — believe — all are included. We teach the whole child, not just his mind. "Lutheranism is not an emotional religion. Perhaps that is all the more reason why we must constantly be on guard, also in the classroom, against sterile orthodoxy."<sup>20</sup> Jesus commented: "This people draweth nigh unto

Me . . . and honoreth Me with their lips; but their *heart* is far from Me," Matt. 15:8. We are warned: "Thou art neither cold nor hot," Rev. 3:15, 16. We are urged: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness," Matt. 5:6. We are comforted: "My peace I give unto you . . . let not your heart be troubled. Your heart shall rejoice," John 16:22. We cannot escape the fact that "the individual functions as a unit-thinking, feeling, and striving simultaneously, making use of and being influenced by a variety of abilities and characteristics."<sup>21</sup> We seek a well-integrated, God-centered, socially adjusted personality with powerful convictions and enthusiastic consecration. Luther aptly puts it: "That I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." The pastor will want to branch out beyond the province of materials and techniques that train only the mind, such as memorization, to materials that appeal to the heart and will, and to techniques that touch the soul and life.

*Teaching and Teaching.* There is a difference. Some teachers tell, and some tell teachers. Telling is not necessarily teaching, nor is listening necessarily learning. In fact, there is no teaching unless there is learning. Learning involves the child's activity, his thinking, his willing, his speaking, his feeling, his acting, his believing. In the study room, it is teacher activity; in the classroom, it should be child activity. John 7:17 records: "If any *man* will *do* His will, he shall *know* of the doctrine." Eavey devotes a whole chapter to this vital factor in the learning situation and suggests: "Teaching is guiding and stimulating the learner and creating an environment in which learning will take place most adequately and effectively."<sup>22</sup> These are no mere pious phrases, but a plea for practicality. Units are now being prepared by the Board of Parish Education, all with the idea of setting up learning situations in the class which will stimulate interest and motivate self-directed purposeful activity.<sup>23</sup>

*Creative Christians.* Handel was writing compositions to express his faith at eight years of age. Bach's faith led him to creative music. Michaelangelo's faith led him to creative art. Walther's faith led him to pioneer a democratic organization in the church, an idea which was largely new to Lutheran practice. We Christians

are not creative in doctrine, of course. But there are plenty of ways to express creativeness in applying Biblical truth. Perhaps we are very late in the universal priesthood idea because people have expected pastors to do most everything. He set up the goals, got the committees, supervised (!) the work. No wonder many churches without a pastor are stalemated. Why should not the laity take the responsibility, formulate goals, construct parish planning, and use the pastor as a guide to their activity? Maybe our educational set-up, especially confirmation classes, is so teacher-dominated that it actually stifles creative self-expression and individual initiative. In retrospect, why is it that children cannot be encouraged to write original poems in connection with units? Why not let them pick hymns that fit the topic and have one of their own classmates who can play accompany? Why not encourage those who love to paint murals, posters, and plaques? Why not let boys sketch out a church building in which they would someday like to worship? (In later life they would never permit the building of those abominable architectural monstrosities designed by surrealist secularists for the worship of God.) A pastor may never have time to allow the class to be turned into a workshop, but he can give such inspiration, recognition, and appreciation, that the children work independently on their own time. They'll probably enjoy every minute of it! Here is food for thought: "Why have we not had recent organists, hymnists, artists, architects, authors that rival the masters of Reformation times?"

## V

### A FEW BIBLICAL HINTS ON LEARNING TECHNIQUES

The Bible abounds in many examples how people learn. While much has been written on the subject of catechetical methods, it is quite a surprise that we have not begun with the Bible research, but have many treatises on historical development, psychological studies, and educational experiments. The Divine Word should be our infallible guide, particularly the life of the Great Teacher. The following hints suggest themselves just from a cursory reading of the Gospels. What marvelous discoveries could be made from an exhaustive research!

1. *Visualization.* According to Luke 11:37-54 Jesus sat down to

dinner with a Pharisee. When the question came up why He had not washed His hands, the Savior led the Pharisee to learn that God looks not to externals but internals by pointing to the cup and platters before Him on the table, saying, "Now ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness." In John 6:35, after Jesus fed the 5,000, He said, "I am the Bread of Life." The use of objects, handwork, flowers, and concrete material real to the life of a child, are invaluable in the learning situation.

