

THE CATECHISM IN SONG: THE BENEFITS OF USING HYMNODY IN TEACHING  
CATECHISM

BY  
IAN HEADRICK

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

DR. JOHN R. ISCH, ADVISOR  
WISCONSIN LUTHER SEMINARY  
MEQUON, WISCONSIN  
MARCH 2013

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the benefits of incorporating hymns into a religion curriculum focused on Luther's Small Catechism. Two things become abundantly clear through a study of God's Word on this topic: God wants his Word impressed on hearts and minds and his gift of music carries his Word to hearts and minds. Luther's approach to the instruction of God's Word displays how these two biblical concepts come together. He composed hymns in a way to serve the purpose of Christian education. How then have Lutherans followed in his example of utilizing hymns in teaching scriptural truth to children? By evaluating the use of hymns in various curriculums, this study uncovers some existing practices for incorporating hymns into religious instruction. Hymns present a way for a teacher to address cognitive and affective learning goals, which will provide for greater retention of the Chief Parts of the Catechism. A hymn's rhyme and melody benefit a child's learning in far too many ways for hymns to be overlooked in teaching catechism. The role hymns may hold in a catechism classroom is to promote understanding and retention.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION..... 1

II. LITERATURE REVIEW..... 2

    A. Biblical and Historical Considerations..... 2

        1. God Wants His Word Impressed on Hearts and Minds..... 3

        2. Music Used to God’s Glory..... 9

        3. Luther’s View of Music’s Educational Value..... 11

        4. Luther’s Catechism Hymns and Their Influence on Catechetical Instruction..... 12

    B. Evaluation of Various Curriculums’ Use of Hymns..... 15

        1. Hymnology Class..... 15

        2. Christ Light..... 17

        3. Sing and Make Music..... 20

        4. Singing the Faith: A Graded and Seasonal Approach to Learning Luther Hymns and Liturgy..... 21

    C. What Do These Things Teach Us?..... 22

III. BODY: HYMNODY’S ROLE IN TEACHING CATECHISM..... 23

    A. Music’s Lasting Impression on Memory..... 24

    B. Hymnody Used to Leave Lasting Impressions..... 28

IV. CONCLUSION..... 35

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 38

VI. APPENDIXES..... 42

    A. A Lesson on Baptism..... 42

        1. Lesson Plan..... 42

        2. Student Guide..... 43

        3. Hymnology Journal Assignment..... 46

    B. A Lesson on The Lord’s Supper..... 47

1. Lesson Plan.....	47
2. Student Guide.....	48
3. Hymnology Journal Assignment.....	51

## Introduction

Martin Luther was appalled by the spiritual depravity that he witnessed in his visits to churches in Saxony. Many laypeople in those churches struggled to recite the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed. The problem was not just with the laypeople; the spiritual leaders of those people could not recite the basic tenets of the Christian faith. It is no surprise how Luther spoke about the conditions he found. "The deplorable, wretched deprivation that I recently encountered while I was a visitor has constrained and compelled me to prepare this catechism, or Christian instruction, in such a brief, plain, and simple version."<sup>1</sup> The dreadful spiritual condition of the churches in Saxony caused Luther to address those problems by making the basic teachings of the Christian faith accessible in a "brief, plain, and simple version," which became known as *Luther's Small Catechism*. This work of Luther would become a tool through which generations of Lutherans would be instructed in the pure teaching of God's Word.

What if a pastor would conduct his own "Saxon visitations" of his former confirmation students? The experiences the pastor may have would most likely be engraved in his mind. The pastor would find joy in catching up with students from years gone by, hearing about their active church life, faithful Bible reading, and love for Luther's catechisms. However, the pastor would feel sorrow when confronted with the deplorable conditions of some of his former students' lives and their lack of spiritual life. With the reality of our sinful nature, the world's disregard for God's Word, and Satan's constant temptations, the latter will be a constant struggle for a pastor throughout his ministry. The words of Luther might echo through the mind of a pastor as he conducted his "Saxon visitations."

Luther's response to the deplorable conditions of people's spiritual lives was to make the basic teachings of their faith easy to learn. The truth of God's Word was something to be in their lives, which is shown by the fact that Luther wanted his catechism to be taught in the home by the head of the household. In the spirit of Luther's approach, many people use various teaching methods to impress the catechism on children. In Luther's day, woodcuts portrayed Bible history to illustrate the main teaching of the chief parts. The five hundredth anniversary of Luther's birth was marked, in one way, by an edition of *Luther's Small Catechism* seeking to carry on this

---

<sup>1</sup>Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Fortress Press, 2000), 347.

teaching method rooted in reformation heritage. “That is how pictures come to our aid. They help us relate the sacred truths to Christian life. They serve as visual bridges in applying the faith which is learned to the faith which is lived.”<sup>2</sup> The use of visual aids is just one way through the years Lutheran teachers have sought to use as many bridges as possible to apply the truths of the Catechism not just to the heads of their children, but also to their hearts and lives. Whatever method a catechism teacher may choose, he does so to connect God’s Word to the life of the child. He utilizes every method at his disposal to impart the Word and avoid any Saxon-visitation-like sorrow.

In the plethora of teaching methods a teacher has to impress the importance of the Savior on a child, there lies an educational instrument that is often not used or not used to its full potential. The rich Lutheran hymnody, which permeates worship life, possesses educational value. This study demonstrates the theoretical and practical advantages of using hymnody in helping students understand and retain the Chief Parts of Luther’s Small Catechism. Because there is no current catechism curriculum which connects the chief parts of the catechism to hymnology, the author set out to display the benefits of this concept by researching music’s effects on memory. When a student sings his faith, the songs help engrave the truths of God’s Word on his heart and mind. The purpose of this study is to show music as a viable option in helping a child to retain concepts over time. A hymn’s rhyme and melody affect emotions in such a way to aid in long term storage of material. A portion of the paper discusses how this concept can fit into the scope of catechism instruction. Finally, an appendix to this paper displays this concept in a concrete manner with two lessons from *Luther’s Small Catechism* on Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

## **Part I - Literature Review**

### **Biblical and Historical Considerations**

This portion of the paper is meant to show the theoretical basis from which the author derived the purpose for this paper. In this section, the author cites the biblical and historical basis for integrating hymns into catechetical instruction. From this firm foundation, portions of this section discuss educational research that shapes the place hymnody may hold in our catechesis.

---

<sup>2</sup> Minnesota District of WELS. Preface to Picture Catechism edition of *Luther’s Small Catechism*, (Dr. Martin Luther College, 1983).

Finally, the author gives consideration to various hymnology courses: what has been done in the past, what is currently being done, and what is planned for the future.

### **God Wants His Word Impressed on Minds and Hearts**

Timeless words spoken from the mouth of God's servant Moses connect God's people of all generations in the task of teaching God's Word. As the people of Israel were anticipating their life in the Land of Canaan, Moses reminded them of a task that would shape their lives and their children's lives for years to come; he encouraged them to teach God's Word. Moses' words of exhortation stretch all the way to the present day. These words connect parents, pastors, teachers, and staff ministers entrusted with the privilege of teaching God's Word with those Israelites who stood in the desert east of the Jordan. To God's people – past, present and future – Moses' words describe God's desire for Christian education.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Dt 6:4-9)

Moses' words present the teaching of God's Word as a task of the parents, but an extension of parents' responsibility is the teaching task assigned by those parents to any instructor of their children. The parents are first assigned the task of teaching their children the truths of God's Word and pastors, teachers and staff ministers are called to assist them in this duty.

The guiding principle embedded in these verses is translated by the New International Version (1984), "impress them on your children." (Dt 6:7) There are a many other principles of Christian education contained within these few verses, but the this study's focus calls for a careful consideration of the Hebrew word translated as "impress," which in the original Hebrew is the verb *לְחַצֵּץ*. The basic meaning of *לְחַצֵּץ* is to sharpen a blade. The form of the verb used is a Piel perfect, which gives *לְחַצֵּץ* an educational sense: "teach the words *incisively*."<sup>3</sup> The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament retains the sharpening sense of the verb and gives this

---

<sup>3</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, Charles Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English* (Hendrickson Pub, 1996), 1042.

explanation: “incise, engrave” (by incessant recitation and explanation).<sup>4</sup> God, through Moses, had a very vivid picture in mind when he laid down his desire for passing on his Word to children. He wants his people sharpened by constant use of his Word. Through the constant use of his Word, it would be engraved on their hearts and minds.

Moses quickly focused on concrete ways to fulfill this abstract idea of sharpening the minds of children with the Word of God. The examples Moses gave center in the most critical location for Bible teaching: the home. God’s Word is more than just an academic exercise; it is a way of life. God’s Word finds a teaching moment in every aspect of life, for it is in life itself where biblical truths are to have meaning for us as whole persons. God wants his Word taught, this much is clear from the timeless words of Moses, and he wants it to permeate the lives of his people. In this way, God’s Word will be like a whet stone sharpening the minds of not just little children, but all of God’s people as they hone their knowledge of his wondrous Word.

For parents, this is an essential task, because God entrusts it to them for the spiritual well-being of their children. For catechism instructors, this is a difficult task because time spent with these children can be limited to two or three hours a week. How can a teacher display for these children that these truths are far more important than just something they need to write out on a test or recite at desk? How can he impress God’s Word into their hearts and minds in the way that equips them for a life of learning and living their faith? When trying to come to grips with an answer to these questions, educational research helps formulate a teaching method that aims at the whole of child’s learning capabilities. This research reveals some helpful concepts to consider when trying to carry out our teaching task to the best of our God given ability.

It was for the purpose of giving teachers a tool with which to consider the various categories of educational objectives that Benjamin Bloom crafted his taxonomy of educational objectives in the cognitive domain. Considering Bloom’s taxonomy will aid a catechism teacher in understanding the learning process. Cognitive learning objectives stress the mental aspect of learning; the development of a body of knowledge is the primary goal. With this body of knowledge properly learned, the child’s knowledge is tested with various activities in order to display his understanding of the knowledge. Bloom defines this process with six levels:

---

<sup>4</sup> Johannes G. Botterweck, Ringgren Helmer, and Fabry Heinz-Josef, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament Vol 15* (Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 343.



knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation.<sup>5</sup> In Bloom's explanation of these stages, he writes about how each concept builds off one another; therefore, these terms are placed in a hierarchy. This tool displays for a teacher how these concepts work together to meet the objective of the cognitive domain.

