

I Reckon

—By Earl Heffner

There's an educational experiment going on in Charlotte, an experiment that hasn't been underway very long and an experiment that is beginning to attract citywide attention despite its brief life.

The experiment? A pre-school kindergarten at Our Lady of Consolation School. So what's unusual about a kindergarten? This one uses the Montessori method of teaching.

THE METHOD was developed by an Italian woman who was a physician and an educator. Her method assumes that small children from 2½ years to 5 years of age can learn quickly and easily the same things their older brothers and sisters learn, that they

can learn to read, to spell and to do arithmetic.

Dr. Maria Montessori originated the method in 1900, after concluding from her studies of pre-school children that they would learn under controlled conditions.

She used bright objects which a child could feel with the fingers. For instance, a string of colored beads. And she stressed that children should move freely around the classroom, picking up cardboard letters or whatever interested them. The teacher guides rather than instructs.

Dr. Montessori's method was used widely in the United States about 40 years ago. But interest waned until the Sputnik era began. Since 1958, more than 100 Montessori schools have been organized in the country.

MSGR. CHARLES Gable started the school at Our Lady of Consolation under Miss Wilma Gardner who had been teaching the regular kindergarten classes. Miss Gardner took training in the Montessori method and started the school's two classes last October.

Her children are in class three hours each day. They come from parishes all over Charlotte.

Most of the pupils are non-Catholic. Their parents are paying a tuition of \$12 a month.

While learning, the children are unhurried. So is their teacher. She gives them answer books to check their own work because "they resent being criticized." Maria Montessori said we must always treat small children with respect because they get so little of it.

"If they don't do a problem correctly, we consider it our fault." How successful is the school?

Well, it hasn't been in operation for a year yet.

But Msgr. Gable is enthusiastic. So is the school principal, Mother Dolorosa. So is Miss Gardner. And so are many people in Charlotte.

THE TIME TO answer this question may come when these children now in the kindergarten are in grammar school. Then their teachers will be able to say more precisely how much they learned, how much the Montessori kindergarten helped them in later school work.

Of course, even that may be hard to determine.

What is important now is that pre-school children are learning in this kindergarten and at a younger age in many cases than they would be learning in any other kindergarten or at home.

And this in itself is an accomplishment, is important for their future.

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Scholars Examine Relations Between Catholics and Jews

LATROBE, Pa. —(NC)— Catholic and Jewish scholars spent four days examining relations between their faiths here and uncovered many areas of agreement as well as disagreement.

The occasion was a Jewish-Catholic "colloquy" held (Jan. 25-28) at St. Vincent Archabbey under joint sponsorship of the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the American Benedictine Academy. The participants discussed both theological and temporal aspects of Catholic-Jewish relations.

TWO SCRIPTURE SCHOLARS — Father Roland Murphy, O. Carm., of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and Rabbi Samuel Sandmel of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati — noted a broad scholarly consensus between Catholic and Jewish students of the Bible.

Father Murphy said this has been made possible by the shared concern of scholars for "understanding the biblical message in its historical perspective."

"From this point of view," he said, "all interpreters are equal — they must use the same tools: philology, literary criticism, history, archaeology, etc. . . . On the level of objective analysis, where the text is subject to the control of historical and literary evidence, a consensus of opinion is possible, even apart from one's particular religious commitment."

Rabbi Sandmel said that the 20th century has seen "a joining by Catholics and by Jews in the Protestant search for the pristine meaning of Scripture."

"At last we are united in common academic quests, reading each other's books and agreeing and disagreeing with each other, not on denominational lines but in the way that scholars differ in weighing the materials they deal with," he said.

The close relationship between Catholic and Jewish worship was underlined by Father Aidan Kavanagh, O.S.B., of St. Meinrad (Ind.) Archabbey and Rabbi Solomon Freehof of Rodef Shalom Temple, Pittsburgh.

RABBI FREEHOF noted that ancient religions were essentially "spectator religions" in which the people "were not worshipers — they

were audience." By contrast, he said, synagogue Judaism and primitive Christianity focused on a "highly democratic and participating" form of worship.

"The modern changes in the Catholic Church with regard to the Mass, as to the vernacular and increased participation of the people — the whole democratic tendency — may seem radical to some, but it is merely a reemphasis of the democratic spirit of the early Church and of the synagogue," Rabbi Freehof said.

Father Kavanagh called Christianity's debt to Judaism in the area of worship "incalculable."

"The more closely we examine the origins of Christian worship, the more we see them begin to merge into Jewish tradition both in structure and detail," he said.

Rabbi Jacob B. Agus of Baltimore, in a talk examining fundamental Jewish ideas about Judaism, said the growth of the ecumenical movement is "likely to strengthen the humanist trend in the concept of Israel, transforming it into the vision of the invisible fellowship of all who seek the Lord with heart and soul."


"This development," he added, "is likely to gather additional momentum if Moslem intellectuals should fall in line. We may expect some deep and sustained soul-searching among Jews, which will result in according full recognition to the latent universalism within the Jewish faith."

RABBI ROBERT GORDIS of New York, a past president of the Synagogue Council of America, said believers must find a basis for religious liberty in their fundamental religious convictions. Otherwise, he warned, "They may extend freedom of religion to those who differ with them, but it will be at worst a grudging surrender . . . and at best a counsel of prudence limited in scope and temporary in application."

"Unless a nexus is established between the religious tradition to which the believer gives his allegiance and the doctrine of religious liberty," Rabbi Gordis said, "he will still be in danger . . . of violating the divine commandment, 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart.'"

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