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German Religious Instruction

Illustrative Translations*

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The instruction in Religion, like all other branches, in the Prussian schools, is governed by regulations issued by the Ministry of Education to which all schools, public and private, must conform. Hence these regulations are the first document in our series. This is naturally followed by the course of study as worked out in a typical school system, namely that of Berlin. Here we find the matter prescribed by the regulations, carried out into more detail. Next we present the tables of contents of several *text books* in use in the schools; and finally a number of reports of lessons in Religion as actually found in the school room.

All the matter presented refers to the protestant or *Evangelical* instruction, and to the *Volksschule*, or elementary school.

I.

General Regulations for Religious Instruction in the Volksschule

[Translated from Schneider: "Volksschulwesen und Lehrerbildung in Preussen", Berlin, 1875. Pages 34-36]

Function and Aim of the Evangelical Religious Instruction is to bring the children to an understanding of the Holy Scriptures and of the creed of the congregation, in order that they may be enabled to read the scriptures for themselves, and share actively in the life and worship of the congregation.

Sacred History.

The study of the Holy Scriptures includes instruction in bible history and explanation of unitary selections from the scripture, particularly the Gospels and Epistles (Pericopes) of the church-year.

The children of the lower grades are to learn a small number of stories; from the Old Testament especially those in Genesis, and the stories of Moses and of David's earlier life; from the New

*An article on Religionsunterricht, by the same author was published in RELIGIOUS EDUCATION for August, 1906 which gave his judgment on the values of German religious instruction.

Testament, stories of the birth, childhood, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and such incidents in his life as lie within the range of the child's comprehension.

Later in the course the pupils learn a systematic series of the most important events in all periods of the sacred history of the Old and New Testaments, and based upon this, they are to gain a connected idea of sacred history, in which the life of Jesus is to be especially prominent, and the founding and first period of the extension of the church is to have a place. As a sequel to this comes the history of the establishment of Christianity in Germany, the German Reformation, and information concerning the life and work of the Evangelical Church of our own day.

In schools with more than one class this instruction is to be enlarged, especially in the case of the church history.

The teacher is to narrate the bible stories freely in words as nearly like the language of the bible as possible; he is to develop the stories so as to bring out their religious and ethical content, and make them fruitful to the culture of the intellectual and moral natures. Spiritless memorizing is to be avoided.

Bible Reading.

The Biblical History of the upper grades is accompanied by the reading of connected sections of scripture from the prophetic and poetical books of the Old Testament, especially the Psalms, and from writings of the New Testament.

The quantity and selection of the matter to be treated in this instruction is left to be decided in the course of study according to the particular conditions of the several schools.

The Pericopes.¹

On each Saturday the pericopes for the coming Sunday are to be read to the children and briefly explained. The pericopes are not to be memorized.

The Catechism.

Knowledge of the creed of the church is imparted by explanation of the official catechism, with the aid of related matter in bible story, texts, and hymn verses or whole hymns. In this care must be taken not to overburden the memory.

¹ The pericopes correspond to the "Lessons" of the Anglican Church.

As a general rule, special hours for instruction in the catechism are not introduced until the upper grades in the school with one or two teachers, and the intermediate grades in schools with several teachers.

Not more than two hours (per week) are to be assigned to the catechism.

So far as peculiar conditions do not require other arrangement, the Lutheran Catechism, where it is used, is to be treated as follows: Only the first three parts are to be learned in the Volksschule; in the lower grades the simple text of the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, in the intermediate grades the first two parts of the shorter catechism with Luther's interpretation, in the upper grades the third part.

The remaining parts are left for the Confirmation Instruction.

Hymns.

Attention is to be paid to the hymns of the church in all stages of the religious instruction. In the lower grades single verses are to be learned for the most part; in the later years whole hymns. The study is not to be confined to the hymns which are memorized; and in the choice of hymns those of the most recent times are not to be ignored.

In cases where a special school hymn book is not used, the text should as a rule follow that of the hymn book used in the local church of the same confession as the school.

For memorizing, not more than twenty hymns are to be chosen, and these are to be suited in content and form to the comprehension of the children. Before the hymns are memorized they must be explained and the pupils must be drilled in correct and expressive pronunciation of them.

Prayers.

In the lower grades the children are to learn several short and easy prayers for morning, noon and evening; in the upper grades the order of the public divine service is to be explained. The general church prayers and other parts of the liturgy are not to be committed to memory.

II.

Berlin Common Schools Course of Study in Religion

[Translated from "Grundlehrplan der Berliner Gemeindeschulen", Breslau, 1902.]

I. THE SUBJECT MATTER.

A. THE ELEMENTARY GRADES (1st, 2nd, and 3rd school years.)

The work of this division is to present to the childish understanding a number of biblical stories.

Besides this the pupils must memorize the following: Several prayers, including the text of the Lord's Prayer; thirty-three verses of hymns; twelve texts, to be selected from the prescribed list; the text of the Ten Commandments.

The following stories are taken:

Class 8 (1st school year)—3 hrs. a week.

From the Old Testament:—1. Joseph is sold. 2. Joseph in prison. 3. Joseph is promoted. 4. Joseph's brothers come to Egypt. 5. Joseph makes himself known. 6. Joseph calls his father to Egypt.

From the New Testament:—1. The birth of Jesus. 2. The twelve-year-old Jesus. 3. The blessing of the children. 4. The widow's son at Nain. 5. The daughter of Jairus. 6. The stilling of the tempest. 7. The marriage at Cana. 8. The feeding of the four thousand.

Class 7.—3 hrs. a week.