To explain the development of these cognitive terms consider teaching the first commandment. The knowledge base the teacher wants the child to have is that God commands, "You shall have no other gods." The child's knowledge for this comes from Bible passages and *Luther's Small Catechism*. He comes to know that we should put nothing before God in our hearts, but the teaching task is not finished there. A teacher may have him communicate the truth of the first commandment in his own words; so that a child's comprehension may be assessed. This shifts to the teacher breaking down the idea of idolatry into concepts or principles and turning those into an application for the child to display his knowledge by applying it to a given situation. Analysis allows the child to piece together various elements. For example maybe the children could locate thoughts, words, and actions in a given application that show an idolatrous heart or a sanctified heart. Synthesis may be displayed in the exercise of teaching the child how the first commandment is connected to all the other commandments. The child could be asked to take the various elements in the other commandments and explain how when we break the first commandment we break all the others. Finally, evaluation asks the child to use his knowledge to make judgments on the various material or methods. Bloom's remarks about how these six concepts build off one another are easily identified in a classroom. It is not just enough to have knowledge of a truth; he must display that he can apply that truth as well.

Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning objectives may cause many minds to consider the days of their own catechetical instruction: a list of passages and chief parts memorized throughout those years. This brings up one of the primary goals of catechetical instruction, which is to educate children in the teachings of *Luther's Small Catechism* by getting them familiar with the basic teachings of Scripture. All of those passages and chief parts were engraved on minds by incessant recitation and explanation; this focus on the cognitive aspect of learning is for many the primary memory of days in catechism class. A memory Professor Joel Gerlach wrote about in his paper *Teaching for Cognitive and Affective Outcomes*.

---

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Bloom, "The Nature and Development of the Taxonomy" In *Sources: Notable Selection in Education*, edited by Fred Schultz (Dushkin Pub Group, 1997), 168.

It hardly needs saying that our work in the classroom is done for a cognitive outcome. We *are* there to process information, to help students know in the narrow sense, to transmit facts from books or from our heads to the mind of the learner. Content, particularly Biblical content, is important. Intellectual activity must characterize all Christian teaching. There is no new life apart from knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, as our Lord states unequivocally. We are committed as Lutheran Christians to a belief-system and to the perpetuation of that belief-system with its creeds and confession drawn from the Word of God. That necessitates teaching for cognitive outcomes. Jesus did that; so did the prophets and the apostles; so must we. We cannot train disciples to make disciples without enabling them to communicate propositional truth verbally.<sup>6</sup>

Professor Gerlach's comments bring back the dictionary definition of *דַּבָּר*. For proper biblical education to take place there needs to be a transmission of the facts from the instructor to the children who are learning it. Parents, pastors, and teachers are to instruct the children in the body of truth God reveals in his holy Word. Dr. John Isch in his paper *The Challenge of Catechetical Instruction: From the Perspective of Our Teaching Task* stated it this way, "If they [*the students*] are to revere and hold fast to the teachings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, they must know those teachings. They must also know why we confess and practice those teachings, they must be able to speak in their own words about those teachings, and they must acknowledge those practices as scriptural."<sup>7</sup> Through a series of questions, answers, memorization, applications, and evaluations of these teachings, an instructor seeks to impress God's Word on the hearts and minds of children in accord with the cognitive domain.

However, when it comes to the teaching task assigned to pastors and teachers, which seeks to equip a child for a life of learning and living his faith, the cognitive domain is not the only learning domain of which they have to be aware; they also have to be conscious of the affective domain. "The affective domain refers to emotions as well as their outward expression."<sup>8</sup> This area of learning objectives targets the child's emotions as a way to impress a body of knowledge on a child. The goal of the affective domain is for a child to attach emotional significance to a certain stimuli; this emotional attachment then leads him to seek to learn more about this stimuli and he begins to attach this stimuli to other things he has found valuable.

---

<sup>6</sup> Joel Gerlach, *Teaching for Cognitive and Affective Outcomes*, (WLS essay file, accessed December 15, 2012), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. John Isch, *The Challenge of Catechetical Instruction: From the Perspective of Our Teaching Task* (WLS essay file, 1979), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Amy Brett, Melissa Smith, Edward Price, and William Huitt, *Overview of the Affective Domain* (2003), 1.

Finally all of the values he has accumulated shape his view of the world. The affective domain is really nothing other than the use of a child's emotions, in order to shape his understanding of a certain subject and his behavior toward that subject. In the affective domain, a subject becomes something more than just material to be learned or an academic exercise; it is shown as an impactful truth for a child's life. Humans are emotional creatures and it is important for pastors or teachers to recognize and utilize the affective domain for that simple fact alone.

According to David Krathwohl, who wrote *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook II: Affective Domain* in collaboration with Benjamin Bloom and Bertram Masia, the cognitive and affective domains work together.

The fact that we attempt to analyze the affective area separately from the cognitive is not intended to suggest that there is a fundamental separation. There is none. As Scheerer puts it, "...behavior may be conceptualized as being embedded in a cognitive-emotional-motivational matrix in which no true separation is possible. No matter how we slice behavior, the ingredients of motivation-emotion-cognition are present in one order or another" (Scheerer 1954, p. 123)."<sup>9</sup>

He also writes about the ease with which many teachers blend these two domains together.

The careful observer of the class room can see that the wise teacher as well as the psychological theorist uses cognitive behavior and the achievement of cognitive goals to attain affective goals. In many instances she does so more intuitively than consciously. In fact, a large part of what we call "good teaching" is the teachers' ability to attain affective objective through challenging the students' fixed beliefs and getting them to discuss issues.<sup>10</sup>

These tightly interwoven domains emphasize the role emotion possesses in the teaching task. Downplaying the role of emotion is easier to do than a teacher might think, because the tendency is to have cognitive objectives in instruction. "Emphasis on one domain may tend to drive out the other... We feel more comfortable in teaching for cognitive than for affective objectives. Our drive for subject-matter mastery and the ever-increasing amount of knowledge available gives us more and more subject matter to cover."<sup>11</sup> The danger is looking at a child more as a computer in which we are to download knowledge and not a child whose life is shaped by the knowledge we want to impress on their hearts. Professor Gerlach put all of this educational research into perspective for the Christian educator.

Teaching for an affective outcome is teaching which aims beyond the intellect at the emotion so that the two acting together influence the Christian's will. It is teaching which

---

<sup>9</sup> David Krathwohl, Benjamin Bloom, and Bertram Masia, "Affective Domain" In Schultz, 276.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 282.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 283.

moves God's people to want to grow and helps them to know how in specific ways. It is teaching which helps them to translate faith into life, teaching which stimulates the process of transformation into the likeness of Jesus. It is teaching that is never satisfied merely with programming facts into computer-like minds so that the possessors of such minds qualify as orthodox Christians.<sup>12</sup>

God wants his word taught; he wants it impressed onto the hearts and minds children in way that shows them it is a way of life. It was appropriate to briefly consider these two domains of learning, because it helps Christian educators begin to consider ways to answer the questions: How can a teacher show these children that God's truth is more than something to be regurgitated or recited? How can he impress God's Word onto their hearts and minds in the way that equips them for a life of learning and living their faith? The answer is simple, but with a complex application. He teaches not just to impart the facts of God's word, but also to apply God's word to the children's lives entrusted to our care. The affective domain is an effective means of application to a child's life; we not only focus on their brain, but also their emotions.

Using hymnody in catechetical instruction supplies a teaching tool to apply God's truth to both learning domains. Seeking to keep a balance between cognitive and affective objectives, the author is suggesting the implementation of hymns into catechism instruction. Understanding cognitive and affective learning domains equips a teacher to instill the firm foundation of God's Word in his students. God is clear from his Word. He wants his Word implanted in the hearts and minds of his people. A teacher seeks to be faithful to the teaching task God has entrusted to him by addressing a child's thoughts and emotions. With this educational basis established, this study will set forth the biblical use of music and then the historical use of music in connection with the teaching of God's Word to children. This is done to display music as a means to address both cognitive and affective learning objectives.

### **Music Used to God's Glory**

Advertisers use music with the intention of finding the perfect song to go with their campaign, so that you will purchase their product. Music is an aid to attach a potential customer emotionally advertisement. Movie directors painstakingly edit their work to attach a musical score to a certain scene, so that the people in the seats are engaged by the scene's emotionality. In both cases music plays a vital role in the message that is being conveyed to the target audience. These groups of people are not the only ones to recognize the strong emotional

---

<sup>12</sup> Gerlach, *Teaching for Cognitive and Affective Outcomes*, 4.

connection music has to a person. Martin Luther wrote about music's hold over mankind's emotions.

For whether you wish to comfort the sad, to terrify the happy, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate, or to appease those full of hate and who could number all these masters of the human heart, namely, the emotions, inclinations, and affections that impel men to evil or good? – what more effective means than music could you find? <sup>13</sup>

Luther's words help us understand why advertisers and movie directors work hard in trying to attach the right music to their product. It is simple. Music addresses the emotions.

Throughout Scripture the emotions of God's people burst forth in songs. Take for example the God's deliverance of the Israelites from Pharaoh's chariots as he consumed Pharaoh and his men in the waters of the Red Sea; after the Israelites had seen the power of the LORD, they joined in song. "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him." (Ex 15:1,2) Now consider the emotional state of God's servant David when Nathan the prophet confronted him with his sin: his anger brought on by Nathan's parable, his shame when Nathan proclaimed his sin, and his joy in the words conveying God's forgiveness. Then recall this heading to Psalm 51, "For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba."<sup>14</sup> David wrote a song after his array of emotions. Finally, consider the circumstances surrounding Simeon at the temple forty days after the birth of Christ. He trusted in God's promise to send a Savior and he trusted in God's promise that he would see that Savior with his own eyes. When Simeon beheld the fulfillment of both promises in the form of the infant Jesus, "Simeon took him in his arms and praised God." (Luke 2:28) Throughout Scripture, God's people use music to give voice to the joys and sorrows in their lives, which shows that music addresses the emotions.