2. *Story.* In about thirty parables, Jesus led His hearers to understand the nature of the kingdom of God, proceeding from the known to the unknown, from material things to spiritual things. Notice Matt. 7: "house on the rock"; Luke 13: "the fig tree"; Luke 15: "the piece of money"; Matt. 13: "the goodly pearl." Other stories, such as the Good Samaritan, are told with telling effect. Illustrations, not only from the Bible, but also from daily life experiences such as newspaper clippings, rightly used, are much worth while.

3. *Lecture.* The Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5—7, is the classic example of lecturing and sermonizing. Occasional talks to explain, apply, and inspire are not outside the province of the catechist. Sometimes it is the only way.

4. *Observation.* As we read in Mark 12:41-44, Jesus halted His disciples and caused them to learn something about Christian giving by simply having them stop to observe and evaluate the actions of a poor widow casting her mites into the Temple treasury. Planned observations of actual life situations sometimes leave deeper impressions on the minds and hearts of children than a million words.

5. *Excursion.* Recall Gethsemane, to which Jesus often went with His disciples, and there, learned how to pray. Matt. 24:41: "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." Recall the excursion to the mount where Jesus gave the Lord's Prayer, Matt. 6. It seems that Jesus and His disciples were almost always on the road somewhere, and each excursion was a learning experience to them. Occasional excursions with the confirmation class, such as visiting a well-kept park in connection with the First Article, often arouses interest to the point that the work proceeds twice as fast as before, and the time seemingly lost is made up twice over.

6. *Development Questioning, Psychodrama.* A careful reading of John 4:1-26, where Jesus gradually led the woman of Samaria, step by step, to a deep conviction of sin and triumphant faith, all the time using questions, puts Socrates to shame. Where Socratic questioning deals largely with the intellect, Jesus tactfully appeals to mind, heart, will, soul, all at the same time. The situation was not the teacher-directed rationalistic rapid-fire questioning to which the Socratic method so often degenerates. Jesus merely caught the woman's interest and attention and used questions to guide her own heartfelt deliberations as she herself proceeded according to her own thought patterns to arrive at a solution. Jesus never used questions to convince the mind alone.

7. *Scientific Research.* In John 5:39, Jesus meant what He said when He told the Jews who sought occasion to kill Him, "Search the Scriptures." This method is particularly valuable in situations where preconceived notions are involved or where sincerity is in doubt. In Acts 17:11 we read that the Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Research is implied also in Hebrews 11, where the ancient heroes of faith are listed. While this method must not be applied to the whole Catechism, treating it as nonexistent, a body of truth to be developed by personal research on the part of an elementary child, occasional questions raised by the children might be met with a study guide given for personal research. Children like to find out things for themselves. The desire for new discovery is a basic urge in every human being. Here the use of a concordance as a practical tool is a very rewarding experience, and a skill with which a child being prepared for communicant membership should not be unfamiliar.

8. *Problem Solving.* Examining Luke 10:25-37, we find that Jesus posed a problem, just the sort of thing with which a lawyer would be familiar, "Which was neighbor unto him?" By the story of the Good Samaritan, the lawyer learned for himself, by his own processes of deduction and conclusion, a great spiritual truth. If thought problems are widely used in the public schools, not only in mathematical skills, but also in social studies, why not in confirmation instruction? Most children are already familiar with the procedure, and the technique is peculiarly well adapted to applying

doctrinal truth to life situations confronting the child. We use modern true-false, completion, multiple-choice questions and the like in many workbooks, but why is this very profitable learning technique rarely used?

9. *Reports.* John the Baptist was troubled in his mind about the works of Jesus. He learned the truth by sending out someone to talk to Jesus and bring back a report. Matt. 11:2-15. Jesus said, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see." St. Paul reported to the Corinthians the liberality of the Macedonians that they might learn something about giving: "We do you wit (report) of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia," 2 Cor. 8:1. Reports may be written or oral; they may take the form of outside speakers, e. g., a Christian public school teacher testifying to divine creation over evolution; or they may be letters from mission fields read to start out a unit on the Third Commandment, and the like.

