is the irreducible minimum. Is there ever a written home work on a catechism subject? Is the spelling lesson ever taken from the catechism?

The word 'catechism' is a word sacrosanct, hallowed by centuries of the Church's usage. It stands for the instruction of Christ's little ones in the truths of eternal life. 'This is eternal life that they may know Thee, the one true God and Jesus Christ Whom thou didst send,' and yet it is a word in danger of losing its real force and meaning. To catechise means to instruct by means of question and answer. We have given it a limited, dwarfed, and specialised meaning—viz., to instruct by means of set questions and set answers. However, the kernel of the method is to instruct by means of impromptu questions, the answers to which suggest new questions. The process is patient and gradual, and makes for mental alertness, and its real objective is the exhausting of the subject in hand. It combines the inquisitiveness of Socrates and the apperceptive methods of Herbert.

Before I develop this idea further, I must disclaim any attempt to belittle the usefulness of the set question method. In this—viewed as a part of a wider system—there is sound pedagogy. It trains the memory, it gives definite wording and a technical terminology, which are as the foundation to the superstructure, the scaffolding for the building, and the timber for the tunnel.

However, if we would know what real catechising is, we must hark back to the days of him, who, in the order of time at least, if not merit as well, must rank as the first of catechists,—Socrates. He claimed to practise in regard to the soul the art of midwifery, bringing to the birth of consciousness truths before held unconsciously; more important than any innovation with regard to method was his immense personal influence, and personal influence is, in a catechist, the finest asset and the most potent factor. J. B. Mayor, in his *Ancient Philosophy*, says of him: 'His force of will, his indifference to conventionalities, his intense earnestness, both moral and intellectual, contrasting so strongly with the dilettantism of ordinary teachers, and yet combined with such personal interest and sympathy, in all varieties of life and character, his warm and genial nature, his humor, his irony, his extraordinary conversational powers, these formed a whole unique in the history of the world; and we can well believe that they acted like an electric shock on the more susceptible minds of his time. For we must remember that Socrates did not, like the earliest philosophers, content himself with imparting the result of his solitary meditation to a few favored disciples; nor did he, like the sophists, lecture to a paying audience on a set subject; but obeying, as he believed, a divine call, he mixed with men of every class wherever they were to be found, cross-questioning them as to the grounds of their beliefs, and endeavoring to awaken in them a consciousness of their ignorance and a desire for real knowledge.' 'What is Justice?' Socrates would ask of some chance passer-by, who, like Coleridge's 'Wedding Guest,' could not choose but hear. He would question and cross question, qualify and requalify the definition until a full and accurate idea of the subject was made clear.

In All Education We Distinguish Three Needs:

(1) To impart positive knowledge, (2) to make such knowledge exact, (3) to clear away false impressions; and experience tells us that the 2nd and 3rd of these are more in evidence and present greater difficulty than in any subject of secular knowledge, and hence the imperative necessity of making full use of the Socratic method of catechising in order by means of impromptu questions to search out ideas formed in the mind of the students.

At New Year time, I was in the back-blocks of Nelson preparing two children for first confession. I am taking an actual case of two bright children, aged ten and twelve respectively, who, though living far from church and Catholic school, had been carefully and regularly taught their catechism by good Catholic parents, and in these children what I must call the Catholic instinct—a thing rare in the 'back o' Sunday' circuit—was strongly developed. 'What is confession?' I asked, and pat came the answer of the catechism: 'The telling of our sins to a priest approved by the bishop.' Then followed what you or I would call a lucid, masterly explanation, and I put on my Socratic air: 'What do we do when we go to confession? What sins do we tell?' etc., and 'what does the priest do?' I hazarded. 'Tells our sins to the bishop.' If we could get the children to ask questions, we are on the high road to success, but most of us will at once admit the sheer hopelessness of this, so we must interrogate and re-interrogate, not merely to complete half truths dimly grasped, but to strip the child mind of some of the weirdest notions that ever an arch-heresiarch dreamed of. Words are full often the grave cloths of truth, and this fact brings to light a serious danger in too close an adherence to the book. Thus I hold that the successful catechist is the teacher who knows how to supplement painstaking, well-prepared explanations by questioning and questioning again, until complete inventory is taken of the child's mind. This demands knowledge, minute-class preparation, patience, and the part that comes only with prayer and fasting.