God's people are not the only ones to give music such a high honor, but God himself also honors music by combining his truth with this medium. In the whole scope of God's plan of salvation there were many years that passed from his first gospel promise in the Garden of Eden to the fulfillment of his initial promise in his Son's life, death, and resurrection. Throughout

---

<sup>13</sup> Martin Luther, "Preface to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae Iucundae*", *Luther's Words, Volume 53: Liturgy and Hymns* (Fortress Press, 1965), 323.

<sup>14</sup> James McKinnon, *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 65.

those years, God revealed various aspects of the Messiah's work to his people. Such revelations even find their way into the Old Testament songbook. For example, Psalm 22 reveals Christ's passion in more detail than the Gospels and how is Psalm 22 prefaced. "For the director of music. To the tune of "The Doe of the Morning." A psalm of David." Basil the Great wrote about God's use of song.

Now the Prophets teach certain things, the Historians and Law teach others, and Proverbs provides still a different sort of advice, but the Book of Psalm encompasses the benefit of them all. It foretells what is to come and memorializes history; it legislates for life, gives advice on practical matters, and serves in general as a repository of good teachings. The Spirit mixed sweetness of melody with doctrine so that inadvertently we would absorb the benefit of the words through gentleness and ease of hearing. O the wise invention of the teacher who contrives that in our singing we learn what is profitable, and that thereby doctrine is somehow more deeply impressed upon our souls.<sup>15</sup>

Martin Luther expanded this view from just the Psalms and discussed how God chose music to reveal his message through the Prophets. "This is the reason why the prophets did not make use of any art except music; when setting forth their theology they did it not as geometry, not as arithmetic, not as astronomy, but as music, so that they held theology and music most tightly connected, and proclaimed truth through Psalms and songs."<sup>16</sup> Recall the examples of the Moses and the Israelites, David, and Simeon. Their emotions burst forth in praise to their God, but they didn't sing about their emotions; they sang about God's wondrous works and proclaimed the truth about him. In Scripture music is much more than just a means to express emotions and affect emotions; it is an effective means to proclaim God's Word to the hearts and minds of God's people.

There is no guiding principle from Scripture that clearly lays out for us how to use songs or hymns in the education of God's people. Yet it is clear from Scripture that God holds music in high regard as means to affect the emotions of his people and as means to carry his word of truth to his people. The art of music is a gift of God. A gift he has not only equipped people to use to create beauty, but also a gift he has given to equip his church in the task of sharing and teaching the good news of Jesus Christ. It is not a stretch of the imagination to consider how music could be used to achieve both cognitive and affective learning goals. For God himself reveals examples of how this gift addresses those aspects of the human beings he has created.

---

<sup>15</sup> Martin Luther, "Letter to Louis Senfl", In *Luther's Works, Volume 49: Letters II*, edited by Helmut T. Lehmann (Fortress Press, 1965), 428.

## Luther's View of Music's Educational Value

Luther held Christian education as an important aspect of a Christian's life; he also held music in a high regard. Luther's love for music is easy to see in his writings. "Indeed I plainly judge, and do not hesitate to affirm, that except for theology there is no art that could be put on the same level with music."<sup>17</sup> Luther's love for music was not just the simple fact that music delighted his soul with pleasant sounds, but that it was also an excellent mode to proclaim the gospel. Carl Schalk says this about the whole body of Luther's work in music.

Luther's involvement in virtually every aspect of music with which he came into contact reflects his understanding of music as a practical and performing art that had great potential in the life and worship of every Christian... For Luther music was an art that once practiced and performed, that delighted the soul and brought life to the Word of the gospel. For Luther, music was always the *viva vox evangelii*, the living voice of the Gospel, a gift of God to be used in all its fullness in Christian praise and prayer.<sup>18</sup>

Luther's recognized hymnody as a wonderful tool through which God's people can proclaim God's glory, but he also viewed it as something more. He saw it as a wonderful tool through which God's people can be taught the truth about God and what he has done for them. Luther's catechisms are rightly seen as one of his lasting impressions on the field of Christian education; however, they are not Luther's only efforts in trying to impress the Christian faith on hearts and minds. Luther wrote that his musical works in hymnody and liturgical worship could be used to impress the truths of God's Word on his people. "He [*God*] is thereby praised and honored and we are made better and stronger in faith when his holy Word is impressed on our hearts by sweet music."<sup>19</sup> Luther enlisted music into his efforts of impressing the Christian faith. Evidence of this is shown in his preface to the *Deutsche Messe* where Luther speaks about the people's need for an order of worship. In this context Luther wrote about the educational aspect any order of worship is going to have.

They are essential especially for the immature and the young who must be trained and educated in the Scripture and God's Word daily so that they may become familiar with the Bible, grounded, well versed, and skilled in it, ready to defend their faith and in due time to teach others and to increase the kingdom of Christ. For such, one must read, sing, preach, write, and compose.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 428.

<sup>18</sup> Carl Schalk, *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise* (Concordia Publishing House, 1988), 30.

<sup>19</sup> Luther, "Preface to the Burial Hymns", In *Hymns and Liturgy*, 328.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 328.

<sup>20</sup> Luther, "The German Mass and Order of Service", In *Hymns and Liturgy*, 62.

Luther carefully crafted a German liturgy because he knew its importance not only to proclaim Christ, but also to impress Christ upon people's hearts. Luther saw the use of music as vital part of a Christian's education and his liturgical work brought this important part of a Christian's life to the people. His liturgical works were not the only piece of music he composed in order to teach. To fully understand how Luther viewed the use of music in the scope of the instruction of God's people, a consideration has to be given to Luther's catechism hymns.

### **Luther's Catechism Hymns and Their Influence on Catechetical Instruction**

The same year in which Luther issued his catechisms, 1529, he also published a new collection of hymns for the congregations in Wittenberg. Luther's intent was to give the Lutheran laity an order of worship in their own language; he also desired to give them hymns. "Our plan is to follow the example of the prophets and the ancient fathers of the church, and to compose psalms for the people in the vernacular, that is, spiritual songs, so that the Word of God may be among the people also in the form of music."<sup>21</sup> In 1529, Luther delivered on his intentions by publishing this collection hymns in the vernacular. This hymnal differed from hymnals that preceded it, because it was arranged in a carefully planned out order. The hymns Luther had released in years past were presented in the main part of the hymnal and were arranged with other hymns published by other various composers. This main section of the hymnal was arranged according to the church year with the hymns spanning from Advent to Trinity season. Following the main section of the hymnal, containing the seasonal hymns, was portion of the hymnal dedicated to hymns written by Luther which were catechetical in nature. These hymns were written to teach the fundamentals of the Christianity.<sup>22</sup>

This was only the beginning for the catechetical section of hymnals. As Luther's Catechisms grew in popularity so too did such hymns which aided in teaching the Chief Parts of the Catechism. A later edition of Luther's Wittenberg hymnal, 1543, contained an extensive collection of catechism hymns, which covered all of the chief parts of the catechism. Luther wrote a small preface to these hymns, in which he explained their nature and significance:

Now follow spiritual songs in which the Catechism is covered, since we certainly must comment Christian doctrine in every way, be preaching, reading, singing, etc., so that

---

<sup>21</sup> Luther, "Letter to George Spalatin", In *Letters II*, 68.

<sup>21</sup> Robin Leaver, *Luther's Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications* (Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 109.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 109-110.



young and unlearned people may be formed by it, and thus in this way it will always remain pure and passed on to our descendants. So may God grant us his grace and his blessing though Jesus Christ. Amen.<sup>23</sup>

Eventually, Luther was joined by others who composed hymns to combine the chief parts of the catechism with melody and rhyme, which increased the number of catechism hymns greatly. However, six hymns written and composed by Luther remained the primary basis for the catechism portion of any hymnal that was published with such a catechetical section. What follows is a chart that shows these six hymns written by Luther and where they are found in *Christian Worship*.<sup>24</sup>

**Table 1** – Luther’s Catechism Hymns

<b>Title of Hymn</b>	<b>Chief Part of Catechism</b>	<b>CW Hymn</b>
The Ten Commandments are the Law	The Ten Commandments	285
We All Believe in One True God	The Creed	271
Our Father, Who from Heaven Above	The Lord’s Prayer	410
To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord	Baptism	88
Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior	The Lord’s Supper	313
From Depths of Woe I Cry to You	The Ministry of the Keys	305

How did the early church use these catechism hymns? Whenever the catechism was taught in church, Luther’s six catechism hymns were routinely sung by the congregation. At home or in school, children would have been singing these hymns in connection with their catechetical instruction; in some cases these hymns were mandatory. For example, the Saxon Church order directed that in schools “the children shall be taught with diligence the catechism and with it the spiritual hymns and psalms of Dr. Luther.”<sup>25</sup> The repetition of these hymns in multiple areas of child’s life shows how important the Lutheran church viewed the use of hymns in impressing the chief parts of the catechism. These hymns were sung in corporate worship.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>24</sup> Jacob Behken and Philip Moldenhauer, *Bach on Luther – The Catechism Hymns* (WLS essay file, 2012), 6.

<sup>25</sup> Leaver, *Luther’s Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications*, 112.

They were used in catechetical instruction at school and in the home. It shows just how serious they were about impressing the basic truths of the Christian faith on the hearts and minds of all people, especially children. A quote from Robin Leaver's book reveals why they held such a high view of hymns and their educational value.

It is because the classic Lutheran hymns were Scripture-based that they functioned not only as worship songs, expressing the response of faith to be sung within a liturgical context, but also as theological songs, declaring substance of the faith to be sung with catechetical intentions... Yet the catechetical function of hymns has been fundamental to Lutheran theology and practice which, at least until the eighteenth century, ensured that every hymnal would have a substantial section of specific "Catechism Hymns," because through catechesis Christian experience is both created and interpreted.<sup>26</sup>

Lutherans before and after Luther's death viewed his catechism hymns as useful tool to impress the truth of God's Word on the hearts and minds of their children. God's gift of music used to help people of all ages learn the fundamental truths of the faith they professed. Their high view of music in the life of a Christian's education fits together with God's high regard for music. It is gift he has given to bless the lives of his people in so many ways and one of its chief purposes is to address the emotions of God's people with good solid biblical teaching to strengthen their faith in their Savior. Luther knew this and he clearly used God's gift for this purpose.