10. *Free and Open Discussion.* In John 3:1-21 we have a classic example of the discussion method used by Jesus with Nicodemus. Jesus makes a challenging statement, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," and this immediately touches off questions, statements, illustrations, Scripture references, explanations. Note that on this occasion Nicodemus does the questioning, not Jesus the Teacher. The secret of a good discussion lies in the field of motivation. Many of our children are already familiar with the discussion technique learned in public school, and the Catechist may be surprised to find that most children are capable of taking a challenging statement, carry on their own discussion, evaluate their own ideas, and draw their own conclusions on the basis of Biblical truth, with only an occasional suggestion by the pastor here and there.

11. *Buzz-Group.* Mark 9:10 is a case in point, where the disciples withdrew from Jesus momentarily, "questioning one another what the rising from the dead should mean." This method has the special advantage of allowing students to think and discuss on their own, to mentally digest certain facts, to seek solutions according to their own ability, before they get further help. Self-consciousness is eliminated. Interest and motivation are renewed and stimulated.

12. *Demonstration.* In Luke 22:24-30 and John 13:1-20 Jesus led contentious disciples to learn a lesson in humility by washing their feet. Call it shaming them into it if you wish, but no one can doubt the propriety of His technique. Jesus did not use this motive often, but when matters were critical enough to require it, He employed it with telling effect. Demonstration may proceed on the basis of other motives, such as the desire to imitate. The pastor's whole life is a demonstration which may motivate some children to want to be ministers or teachers. Specific demonstrations, such as conducting a family altar, leading devotions, and the like, are often the only effective aids possible to start the learning activity.

13. *Project.* Luke 10:1-17 records a project instituted by Jesus wherein He sends forth seventy disciples to do mission work, with many suggestions offered to guide their learning experience. These disciples went out and learned soul-winning by practice. They came back with a glowing report of success: "And the seventy returned again with joy," v. 17. The old sayings, "experience is the best teacher," and "we learn by doing," could not be more aptly put for some things. Several pastors are urging children to bring others with them to church. What could be better than a little project on the side, where children report their contacts, discuss objections, successes and failures, and from time to time are given opportunity to evaluate their own reaping of the fields white unto the harvest. And if some of the children seem to be making little progress, why not go out by twos, the stronger witnesses with the weaker?

14. *Units.* The best example of this is probably Jesus' leading the multitudes to the mount (excursion); then He preached His priceless sermon (lecture), talked about two builders (story), mentioned "ye are the salt of the earth" (visualization), conferred with a scribe about discipleship (psycho-drama), healed a leper and the Centurion's servant (demonstration), "and the men marveled saying, 'What manner of man is this?'" (discussion). Of course, the Redeemer was not limited to one phase of Christian teaching. He covered the Commandments, His deity, His power, faith, forgiveness, sanctification, the kingdom of God, and so on.



The possibilities of this technique of learning is tremendous, but it takes much planning, materials, guidance activities, and experience.

As can be seen very easily from this hasty catalog of hints, the methods of the great Rabboni positively beggar human description, to say nothing of what the rest of Scripture could reveal by painstaking research. We have barely touched the subject. Though Eavey<sup>24</sup> and Reu<sup>25</sup> do not dwell much on Biblical example, the interested pastor will find their evaluation of several techniques in teaching various parts of the Catechism quite rewarding.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Martin Luther, "Preface to Small Catechism," *Triglotta*, p. 535: "Teach them first of all these parts, namely the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, etc., according to the text, word for word, so that they, too, can repeat it in the same manner after you and commit it to memory."

2. H. B. Fehner, *Outlines for Catecheses*, Concordia Publishing House, 1926, pp. 144—178, and R. Neitzel, *Catechetics*, Springfield Concordia Seminary Publishing Company, 1943, pp. 5—13.

3. M. Reu, *Catechetics*, Wartburg Publishing House, 1931, pp. 502—505.

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