The information we impart must be exact. Bacon says: 'Writing maketh an exact man,' and I feel the lack of written work in Christian Doctrine is responsible for a great deal of mental and spiritual dyspepsia. If we get the children to set their ideas on paper, we learn, and what is more, we make the children conscious of their limitations. There is such a thing as unsound religiosity of sound, as in the case of a pious old man in a Melbourne church who prays most devoutly—in the 'De Profundis'—'May purple light shine upon them.' We are in a stage of civilisation that visualizes, and exact knowledge comes almost exclusively from sight, and therefore a catechism class without a blackboard is foredoomed to failure. (N.B. Why are our school furnishers so niggardly in the matter of blackboards?)

Spirago has some excellent hints on diagramatic representation which are well worthy of study, and the idea may be developed with splendid results. Caution insists on simplicity, and prepare faithfully beforehand. Do not have the diagrams that call for too much explanation. The chalk should not be out of the teacher's hand, and colored chalk, used in moderation, is very useful. The mere writing of a word on the blackboard is of value, and certainly all proper names, technical word headings, and sub-headings, must reach the eye as well as the ear. Thus suppose we are giving a lesson on the sacramental character. First take the catechism explanation:—Character—Seal, mark, badge, brand. Seal, royal stamp; badge, soldier's uniform; brand, on horse, etc. Baptism—God's own children, once for all; Confirmation—God's own soldiers, once for all; Holy Order, God's own priests, once for all.

A great deal is lost if the board is always cleaned immediately. I see no use for a clean blackboard in a school. It is possible that the oral idea may be grasped only an hour or so after the lesson—perhaps even days after—and then only because an inattentive truant eye has caught sight of the discarded blackboard. A two-fold purpose is thus served—(1) The memory is refreshed with regard to things well understood. (2) Things hitherto held only in the sub-liminal consciousness spring suddenly into full consciousness.

Newman says: 'I want a laity who know their creed so well that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it.' In other words, the polemical side of the children's knowledge must receive careful and systematic treatment. Later on, our pupils will have to answer questions from the civil and the uncivil; from the logical and the illogical; from the sincere and the insincere, and to everyone that asketh they will have to give an answer and a reason for that hope that is in them. If we would prepare our young Catholics to withstand the truth-withering influences of the novelty-seeking press, the cheap flippant magazine, and iconoclastic socialism, we must develop their reasoning faculty, and at the same time provide them with simple proofs, well understood and committed to memory for the chief controversial subjects. And right here let it be fearlessly said that the catechism as we have it is incomplete, and unsatisfactory in this respect. It is criminal negligence on someone's part to send a child out into the world to face criticism from others, or from its own nascent doubts, on such points as the following:—(1) The existence of God; develop the idea of design. (2) The Divinity of Christ. (3) Is one religion as good as another? (4) Infallibility of the Church and the Pope. (5) The sacraments, purgatory and eternal punishment. Make a special point of proving these beliefs indirectly, i.e., by the Church's teaching, as well as directly. From the world to-day absolute truth has practically vanished. There are no dogmas, and no beliefs—we have only opinions and prejudices—hell-broth from the Witch's seething cauldron. The 'leakage' in America, Australia, and New Zealand is evidence that the Catholic schools of the United Kingdom have failed to harden with reason the faith of those committed to them, and can we flatter ourselves that the 'finished product' of our own New Zealand schools approached Newman's ideal, 'an intelligent well-instructed laity.' We know of course that much of this unbelief in the 'leakage' is but feigned, that these 'emancipated' minds are not always sceptic, but often merely septic, yet we must realise that there is a crying need for more proof in our teaching. The proof is there in plenty, why not give it to our children? In this department written work must play an important part, and a judicious selection from amongst these subjects will often aid a teacher in choosing an essay subject.

If the teacher would give an outline of the essay on