Martin Luther took advantage of music's ability to proclaim and teach. Throughout his life he composed various pieces of music to educate God's people in their faith. He viewed the gift of music as means to affect the mind and heart, in order to inculcate biblical teaching. The next section is an evaluation of how Lutherans, years after the writing of Luther's catechism hymns, have sought to continue in his use of hymns as teachers of faith. Consideration will be given to the basic hymnology class and a few courses from Northwestern Publishing House and Concordia Publishing House. Each of these has sought to follow in that Lutheran heritage of connecting hymns with catechetical instruction.

### **Evaluation of Various Curriculums' Use of Hymns Hymnology Class**

The hymnal still plays a role in the religion curriculums of our Lutheran elementary schools. For years schools have given a class period a week, usually on Friday, to the study and recitation of the hymn of the week. The author had the privilege to communicate with a total of

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 107-108.

10 different teachers in three different Lutheran Elementary Schools about the practice of teaching hymns.<sup>27</sup> Each school had an established curriculum in place to teach hymns to the children; however, the curriculum each school used was different. This revealed an interesting fact about hymnology in Lutheran elementary schools. It is very much like the time of the Judges, when it comes to this class everyone does as he sees fit. What these three schools have seen as fit was to establish their own curriculum to educate their children in the rich heritage of Lutheran hymnody. For example, one school established their hymnology curriculum around the seasons of the church year. As the school year progressed, the students would study hymns corresponding to the church calendar. Another school centered their course on the hymns being sung in the chapel series for that school year. The hymn studied in class on Friday would be the hymn sung in chapel earlier in the week. The rationale is to expose the children to the hymn as much as possible and help reinforce the message of chapel. The chapel series for this school changes annually, so this school has a lot of hymn turnover from year to year. Even though these schools do not share a hymnology curriculum, they are united by their desire to share Christ through word and song. Each of the schools views hymns as a useful tool for students to develop as Christians and in this way follows another aspect of their Reformation heritage.

Even more varied than the curriculums are the ways teachers utilize these hymns in their classroom. There may be a set curriculum of hymns for the whole school, but how these hymns are taught is left to the teacher. Teaching the hymn may simply be memorizing a certain amount of stanzas or as complex as creating art projects that correspond to the word pictures in the hymn. The diversity seems to be driven by two factors: the teacher's confidence and the time allotted for instruction. A few teachers spoke about their lack of musical ability; the lack of musical ability hinders the confidence some teacher have in hymnology class. If a teacher is not gifted musically, his desire to teach hymnology may diminish or might possibly be non-existent. The few teachers in these circumstances confessed that their goal for the class is often memorization. This exercise may help a child learn hymns; however, it does not help a child appropriate the hymn to his life of faith. The lack of time is an even greater hindrance, because it affects both musical and non-musical teachers. A teacher may need the time devoted for hymnology to play catch-up in another class. Even the scheduled class period often does not

---

<sup>27</sup> These interviews were conducted mostly in person, but some interviews were conducted via email or over the phone.

permit the teacher enough time to accomplish the learning objectives he desires. There are many factors that contribute to a wide range of teaching methods, but these two factors hamper hymnological instruction the most.

Each teacher expressed the importance of getting the students to relate the message of the hymn to their own lives. With this objective in mind, one teacher gave this example, “There are some hymns I use like *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* that when I tell the background story then there is a little bit more to connect it to their lives and the children like that more.”<sup>28</sup> This focus becomes lost for many teachers due to the factors stated previously, but those teachers still saw this objective to be vitally important in teaching a hymnology class well. Seeking to get the children to make the hymn’s message their own also requires a teacher to teach the meaning of the poetry or specific words contained in some hymns, especially when the hymn uses some archaic language. This requires teachers to devote portions of their class time to defining words, so that the children can properly understand the message the hymn.

The goal of hymnology is for the hymns being taught to become a resource for the children in their own worship and prayer. A resource that helps them retain the central truths God wants them to know.<sup>29</sup> However, because of the “hymnology period of the judges” throughout Lutheran elementary schools this class seems to lose its importance and effectiveness in some cases. All too often a teacher doesn’t have enough time, skill, or resources to do the excellent job he wants to do, so the class gets only minimal attention.<sup>30</sup> The varied approaches to hymnology reveal a teaching tool not being used in a manner that aids children in the development and retention of God’s Word. All too often hymnology becomes another class aimed at the cognitive domain of the child. The content of the hymn is treated as a piece of information the child needs to process and remember. The emotional content of the hymn, at times, is left untouched and an effective means to address the affective domain of child is

---

<sup>28</sup> Interview with a Lutheran elementary school teacher, November 6, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> John Isch, *The Generation to Come: Teaching Religion in the Lutheran Elementary School* (Dr. Martin Luther College, 1990), 137-138.

<sup>30</sup> The author would like to note here that at the time of writing this paper our synod had established a committee to work on a hymnology curriculum. However, this committee was in its starting stages at the writing of this paper and did not have much to say about its purpose or scope, because they hadn’t really started meeting yet. A planned hymnology curriculum would help some of these problems, but it would not cure all of these problems.

underutilized. When the affective domain is dismissed in this way, the goal of hymnology may be met in the mind of the teacher, but not necessarily in the mind and heart of the student.

### *Christ Light*<sup>31</sup>

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) has followed in its Reformation heritage in many different ways. One of those ways is the value it has placed on quality Christ centered education. A product of the WELS's commitment to Christian education has been the *Christ Light* curriculum. This program was developed as a tool for congregations and Lutheran elementary schools to be able to implement a religion curriculum. It is an extensive program that seeks to provide such material for ages birth to grade 12. The main goal of this extensive program is to impress the scope of God's plan of salvation on the hearts and minds of children throughout these years. Each year the program seeks to build on the material presented in previous years by presenting the material in a way that grows with the child's development. *Christ Light* exhibits WELS's commitment to Christian education.

The men and women who produced the *Christ Light* material have not only done an excellent job producing a quality Christ centered religion curriculum, but also of setting goals for each age group the material seeks to educate. With each age group, goals are set to help identify key spiritual truths, attitudes, and habits the children are to develop. The handbook to the *Christ Light* material speaks about those goals.

When we set goals for Christian nurture, there is a danger of forgetting that in teaching God's Word we are only instruments in the hands of the Holy Spirit... But there is also danger in not setting goals. In his Great Commission, Jesus sets a goal for Christian. "[Teach] them," he says, "to obey [to hold on to and to put into practice] everything I have commanded you." Each of the writers of a New Testament book did some planning as he followed this goal set by the Savior. Each writer aimed at addressing the spiritual need(s) of the individual or group to whom he was writing. Then he selected, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the material that would best meet the spiritual needs of his audience. This is a good pattern for us to follow as we nurture according to Christ's command. It is important that we plan, at the very least, *what* we will teach and *why*. Otherwise our nurture of Christians may be done haphazardly, and we may become stumbling blocks to the Holy Spirit's work instead of instruments in his hand.<sup>32</sup>

*Christ Light's* goals place an important emphasis on spiritual development especially as the child progresses through his own intellectual development. The child receives a firm

---

<sup>31</sup> David Kuske, *Christ Light* (Northwestern Publishing House, 1997).

<sup>32</sup> David Kuske, *Christ Light Handbook* (Northwestern Publishing House, 1997), 3.

foundation in the early years as he learns the basic truths of the Bible through biblical narrative. That foundation helps the child apply abstract biblical doctrines to his life in his later years as he grows in his own development, which allows him to grasp such abstract ideas better. This method enables the child to grow in his faith as he learns about the great things his God has done for him and what that means for his life.

In seeking to meet this goal of spiritual development, the makers of *Christ Light* listed eleven specific goals in the handbook to their course material. In those eleven goals, two of those goals highlight the specific Lutheran heritage of hymnody and music.

The students are able to recite a given number of passages and hymns and the first two chief parts of Luther's catechism at any time without prompting, and gladly use what they have memorized to strengthen, comfort, instruct, guide, or admonish themselves and others in various aspects of daily life and in the face of death.

The students know the basic elements of worship (reading and applying God's Word and praising God through hymns and prayers), can plan and carry out daily personal and family worship, understand the function and forms of Lutheran congregational worship so that they can participate in the most meaningful way, and have acquired the habit of worshiping and receiving Holy Communion regularly.<sup>33</sup>

Just as Lutherans at the time of the Reformation, the makers of *Christ Light* understood the significant role hymns play in the life of a developing Christian. The manner in which *Christ Light* seeks to accomplish this goal is thus: "The study of Bible passages, hymns, and the chief parts of the catechism is correlated with this theme or topic of the week."<sup>34</sup> The study of spiritual music, which is tied to the theme or topic of the week, is integrated as early as 2 years old and is used throughout the rest of *Christ Light* curriculum.

These spiritual songs are incorporated early in the *Christ Light* curriculum. However, the hymns of *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* do not play a prominent role in the educational portion of the lessons. The hymns tied to the topic of each lesson are listed as memory treasures for the children to learn in connection with the lesson. This is what the teacher's guides for each set of lessons explains about all the memory treasures: "These passages, chief parts of the catechism, and hymns apply to the lesson being taught. Use the explanation following each memory treasure to show how it relates to the truth of the lesson as well as to the students' lives." How does this work? Take a lesson on *Abraham's Prayer for Lot*, Genesis 18:16-33, from

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, Section 1, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, Section 3, 4.

the New Testament B lessons set 4 for grades 5 and 6. The memory treasures for this lesson are Matthew 7:7, John 14:14, 1 Peter 5:7, The Address of the Lord's Prayer, and Hymn 411:1,2. Here is the explanation for Hymn 411:1,2 and its connection to the lesson: "God is not only our Father, he is our friend who invites us to bring every trouble to him in prayer." This is the extent of the hymn's educational participation in the lessons of the *Christ Light* curriculum.

