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CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION.

That any body, civil or religious, be maintained in prosperous condition, it is necessary to avoid relinquishing whatever has already been found of beneficial tendency—to examine with deliberation and candour every new proposal, in order that what is specious may be distinguished from what is solid, that, the latter being adopted, a positive gain may be secured.

The Catechetical mode of communicating information, so often as it has been properly followed, has uniformly proved advantageous. This, I believe, is universally allowed, whatever be the species of knowledge designed to be imparted. Those instructors, accordingly, who have adopted this plan, will be found, other circumstances equal, to be the most successful. This the very nature of the case demonstrates. A person, when a lecture or discourse is delivered, who is merely an auditor, may hear either with careful attention, or with languor and indifference. In the latter case, however excellent the prelection, little profit can be acquired. Some of the points under discussion may either have been treated obscurely, or be in their own nature of comparative difficult comprehension; and it is not to be supposed, that the careless auditor will give himself much anxiety, by subsequent study, to obtain clearer notions on the subject. When, however, questions are proposed on what has been previously heard, or, with which we are more or less acquainted, we must, and, in ordinary cases,

will give attention, in order to return distinct and proper replies. Thus our being induced to *think* is of essential service; and the more this can be formed into a habit, the greater is the power of precision and discrimination which is produced. There is not merely the additional quantity of knowledge which is gained, but the faculty for farther advances is invigorated. Besides, when it is discovered by the examiner, that any particular may be less distinctly understood, a change of phrase or terms on his part—some familiar illustration or allusion, may, at once, make all plain, which is not to be expected when a discourse is only read or delivered. In this manner, the catechetical method of instructing recommends itself to our approbation.

Many years have elapsed since catechising became general in Scotland. While it is to be regarded as one of the happy fruits of the reformation from Popery, it held a distinguished place in the system of Presbyterianism. As a means of diffusing religious knowledge, its good effects soon became apparent. The people valued and expected it, as an important part of the duty of their Pastors. The information thus communicated and appreciated, together with what was imparted by the regular preaching of the gospel in the ordinary form, was abundantly blessed of God, for the purposes of that strict moral deportment, for which Scotland has been long conspicuous. While we would carefully keep in view the necessity of divine influence to give