

great distance, but it is only a pleasure for children to run short errands and perform little services for those they love. The mental powers of children, as well as their physical strength, may be easily overtaxed by any continuous strain. When, however, instruction is thrown into the form of question and answer, there is not the same effort necessary to keep up the attention and to follow the line of thought. And there is, besides, the healthful pleasure of coming upon truth through the exercise of one's own powers of reflection rather than merely listening to its statement by another. We may cram a child's mind with facts to be remembered without, in any true sense, educating the child. It is as we lead children to reflect upon the facts brought under their notice and to think for themselves, that knowledge of any kind becomes of very much value to them. The parent or Sabbath School teacher, who, in imparting religious instruction, does not merely talk to and tell children what he knows about the subject in hand, but draws as much as possible out of them, thus leading to reflection and stimulating inquiry, is the one who is doing most to develop the mental and spiritual powers of childhood.

It is the felt necessity for help and guidance along the line of catechetical instruction that has led to so general a use of catechisms among the young; and I wish in the brief space at my disposal here to indicate some of the conditions on which a child's catechism may be made a useful help in this most Christ-like work of instructing the little ones in the things of God.

In the first place, the language of such a catechism should be intelligible to the child. It is worse than useless to require a child to memorize a form of words whose meaning he does not understand. For this reason I do not think it advisable to put our Shorter Catechism into the hands of very young children, though I believe it stands unsurpassed in its special line; for much of its language is above the comprehension of a little child. I know there are some who say, Let the child commit to memory the words

of our Shorter Catechism, and when he grows older he will understand more of their meaning. There is doubtless truth in this; but what of the injury done to the child in the meantime in memorizing and repeating by rote words which have no intelligible meaning to him? Is not this the very way to make our children thoughtless and to foster the spirit of formalism? I suppose no more concise or comprehensive answer was ever given to the great question of man's existence than that contained in the first question of our excellent Shorter Catechism, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." And yet what idea does the word "end" have to a little child? He knows what the end of a rope or the end of a stick is, but what conception has he of the theological sense of the word? To test this I once asked a class of very small boys the question, "What is the chief end of man?" For a time they were silent, but on being encouraged to attempt some reply, one little fellow said, "I think his head is the chief end of man." This is what might have been anticipated. I then spoke to them a little about the purposes for which things were made, and after leading up to the question, asked them what they supposed God had made them for. The answer came without hesitation, "To love and serve Him." But the first question of our Shorter Catechism is one of the simplest of the whole list.

But assuming that we have a catechism for the very young, whose language is or can be made intelligible to them, how are we to make use of this manual to the best advantage? One very important condition is to prepare the minds of the children for each question by a short conversation upon the subject of which it treats. For illustration, take question 16 of the Primary Catechism, "What besides the Bible teaches us about God?" and the other questions which immediately follow this. A short talk to the children about the works of God, in which they are led to think of how much we can learn of God's character from these wonderful works, would prepare the way for these questions. Having thus prepared the way