Hymns can offer many different tools to a teacher when it comes to developing God's truth in the hearts of children. *Christ Light* utilizes this useful tool, but not to the extent that is needed to show the full scope of a hymn's usefulness in religious education. This becomes more apparent in the catechism material present in the *Christ Light* series *Faith Foundation*, which is a two year catechism course developed for grades 5 and 6. It is also a course that demotes the role of hymns to an even smaller role in the whole education experience. Hymns find a fitting role in the opening and closing devotions recommended for each lesson, but those hymns find no part in the teaching of the chief parts. It is hard to utilize the theological and emotional content of a hymn when it is limited to the role of devotional material, especially when there is no clear repetition of hymns in these devotions. Considering the whole scope of *Christ Light*, the authors have produced a wonderful product that gives WELS' churches and schools a way to present the saving message of Christ in an orderly way. This curriculum grows along with a child's own development. *Christ Light*'s integration of hymnody into this comprehensive curriculum has not utilized hymnody to the extent that it offers itself to help children retain the truth of God's Word.

### ***Sing and Make Music***<sup>35</sup>

*Sing and Make Music* is a structured music curriculum designed to teach basic music skills and concepts in Lutheran elementary classrooms, grades prekindergarten through 8.<sup>36</sup> How this structured course differs from *Christ Light* is in the main focus of the program. *Sing and Make Music* is a class put together primarily to teach music theory to children. Music skills such as singing, listening, reading, playing, and creating are taught to the children in order to develop the child's musical abilities. *Christ Light* is focused on a child's religious instruction. Each year of the *Sing and Make Music* program is broken up into fifteen units, with fifteen alternate units. *Sing and Make Music*, just like *Christ Light*, has a proper understanding of a child's development

---

<sup>35</sup>Commission on Parish Schools, WELS, *Sing and Make Music* (Northwestern Publishing House, 2000).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

throughout the years from prekindergarten through eighth grade. The procedure for a single unit, which is to be taught in the class, is to begin with a unit song, which contains the concepts of the unit. From this unit song the key music skills are taught to the children.

*Sing and Make Music* is a resource for teaching a child the basic skills he needs to sing praises to his Lord. The obvious point concerning this material is that it does not seek to tie the songs the children sing to any theological point the children may be learning. However, the material in no way makes this a goal of its curriculum. Some of the unit songs are not even hymns; this shows even more that impressing God's truth on the hearts and minds of children was not the main focus of this curriculum. *Sing and Make Music* is a wonderful resource that ties a common subject, music theory, in many classrooms to the proclamation of the gospel. Whether the child knows it or not, he is getting a subtle dose of Christ centered instruction in his music class. As a course primarily dealing with teaching musical skills, it does not make use of hymns in a way that allows them to engrave God's truth, but instead uses them as teaching tools in a different way.

### **Singing the Faith: a Graded and Seasonal Approach to Learning Lutheran Hymns and Liturgy<sup>37</sup>**

*Singing the Faith* is a hymnology curriculum put forth by the combined effort of Richard and Barbara Resch, which was published by Concordia Publishing House. This hymnology curriculum takes children through the church year as they learn the hymns selected for this curriculum. Barbara Resch in her *Guide to Using This Resource* wrote about the hymns selected for resource. "The hymns in this curriculum have been chosen with consideration for their musical and conceptual appropriateness for a particular age group. A hymn is considered appropriate for a particular age if, after some preparation and teaching, the range and difficulty of its melody are accessible, its theological concepts are clear, and its textual expression is understandable."<sup>38</sup> These hymns have been selected for more than just their theological clout. They were also chosen for their accessibility. This concept of accessibility means so much to teaching hymns to children, because a hymn could unfold the marvels of the saving work of the Trinity, but if its melody was not easily picked up by the children its message could be lost. On

---

<sup>37</sup> Barbara Resch and Richard C. Resch, *Singing the Faith : a Graded and Seasonal Approach to Learning Lutheran Hymns and Liturgy* (Concordia, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 8.



the other side is a song that is devoid of any theological substance but has a catchy tune, this song would have the children's attention, but it would not teach them anything concerning their faith. *Singing the Faith* seeks to travel the middle road between these two extremes.

Barbara and Richard Resch have compiled a complete list of hymns for each grade, with a small number of those hymns being listed as the core group of hymns to learn. As was stated above, these hymns seek to walk the children through the church year, and the message of the hymns, being taught focus on the life of Jesus. This is the strongest aspect of this hymnology curriculum. Its focus on the church year allows a teacher to focus on what Christ has done for the children and to impress those truths on the children through music. Its other feature is that it seeks to teach the children the songs of the liturgy. All the different songs from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod's liturgical settings are listed for the teacher and with those songs are listed Scripture references for teacher to connect those songs to biblical origin. This feature highlights a secondary purpose of this curriculum, which is to help the children get accustomed to the liturgy of their church body.

As a whole, *Singing the Faith* gives the teacher a resource to accomplish the goal of helping a child sing his faith, and thereby reinforce God's Word in his heart and mind. Another important aspect is the instructions this resource gives to the teacher. *Singing the Faith* gives musical instruction to the teacher to help the child sing the songs: teaching the texts of the hymns and teaching the hymn tunes. All the evidence Barbara Resch gave in her *Guide to Using This Resource*, on pages 8 to 11, sought to make both the teacher and student comfortable with the whole learning process. It is a simple yet well put together hymnology curriculum. However, it does not tie the catechism to these hymns and such a use was not really a purpose outlined for this curriculum.

### **What Do These Things Teach Us?**

Hymnody as a teacher of faith is a conviction held to by all of these courses. For some it is a stronger conviction than others. In these courses the main objective is to teach children about their Savior. The role hymnody has to play in this goal varies from course to course. However, considering the importance God placed on music in his Word and Luther's composition of catechism hymns, the role of hymnody as a teacher of faith should be not minimized. From evaluating these courses, the value of hymnody is diminished in a couple different ways. Hymns become an add-on to a child's list of memory, or teachers view excellence in teaching hymns as

something only a musician can accomplish. In both cases, the function of hymnody in a religion class is stunted, because a teacher may not see the full potential of hymnody. In the case of relegating hymnody's role to memorization, is the child's affective learning domain being reached? Then the misconception of some teachers leads them to settle for minimal or no effort toward hymnology, for their misconception has tainted their thinking about the potential for hymnology's role in a student's knowledge of God's Word. With this biblical and historical information as a firm foundation upon which to build, the body of this paper discusses the practical value of hymnody's role in teaching the faith. Hopefully, the practical value of hymnody will firm up the conviction of hymnody as a teacher of faith and cause the role of hymnody to be maximized.

### **Body: Hymnody's Role in the Catechism Classroom**

The use of hymns in connection with teaching God's Word is a tradition that continues to find its way into the teaching curriculum of our synod. Luther's catechism hymns demonstrate his desire to incorporate hymnody as a vital part in bringing a child up as a Christian. From the Friday hymnology class to *Christ Light's* inclusion of hymns in its curriculum, our synod continues in Luther's desire to utilize hymns as a teaching tool for children. However, the use of hymns in both of these contexts for the most part seems to fall short of the full scope of what hymnody can offer an instructor in applying God's Word to the life of a child. Too frequently, hymns are left as another academic exercise or another article to memorize. This assessment is not intended to accuse the practice of the "Friday hymnology class" or the use of *Christ Light's* suggested hymns for each lesson. It is meant for people to consider hymns as tool through which a teacher of the catechism can engage a child on both a cognitive and affective level, in order that more of the child's learning domains are engaged and God's truth may be stored in mind and heart. The body of this paper is meant to discuss how music addresses itself to these two domains and offer up concrete examples of how to implement these ideas in a catechism classroom with the use of hymnody.

### **Music's Lasting Impression on Memory**

How do you remember your ABC's? Does the ABC song run through your head whenever you think of placing the 26 English letters in alphabetical order? This song has stuck with you in all the years of your life and it probably pops up in your head at various occasions

throughout your life. When you page through a phonebook, its melody plays through your mind. When you pick up a dictionary to show your friend the word he just played in Scrabble really is not a word, its melody sets the pace of your page turning. What you have just thought about is the power music possesses to aid learning; a power to take concepts and store them in a person's long term memory.

There are many components of music that make it advantageous to employ in the classroom. One of the most well known and often utilized aspects is rhyme. For some reason the brain has the ability to remember and recall content memorized in rhyme better than it can content that is memorized in prose forms. Pat Wolfe, an educator who specializes in using brain research within the classroom, notes this feature of the brain, "There is little doubt that when information is embedded in music or rhyme, its recall is enhanced. People can typically remember lyrics of tunes and rhymes, but are much less successful in recalling a prose passage."<sup>39</sup> How people have tried to implement this memory hook into their educational methods is clearly shown through the abundance of children's books that employ rhyme to tell a story or the common nursery rhymes. The teachers interviewed for background for this paper echoed this sentiment. There may be no hard facts from brain research to back up such statements with numbers or percentage, but the testimonies of teachers' experiences speak louder than percentages ever could. Each teacher interviewed for this paper responded with the answer that rhyme and melody make hymns easier for children to memorize. The rhymes present in most musical pieces present a much easier body of text to memorize and store for a child's brain.

The poetical nature of musical lyrics is not the only advantage to employing music in a classroom; consider the last time you had a melody stuck in your head. The ability of the brain to latch onto a melody and recall the melody is as great a wonder as its ability to memorize poetry. Now consider how often your brain remembers a melody it hasn't heard in years. The strong hold the brain puts onto a certain song it has heard is a point of research many have considered. When it is boiled down to the basics, the reason the brain excels at latching onto to a melody is because there is so much of the brain working when the melody is being heard. Throughout the whole process of a person's brain perceiving and receiving the information transmitted through a given piece of music, research has discovered that both hemispheres of the brain are processing

---

<sup>39</sup> Patricia Wolfe, *Brain Matters: Translating Research into Classroom Practice* (Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, 2001), 162.

this information. Wolfe points out how music is dispersed across specialized areas in both hemispheres of the brain. “Many musical experiences can activate the cognitive, visual, auditory, affective and motor systems, depending on whether you are reading music, playing an instrument, composing a song, beating out a rhythm, or just listening to a melody.”<sup>40</sup> When it comes to listening to a simple melody, so many different parts of the brain are involved in encoding that musical piece that it receives a greater chance of sticking in the mind and this process creates in the brain a semantic musical memory, which is described as an abstract musical lexicon our brain uses for recognition of various melodies.<sup>41</sup> This is why the brain remember melodies so well, because music works the brain on so many different levels.