From the Old Testament: 1. The call of Abraham. 2. Abraham and Lot. 3. The birth of Isaac. 4. Jacob and Esau. 5. Jacob's flight and return.

From the New Testament: 1. The wise men from the East. 2. The baptism of Jesus. 3. The healing of the ten lepers. 4. The Captain at Capernaum. 5. The Canaanite woman. 6. The healing of the blind man on the road to Jericho. 7. The crucifixion and death of Jesus. 8. The women at the grave of the risen Jesus.

Class 6.—3 hrs. a week.

From the Old Testament: 1. The birth of Moses. 2. The flight of Moses. 3. The call of Moses. 4. Moses at Sinai. 5. The choosing of David. 6. David and Goliath. 7. David at the royal court. 8. David and Absalom.

From the New Testament: 1. Peter's draught of fishes. 2. Peter on the sea. 3. Peter's confession of faith. 4. Jesus in Gethsemane. 5. Peter's denial. 6. Peter goes to the grave. 7. Peter's call to the pastoral office. 8. Peter on the day of Pentecost.

B. THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES (4th and 5th school years.)

The task of the intermediate division is the connected treatment of the history of redemption under the old covenant.

Besides this the pupils must memorize; the hymns prescribed for the division; twenty texts to be chosen from the list; and the text of the three articles of faith.

The historical matter is as follows.

Class 5.—4 hrs. a week.

First half year: The history of Kings, Saul, Solomon, and tory of the Patriarchs.

Second half year: 1. Israel in Egypt and in the wilderness. 2. Israel under the Judges.

Class 4.—4 hrs. a week.

First half year: The history of Kings, Saul, Solomon, and David.

Second half year: Survey of the history of the two kingdoms to the time of their fall, and of the Jewish nation from the restoration of Jerusalem to the time of Jesus. As central points for the presentation of the several periods, the following: Elijah, Hezekiah, Josiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Judas Maccabæus, Herod and his sons. In the last quarter-year the old testament history is brought to a close by the reading and explanation of the following psalms:

Psalm: 1, 6, 8, 23, 24, 51, 90, 103, 121, 122, 126, 130.

The underlined psalms are to be learned by heart.

C. THE UPPER GRADES (6th 7th and 8th school years.)

The instruction in the upper division embraces the history of redemption under the new covenant, in connection with bible-reading, the catechism, and church history.—The teaching of the catechism is to be based on the historical material. The church history includes the apostolical period and the history of the rise and development of the evangelical church.

The material is distributed as follows:

Class 3.—4 hrs. a week.

In the first three quarters: the life of Jesus, without detailed consideration of the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables. Repetition of the historical matter of the 5th. and 4th. Classes.

In the last quarter: the 1st. and 3rd. parts of the Catechism.—Instruction in the Ecclesiastical Year and in the Order of Service of the Evangelical Church.

Class 2.—4 hrs. a week.

In the first three quarters: the history of the apostolic church, in connection with the reading of the Acts of the Apostles. Review of the historical material of the 3rd. Class.

In the last quarter: the 2nd. Part of the Catechism, along with the Sacramental Words of the 4th and 5th Parts.

Throughout the whole year, the last Religion lesson each week is to be opened with the reading and brief discussion of the church lessons for the following Sunday (Pericopes.)

Also the children are to be taught the sequence of the books of the bible.

Class 1.—4 hrs. a week.

In the first three quarters: connected presentation of the teaching of Jesus according to the parables and the Sermon on the Mount.—Review of the historical material of the 2nd Class.

In the last quarter: the rise and development of the evangelical church, with special regard to the present circumstances of the church.

I. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION.

The history of redemption centers in personalities. The teaching should render spiritual association with these personalities accessible to the children.

The historical facts form also observation material for the moral and religious truths. The facts should be so presented that the truths may be clearly understood.

The instruction in the *Elementary Grades* aims to waken sympathetic understanding for the characters in the stories. In

this the teacher must make the fullest possible use of sense-perception. The instruction must therefore be concrete and observational.

The instruction of the *Intermediate Grades* aims to reveal the inner life of the characters of the sacred history. Even at this stage the presentation of abstract truths is, in general, to be avoided. The instruction should not attempt actual comparative study, but be content with forming associations between the new material and the facts already known.

In the *Upper Grades*, the historical actions are to be presented as the manifestation of the moral character of the actors, and to be judged as to their moral worth. The instruction should, however, now proceed to develop the general, abstract truths which are involved in the historical facts. Above all must this be done when the historical matter is employed as concrete foundation for the catechism.

The same principles which govern the methods used in the sacred history apply also in the *bible-reading*, as far as it consists of history (Acts of the Apostles,) or of didactic matter (Sermon on the Mount, Parables). The free oral presentation and discussion of the matter is followed by the reading of the passages concerned. Explanation should be limited in general to the removal of verbal difficulties. Poetic passages should be so treated that the spirit and feeling of the poet may be aroused in the minds of the children.

The same aim should determine the treatment of the *hymns*. The text of the Provincial Hymn-book is to be used.

In the *church-history*, the presentation of general principles should, in general, be avoided. A grasp of the actual and a sympathetic understanding for the persons involved is the chief aim.

The instruction in the *catechism* cannot undertake to deduce the text of the catechism from facts of the sacred history. It is advisable rather to develop the moral and religious truths at first without regard to the particular form in which the catechism has expressed them. After this has been accomplished for a definite group of ideas, the appropriate section of the catechism should be presented and treated as a source of historical knowledge. ("Wie ein geschichtliches Quellenstück.")