



**Sava D. Milin<sup>1</sup>**

**University of Belgrade, Faculty of Orthodox Theology,  
Belgrade, Serbia**

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## ***Possibilities and Scope of Application of Catechetical Conversation in Religious Instruction***

### **Extended summary**

The dialogic method recognizes different forms of conversation. However, they are disproportionately represented. The catechetical conversation form is portrayed as an archaic method, characteristic of a medieval scholastic approach in religious schools, but anachronistic to such an extent as to appear in contemporary education in the scope of a statistical error. Many authors speak unfavourably of the catechetical conversation form, but without any in-depth analysis of the possibilities this method could offer. It is most often described as a way of teaching church dogmas which were supposed to be learned by heart and reproduced verbatim in class, even in case when the material was not understood quite well. The aim of this work is to reappraise the judgment of pedagogues and methodologists and to point to multiple possibilities offered by this method. In order to arrive at relevant results by means of the comparative method, this work sets out the curriculum and syllabus of Religious Education in primary schools. It sets out all the topics of instruction and analyses all the teaching units of Religious Education in primary schools, which are then classified into three categories:

1. the teaching units which are impossible to cover by the catechetical conversation form,
  2. the teaching units which are possible to cover by the catechetical conversation form,
- and
3. the teaching units in which the catechetical conversation form is recommended.

It appears that the monologue method is the most natural to use in covering new subject matter in teaching. But we focus in particular on those teaching units which would be quite successfully realised by using the catechetical conversation form, maybe not throughout the

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<sup>1</sup> [savamilin@gmail.com](mailto:savamilin@gmail.com)

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class, but certainly in testing. By analysing the curriculum and syllabus of Religious Education in primary schools, we can see that 195 teaching units are provided for covering the teaching subject matter, 18 units of which we have recognized as suitable for the catechetical conversation form, which makes up 9.23 per cent of all the teaching units.

Naturally, in the first grade of primary school, when the pupils are still adjusting to the rules of school behaviour and instruction, the catechetical conversation form should not be used. However, in principle, one teaching unit has been identified in which this method could be applied. We start each class of Religious Education with the Lord's Prayer. Through frequent repetition the pupils learn the prayer with no effort. In view of that, if teaching Unit no. 8 analyses the Lord's Prayer, the content of the prayer is already known to the pupils, so that there is a possibility to use the catechetical method to check if all the pupils know the Our Father prayer.

In the second grade of primary school, teaching unit no. seven sets out different types of service in Church, which are then further analysed in the following classes. Bearing in mind that in a liturgy, the bishop, priest, deacon, sexton, conductor, choir, canonarch, protopsaltis, chanters, and the faithful all have specific tasks to perform, the catechetical method could serve to test the pupils' knowledge. In addition, the seventeenth teaching unit deals with the liturgical objects, which, with the use of visual teaching aids, could also be covered through the catechetical conversation form.

In the third grade of primary school, the second lesson already addresses the creation of the world and man, while its detailed description from the Bible is analysed in the classes that follow. If not throughout the revision class, we could use the catechetical method at least in the final part of the class.

In the fourth grade of primary school, the twenty-second teaching unit analyses Christian virtues. In addressing this subject matter, the teacher can apply different methods. But in view of the importance and number of Christian virtues, it is advisable to use the catechetical conversation form for revision.

In the fifth grade of primary school there is a whole series of teaching units which could be covered through the catechetical conversation form. Given the importance of the lessons themselves and the need to memorize many concepts, the catechetical method should be applied in covering the following teaching units: The Bible, the Creation, The Ten Commandments, David's Psalms, and the Old Testament Prophets.

In the sixth grade of primary school we also have several teaching units which are suitable for the catechetical conversation form, as follows: The New Testament Writings, The Feasts of Virgin Mary, The New Testament Commandments, The Sermon on the Mount, and The Persecution of Christians. The knowledge of the New Testament writings and commandments is the basic precondition of Christian faith.

In the seventh grade of primary school, the catechetical method would be advisable for three teaching units: The Ecumenical Councils, The Creed, and The Sacramental Life of the Church. The Christian faith was in fact formulated in the First and Second Ecumenical Councils. The catechetical conversation form would be advisable due to the fact that each pupil

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should be tested to assess if they have adequately understood and adopted the basic truths of Christianity.

Primary school Religious Education in the fourth and eighth grades teaches the pupils about Christian virtues. Lord Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount emphasized in particular the importance of a moral, virtuous life, rising above the convictions of the time and the Law of Moses. And the teaching units which analyse the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Books of the Bible, the Christian Virtues and similar topics would truly be given a fitting treatment through the catechetical conversation form. This method is certainly not a predominant teaching method, but its use would contribute to methodological diversity.

**Keywords:** teaching methods, catechetical form of conversation, religious instruction

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