With the staying power of rhyme and melody, many people have sought to incorporate music into the field of education. One of the most notable examples of this may be the series *Schoolhouse Rock*. The foundation from which they constructed their educational music was the brain’s ability to remember music.<sup>42</sup> On a much smaller scale, many educators have utilized the rhythm of rap music or piggy back songs, which are melodies of familiar songs with the lyrics changed for educational purposes, through which the children are taught about certain subjects by trying to capitalize on the brain’s musical intelligence.<sup>43</sup> Applying these made up songs to material already learned by the children helps to inculcate the subject matter more into the children’s minds.<sup>44</sup> These few examples display how educators have recognized music’s role in learning and have tried to make use of its undeniable benefits as a valuable asset in their classroom.

These aspects of music’s role on memory are most often employed in classroom, but another aspect of music’s role on memory benefits the classroom as well. The strong connection music can create with a person’s autobiographical memories should not be overlooked by a teacher. This is where the emotional side of music begins to play a larger role than just getting someone engaged in listening to it. The emotions stirred by a piece of music can imprint a moment from a person’s life onto his long term memory. The lasting impression that a piece of

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 161.

<sup>41</sup> Lutz Jancke, *Music, Memory and Emotion* (Journal of Biology, 2008), 3.

<sup>42</sup> Barbara Resch, email message to author, October 23, 2012.

<sup>43</sup> For example taking *Old McDonald Had a Farm* and changing the lyrics to teach the children about English punctuation.

<sup>44</sup> Wolfe, *Brain Matters: Translating Research into Classroom Practice*, 171.

music leaves on our minds triggers memories of the context in which we heard that music. What this means is that autobiographical information associated with musical melodies is evoked when we hear relevant music, or when we are engaged in conversation about music or events in our life in which music has been important. When a person hears a piece of music connected with some kind of a personal memory, it is possible he may recall a broad period of time, a general recollection of an event, or even some specific pieces of information from an event. The range of memories someone might recall when hearing a song could be remembering the time period of dating your future wife to the time of day and weather of their first meeting. “Given its social and cultural ubiquity – we hear music at parties, clubs, concerts, restaurants, movies, and in television commercials – it is to be expected that pieces of music intertwine with specific episodes in our lives.”<sup>45</sup> Research has been done to test this kind of connection between music and a person’s autobiographical memories and what the research has shown is that these music-evoked autobiographical memories were usually associated with some kind emotion.<sup>46</sup> In a manuscript from a presentation on *Whole Brain Experiences with Quality Musical Materials*, Dr. Barbara Resch relates how in one of her college education classes she assigned the students a musical memory journal. In this assignment, her students shared with her their most memorable music related experiences. When reflecting on these anecdotes Dr. Resch gave this interesting point to ponder.

Notice that each group of songs we’ve mentioned is memorable not for the songs themselves, for their poetry, or the beauty of the music; there is no sense that the song was considered strikingly beautiful or well-crafted or a great work of art. No, the memory seems to be shaped by the individual’s multidimensional interaction with the song: I felt loved and secure when my mom sang to me; I had fun singing and dancing in music class; I was proud when I sang on stage; I felt grown-up when we sang songs that were heard on the radio; I learned the names of the states in alphabetical order, and I still know them today. **It really is—all about me and how I am connected to the music.** The memory is larger than just the song. It envelops the source of the song, the context in which it was heard, the emotional reaction the listener had, the physical involvement with the music—all of which become part of the autobiographical memory.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Petr Janata, Stefan Tomic, and Sonja Rakowski, *Characterization of Music-evoked Autobiographical Memories* (2007), 845.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 858.

<sup>47</sup> Barbara Resch, “Whole-brain Experiences with Quality Musical Materials” (presentation given at the national conference of Organization of American Kodaly Educators, March, 2011).

Music plays a significant role in the memories that our minds store and enables our minds to help recall those memories. One example of a teacher trying to capitalize on this wonder of the brain was a man who tried to use Broadway musicals to help teach his students about various life lessons. In a lesson where his objective was to have the children develop a positive attitude toward overcoming adversity, he used the song “Tomorrow” from the musical *Annie*. This illustrates how to implement musical autobiographical memories into a classroom setting. He took an aspect of life most people experience in some way, shape, or form and used a song from Broadway musical to teach his students how to address such hardship. The teacher structured his lesson to make it all about the students in order to connect them to the music. Of course, the teacher could not know if this lesson achieved the purpose for which it was constructed. Nevertheless, the aim of the lesson displays how a teacher might try to structure a lesson in order to connect music to a student’s autobiographical memory.

Music can be useful teaching tool to both the cognitive and affective domains. Its dual strengths of rhyme and rhythm present a useful means through which a child can cognitively store a body of knowledge. These features make it easier for a child to memorize and recall material. Where the music presents itself as a powerhouse of an educational tool is its connection to autobiographical memories. Such a strong connection to the affective learning not only gives educational material staying power in a child’s mind, but it also offers the instructor a way to connect that educational material to a child’s life.

This portion of the paper gave a few examples of how these concepts have been utilized in classrooms; the following portion of this paper is going to discuss how these amazing aspects of music’s hold on memory can be implemented into the catechism classroom.

### **Hymnody Used to Leave Lasting Impressions**

Music’s influence on the brain is something that educators have been trying to integrate into their classrooms. Examples abound of educators trying to implement music into their lesson plans, even in outside of music class. However, the examples of pastors, teachers, or staff ministers instructing a catechism class through a hymn are not as common. Many catechism teachers probably have not thought of hymnody as a tool for teaching catechism. Perhaps, the instructor feels content with singing a hymn in the devotion before class or assigning one for the children to memorize. Hymnody is a wonderful way to open and close catechism class and it is important for children to memorize their Lutheran heritage in song. But what happens to

hymnody when it is assigned only these tasks in a catechism classroom? All of its benefits are not utilized to the fullest potential. What music’s influence on the brain suggests is that hymns have much more to offer the teaching of the Chief Parts, especially for the student’s retention.

*A Hymn’s Rhymes and the Catechism Classroom*

Hymns are pieces of poetry. It may for a child be easier to memorize a hymn or stanzas of a hymn than memorizing a piece of text. In any given classroom, there may be students who struggle to memorize, because memorizing chunks of prose is not something that comes easily. Does this mean a teacher gives up on the child memorizing anything? Or does he go completely the other direction by pushing memorization even harder on a child? There is a variety of strategies to help a child memorize something. One of those strategies is the poetical nature of hymnody. Consider a child struggling to memorize the Ten Commandments and Luther’s explanations. Luther wrote *The Ten Commandments Are the Law* to aid in learning the Commandments. If a child struggles to memorize the Fifth Commandment, stanza six of *The Ten Commandments Are the Law* could be used to help the child learn. The rhyme of this hymn lends itself well to memorization and the content of the Fifth Commandment is not lost. Table 2 gives a comparison of the commandment to the hymn verse. A teacher with a struggling student will be able to find a hymn which accurately proclaims whatever Chief Part the child is struggling with. The teacher could use the rhyme of hymns to help a child memorize the basic truths of their faith. The poetry of the hymn will aid a child’s memory and because our heritage in hymnody placed God’s truth in those poems, the content of the *Chief Part* is not lost.

**Table 2 – Comparison of Commandment and Hymn Verse**

Luther’s Small Catechism	The Ten Commandments Are the Law
You shall not murder. What does this? We should fear and love God that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need. <sup>48</sup>	“You shall not murder, hurt, nor hate; Your anger dare not dominate. Be kind and patient; help, defend, And treat your foe as your friend.” Have mercy, Lord! <sup>49</sup>

When considering hymnody’s role in catechetical instruction, this may be the easiest way to assimilate hymns into a catechism curriculum. These hymns may be offered as a substitute for

<sup>48</sup> David Kuske, *Luther’s Catechism: The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther and an Exposition for Children and Adults* (Northwestern Publishing House, 1988), 85.

<sup>49</sup> *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* (Northwestern Publishing House, 1993), Hymn #285.

the *Chief Part*. A word of warning needs to be written, however. If a catechism instructor is going to use hymns in this way, it is necessary also to teach how the hymn fits the Chief Part. Often the hymn retains the truth of the Chief Part, but the truths are contained in poetry. The journey of discovery that unpacks the meaning of poetry will be a blessing for the child. If the teacher leaves the student to travel the road by himself, something may be lost in the translation. A good idea may be to compare the Chief Part to the hymn and the rhymes and rephrases; this practice will reinforce for the child the significance of the teaching. There is more benefit to the poetical nature of hymns than merely a memory aid, but those rhymes have instructional value as well.

### *A Hymn's Melody and the Catechism Classroom*

It is not just the poetry of a hymn that provides a student with a memory hook and the teacher with a good instructional tool. The melody provides such benefits for the catechism classroom as well. The tune of a hymn can help the children recall the words of the hymn. This is due to a hymn's combination of rhyme and melody, because its dual nature requires more from the brain in order for the hymn to be processed. Therefore, a hymn gives a student's brain more avenues for the recall of a hymn text. Many secular educators incorporate the dual nature of songs into their class room through piggy back songs, which when introduced into a catechism class may seem contrived and childish. Hymns, on the other hand, provide the instructor a way to help student memorize catechetical content in manner that does try to translate the content into generic or childish music. Our Lutheran heritage in hymnody provides strong material for the child to memorize and that content is matched with beautiful melodies.

A hymn's melody, like a hymn's poetry, can accomplish more than just easier recall of a hymn's content. The musical quality of a hymn is a useful pedagogical tool, because it is so effective at touching the affective domain. Music stirs emotions; it is up to the teacher to use those emotions to teach. The melody of most hymns sets a fitting tone for the message contained in the stanzas of the hymn and in many cases aid the lyrics in their teaching task. Paul Gerhardt wrote the text for *A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth*<sup>50</sup>. This hymn portrays the work of Christ on behalf of sinners and clearly proclaims the vicarious atonement. The melody of this hymn is somber and contemplative. The melody is meant to display the serious nature of the hymn's

---

<sup>50</sup> *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* (Northwestern Publishing House, 1993), Hymn #100.



lyrics; these two things contemplate each other. Therefore, get the children to discuss why such a melody should be solemn and in some ways sad. Get them to discuss the emotions that are stirred when hearing such a melody and connect those emotions to the subject of the hymn. Allow the emotional side of the student to help form a stronger memory of the teaching in the students mind. The emotions stirred through this melody help to reinforce the cognitive understanding of Christ's sacrifice for a sinful world. Then there is a hymn like *Jerusalem the Golden*<sup>51</sup> with the Thaxted melody. This is the description of this hymn from the *Christian Worship Supplement*. "This twelfth century hymn, first conceived by Bernard of Cluny, depicts an idyllic, heavenly scene. The hymn is gloriously set to the English folk tune Thaxted."<sup>52</sup> This is an appropriate description of this pairing of melody and text. Consider teaching this hymn in connection with Christ's second coming. This joyful melody can help students appropriate the wonder of heaven with hymn's "idyllic heavenly" imagery and glorious melody. With the simple task of listening to a hymn and contemplating the significance of the melody, the students are affectively engaged in the lesson. When the text and the melody combine to teach, the child is cognitively and affectively engaged. This gives the material a better chance of being retained. The melodies of hymns provide a different means through which we can teach the basic truths of the catechism.

#### *Musical Autobiographical or Episodic Memories and the Catechism Classroom*

The rhyme and melody of hymns provide the easiest way to implement hymns into a catechism curriculum. An instructor can engage a student both in the cognitive and affective domain by simply listening to a hymn. The feature of music which holds the greatest advantage to helping a child retain the Chief Parts of the Catechism is its ability to form autobiographical or episodic memories. Including hymns into a catechism curriculum with this intention is not an easy task. Achieving such autobiographical or episodic memories in the classroom is something that is going to be hard to accomplish for a class that only meets a couple times a week. There is more to this style of teaching hymns than a simple memory work assignment or listening to a hymn. Utilizing this facet of hymnody takes knowledge of the hymn and of the students. The benefits of incorporating hymns for this goal focus the teacher in the face of this toil and labor. Professor Brug's comments in his essay on the power of hymnody explain why.

---

<sup>51</sup> *Christian Worship Supplement* (Northwestern Publishing House, 2008), Hymn #728.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

Nothing matches the power of gospel in word and sacrament to plant and nourish faith in the heart. Nothing matches the power of preaching and proclamation to plant the truths and emotions of the gospel in the heart. But of all the secondary tools that support the proclamation and retention of the gospel nothing surpasses the power of hymnody. By hymnody I am not referring merely to the fact that we regularly sing hymns during our services but to the fact that over a lifetime of worship we accumulate a storeroom of hymns that are tied to the rites of the church year and to the events of our lives. They hymn becomes attached to the event, and the hymn in turn attaches the events to our memories.<sup>53</sup>

Hymnody has the power to attach God's Word to the life of Christian, and in the case of catechism to the life of a student. The instructor is tasked with finding ways hymns can be used in this way to build retention of the Chief Parts.

The first challenge to incorporating hymns for this type of retention is trying to attach a hymn to a life event and in turn the life event to the hymn. These types of memories are not usually created in a class room. A catechism teacher finds himself handicapped in this because he cannot construct life events with the purpose of attaching hymns to them. However, what he can construct is the curriculum. The subject matter is already determined for him, but not the way he is going to teach the material to his students. That is why tailoring the hymns included in a catechism curriculum each year to include some hymns children are familiar with can build upon memories already present in the student. Many catechism students may already have memories and sentiments connected with certain hymns. Why rely solely on artificial experiences devised in the mind of the teacher when an actual personal memory already exists? Conquer the challenge of incorporating autobiographical or episodic memories by using the ones that already exist.

It becomes important for a teacher to reconstruct the hymnology part of his catechism curriculum year after year. For the simple fact that a different class means different students, the turnover of students requires a changing hymn selection from year to year to utilize their pre-existing memories. In some cases, their favorite hymns may not apply to any of the chief parts. It also may be necessary for an instructor to establish certain hymns within his curriculum because they have an excellent didactic quality. Think about the educational possibilities of a student's selected hymn that does correspond to a Chief Part. Whatever significance a student attaches to a specific hymn would be beneficial for the entire class to hear the significance of the child's

---

<sup>53</sup> John Brug, "Pastoral Brief: The Poser of Hymnody." (Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly 110 Winter 2013), 6.

preference to a certain hymn. Such activity of a personal presentation could help the other students see significance were they did not or help the children appreciate the power of a hymn's message were they did not before. Being willing to alter a curriculum from year to year allows such experiences to be shared for the benefit of the entire class.

For each hymn that a person cherishes because of personal significance, there is a person who wrote that hymn. This is a simple fact, but one that has significance to hymnology instruction. The life and times of a hymn writer present another set of memories to link a student to the significance of God's Word to their own life and times. The concrete examples of what it means to live as Christian can display for a child that catechism is more than a class. Those events from a hymn writer's life underscore that God's Word is for our life. The hymn highlights what truths from God's Word the hymn writer found significant and how those truths comforted, strengthened, and sustained just as it promises. One of the teachers interviewed for this paper spoke about this.

There are some hymns I use like *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* that when I tell the background story then there is a little bit more to connect it to their lives and the children like that more. They hear the background story of that hymn and they say, "Whoa, this seems like a joyful hymn, but really behind it there are some difficult times." I think it helps them because one of the things I try to get into is for them to think when they could sing this hymn for comfort. With that particular hymn it is, "Well, my life isn't that bad, but I do have troubles and times when I need a friend."<sup>54</sup>

The background of the hymn writers can form strong connection to a child's life.<sup>55</sup> If a brief venture into a history book or the *Christian Worship Handbook* to retrieve such biographical information can achieve such connections, such a simple task that offers a whole host of benefits. Now not every single piece of background information will develop this kind of connection; therefore, a teacher needs to look for facts that deepen the meaning of the text. God's Word has importance in the life of a Christian, because through every circumstance God is there offering comfort, strength, and truth. Christian hymn writers have experienced these gifts of God throughout their life and have beautifully expressed God's gifts in word and song. These experiences assist a teacher in taking God's Word from the academic realm to the realm of the life of a Christian.

---

<sup>54</sup> Interview with a Lutheran elementary school teacher, November 6, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Dr. John Isch in his educational textbook, *The Generation to Come*, lists resources to help a teacher achieve this task. This list is written out on pages 147-148.

The life and times of the hymn writer directs the teacher to another feature of hymns that applies God's truth to the life of a Christian, the lyrics. The goal of catechism class is not just to impress God's truth into the minds of the students, so that they can simply regurgitate those truths on a quiz or a test. A catechism instructor wants to help them grow in their lives as Christians by strengthening their faith through the teaching of God's Word. They need to know their faith, in order to live their faith. With this objective of bringing God's Word to the life of a student, a teacher spoke these words.

Based on the application that applies to their life and really tries to bring the real world in. In my experience, if you do that, I don't care if you are talking Math, English, History, Science, Religion, Hymnology, whatever... it is going to come to life for them and personally I think that is part of our responsibility whether we are proclaiming the gospel or talking about a math equation that is part of responsibility to bring it to life for them to feel like they can get hooked.<sup>56</sup>

The Word of God has the power to come to life for the students on its own and as confessional Lutherans we are confident in this comforting truth. The teacher is not denying this truth either; he is expressing his role as a faithful steward of God's Word in regard to his teaching task. Our responsibility is to make help God's Word to come to life for the child; it is to unleash God's Word on the life of the child by applying it to their heart and not just their head. Hymns have achieved this purpose in their message, which makes them a useful tool to help us carry out our responsibility. As our Lutheran hymnody sought to be faithful to the truth and purity of God's Word, it applied God's truth to the lives of Christians. Our Lutheran heritage in hymnody is faithful to the truth and purity of God's Word. Hymn writers bring the truth of God's word to life by bringing it into the life of Christian. This type of application to is contain in the beauty of poetry and melody.

Here it becomes important to explain what is meant by this. To accomplish this consideration will be given to a hymn in the *Christian Worship Supplement*. *In Christ Alone* is a beloved hymn by many people and for good reason. This hymn clearly proclaims the sacrificial life of our Savior. Stanza two rejoices in Christ's incarnation, his vicarious sacrifice and the doctrine of objective justification. Each of these things is clearly taught in one single stanza. The focus shifts in stanza three to Christ's exaltation. These middle stanzas of *In Christ Alone* sing

---

<sup>56</sup> Interview with a Lutheran elementary school teacher, November 12, 2012.

the humiliation and exultation of Christ and these wonderful truths are applied to life of the singer.

No guilt in life, no fear in death  
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;  
From life's first cry to final breath  
Jesus commands my destiny.  
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man  
Can ever pluck me from his hand;  
Till he returns or calls me home,  
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.<sup>57</sup>

Autobiographical or episodic memories may be formed through using these types of hymn. The applications made in the hymn may form a strong connection in the child's mind between events that have already occurred or are in the future. Therefore, the teacher needs to explore the depths of the hymn writer's imagery in order to completely grasp its application. The goal of using hymns this way is to help the child connect the truth contained in the hymn to their life. A catechism instructor is striving to build in the child a catalog of hymns that can be played in the circumstances of their lives that helps them recall the truth of God's Word. Later in life one of those students may be struggling with despair over sin, hearing the comfort message and melody of *In Christ Alone* can remind him of his forgiveness won for him through Christ's humiliation and exultation. Hymns do not make God's Word more effective, they simply take that wonderful Word and attach it to the brain's memories in a way to promote long term memories.

In an effort to help demonstrate these concepts in a concrete fashion, two lessons are attached to this paper as appendixes. These two lessons give an idea of how to maximize hymnody's role as a teacher of faith in the catechism classroom. These two lessons incorporate the various ideas spoken about in this section, but they in no way are the only way to implement these concepts into a catechism lesson. A lesson on baptism is designed with the intention to be concluding lesson in a series of lessons on baptism. A lesson on the Lord's Supper is crafted to be an introductory lesson. The problem with these lessons is that the intention of this paper was to show hymnody deserves a place in a catechism curriculum and these lessons were crafted apart from a catechism curriculum. The reader might wish to keep this fact in mind when

---

<sup>57</sup> *Christian Worship Supplement* (Northwestern Publishing House, 2008), Hymn #752.

considering the appendixes, because they are examples that seek to take hymnology from memorization back to the role as a teacher of faith.

## **Conclusion**

Luther's response to the spiritual poverty he experienced throughout the churches in Saxony was to teach God's Word more. The Small and Large Catechism were written to accomplish this. If a pastor went on his own "Saxon Visitation," he would come to the same conclusion. It is all about teaching God's Word. He helps the child understand and seeks to inculcate God's Word for the child's retention. We accomplish this task with teaching methodologies aimed at the child's life and not just to prepare him for an exam. Hymns facilitate this type of learning in a child's understanding and retention. Cognitively, hymns offer lyrics and melody intended for communicating the basic truths of faith to students head knowledge. Affectively, those same elements stimulate the heart knowledge of child by connecting their emotions to those truths. Teaching to the cognitive and affective domain develops comprehension in a student.

There is tradition in utilizing hymns in religious education. In catechetical instruction, there is historical precedent for incorporating hymns. Educational practices and brain research reveal to Christian educators the good reason to include music into our pedagogy. Music has amazing effects on the brain and its ability to increase recall of material is an asset for teacher and student alike. In a single piece of music a student receives pure teaching of God's Word, which targets his head and heart. God's Word is proclaimed and the emotions are addressed to imprint this life giving message onto the student's memories. In the case of hymns in catechism instruction, Luther set an example that is worth our attention. The strong tradition and historical precedent coupled with overwhelming research flaunts hymns as a means to help children understand and retain the Chief Parts of the Catechism.

There remain areas for study which could further the usefulness of hymns in the teaching of *Luther's Small Catechism*. As this study focused in on the effects of music on memory, it would be a great benefit to consider the value of poetry to teach. Developing techniques to teach the poetical lyrics of hymn would help a child to unpack the truth contain in many hymns. The emphasis of such a study would apply poetry as a teaching tool, instead of memory hook like this study. This would be a useful tool for a catechism teacher to possess, in order that he could get even more instructional use out of the hymns he uses.

A related aspect of this study that could use more attention is organization. Effort could be given to developing a list of hymns that correspond to the different Chief Parts of the catechism and include reasons for incorporating certain hymns and helpful suggestions on the use of each.

God's Word is our heritage past down from generation to generation since Adam and Eve. God will continue to entrust his people with the instruction of his Word, so that his people will know him and what he has done for them. My hope is that this study has given insight into an alternate way of fulfilling this God given task. Hymnody is one way, among many, for us to pass down God's message of salvation.

God's Word is our great heritage  
And shall be ours forever;  
To spread its light from age to age  
Shall be our chief endeavor.  
Through life it guides our way;  
In death it is our stay.  
Lord, grant, while worlds endure,  
We keep its teaching pure  
Throughout all generations.  
**CW – 293**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barrett, Frederick S., Kevin J. Grimm, Richard W. Robins, Tim Wildschut, Constantine Sedikides, and Petr Janata. "Music-evoked Nostalgia: Affect, Memory, and Personality." *Emotion* 10, no. 3 (2010): 390–403.
- Behnken, Jacob, and Philip Moldenhauer. "Bach on Luther - The Catechism Hymns". Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2012.
- Bloom, Allan. *Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*. Simon & Schuster, 2012.
- Bloom, Benjamin, et al. "The Nature and Development of the Taxonomy" In *Sources: Notable Selections in Education*, edited by Fred Schultz, 261-270. Dushkin Pub Group, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 1997.
- Brett, Amy, Melissa Smith, Edward Price, and William Huitt. "Overview of the Affective Domain." *Educational Psychology Interactive* (2003): 1-21.
- Brown, Christopher Boyd. *Singing the Gospel: Lutheran Hymns and the Success of the Reformation*. Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Brug, John. "Pastoral Brief: The Power of Hymnody." *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 110, no. Winter 2013 (2013): 6–7.
- Buescher, Rhonda Edge, and W Lyndel Vaught. "Music Education : Its Role In Faith Development And Spiritual Growth." *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 38, no. 2 (Spr 1996): 4–14.
- Commission on Parish Schools, WELS. *Sing and Make Music*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000.
- Eskew, Harry, Hugh T. McElrath, H. Eskew, and H. Eskew. *Sing With Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Hymnology*. 2nd Rv&Enl. Genevox, 1995.
- Gardner, Howard. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Third ed. Basic Books, 2011.
- Gerlach, Joel. "Teaching for Cognitive and Affective Outcomes.", n.d.
- Gerlach, Joel. "Balanced Teaching - A Necessary Requisite for Proper Christian Motivation". Manitowoc, WI, 1974.
- Isch, John. "The Challenge of Catechetical Instruction: From the Perspective of Our Teaching Task", 1979.



- Isch, John. *The Generation to Come : Teaching Religion in the Lutheran Elementary School*. Dr. Martin Luther College, 1990.
- Janata, Petr. "Brain Electrical Activity Evoked by Mental Formation of Auditory Expectations and Images." *Brain Topography* 13, no. 3 (March 1, 2001): 169–193.
- Janata, Petr. "Brain Networks That Track Musical Structure." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1060, no. 1 (2005): 111–124.
- Janata, Petr, Barbara Tillmann, and Jamshed J. Bharucha. "Listening to Polyphonic Music Recruits Domain-general Attention and Working Memory Circuits." *Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neuroscience* 2, no. 2 (June 1, 2002): 121–140.
- Janata, Petr, and Scott T. Grafton. "Swinging in the Brain: Shared Neural Substrates for Behaviors Related to Sequencing and Music." *Nature Neuroscience* 6, no. 7 (June 25, 2003): 682–687.
- Janata, Petr, Stefan T. Tomic, and Sonja K. Rakowski. "Characterisation of Music-evoked Autobiographical Memories." *Memory* 15, no. 8 (2007): 845–860.
- Jäncke, Lutz. "Music, Memory and Emotion." *Journal of Biology* 7, no. 6 (August 8, 2008): 21.
- Krathwohl, David, Benjamin Bloom, and Bertram Masia. "Affective Domain" In *Sources: Notable Selection in Education*, edited by Fred Schultz, 271-285. Dushkin Pub Group, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 1997.
- Kolb, Robert, Wengert, and James Schaffer. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. 2nd ed. Fortress Press, 2000.
- Kuske, David P. *Christ Light*. Christ Light. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997.
- Leaver, Robin. *Luther's Liturgical Music: Principles and Implications*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works, Volume 49: Letters II*. Edited by Helmut T. Lehmann. Translated by Gerhard A. Krodel. Fortress Press, 1972.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works, Volume 53: Liturgy and Hymns*. Edited by Martin Luther. Fortress Press, 1965.
- McKinnon, James W., ed. *Music in Early Christian Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Messerli, Carlos R., ed. *Thine the Amen: Essays on Lutheran Church Music*. Lutheran University Press, 2005.

Resch, Barbara J. Resch, Richard C. *Singing the Faith : a Graded and Seasonal Approach to Learning Lutheran Hymns and Liturgy*. Concordia, 2003.

Resch, Barbara. "Whole-brain Experiences with Quality Musical Materials" Presentation manuscript, Organization of American Kodaly Educators National Conference, March, 2011.

Resch, Richard. "Hymnody As a Teacher of Faith". Concordia Seminary Fort Wayne, n.d.

Schalk, Carl. *Luther on Music: Paradigms of Praise*. Concordia Publishing House, 1988.

Snyder, Robert. *Music and Memory: An Introduction*. A Bradford Book, 2001.

Sydnor, James Rawlings. "Music and Theological Education." *Pittsburgh Perspective* 6, no. 4 (D 1965): 17–32.

Wolfe, Patricia. *Brain Matters: Translating Research Into Classroom Practice*. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Deve, 2001.

# Baptism

## *God's Own Child I Gladly Say It!*

*Lesson Objective:* That students value their baptism as a lifelong blessing.

### *The Hymn's Purpose*

*God's Own Child I Gladly Say It* (Hymn – 737 CWS) is a wonderful baptism hymn. From beginning to end it sings of the blessings of baptism and how these blessings affect the new life of the baptized from beginning to end. The purpose of this lesson is to show the students these lifelong blessings are theirs through baptism.

### *The Lesson's Focus*

1. This is a summary lesson to review the teachings of baptism with a special emphasis on its blessings for the students' lives. The lesson offers opportunities to review previously taught information on baptism.
2. The *Order of Holy Baptism* is used as the devotional material/introduction to the lesson. It is meant to get the students thinking about the practice of baptism.
3. The central focus of this lesson is *God's Own Child I Gladly Say It*. The lifelong blessings of baptism are beautifully laid out in each verse and this is what the teacher will be using as an outline for the lesson.

### *Teaching the Lesson*

1. Handout the Student Guide for this lesson.
2. Open the lesson with the *Order of Holy Baptism* on page 12 in CW. Divide the stanzas of hymn 737 for an opening and closing of the devotion/introduction.
3. Use the *Order of Holy Baptism* as a way to get discussion going about baptism, in order to review the previous lessons on baptism.
4. This discussion leads into considering the stanzas of the hymn. The main focus of this consideration is the reality of what it means to live as a child of God. God has equipped us for this life through baptism. The students will articulate these blessings in their own words.
5. To develop the children's familiarity with *God's Own Child I Gladly Say It*, the hymn has been used throughout the previous lessons on baptism. Now that the students are discussing the hymn give them opportunity to record notes in their CWS.
6. **Memorization:** To aid the child in appropriating the hymn, allow the students to memorize two stanzas of their choosing. When recitation occurs, divide the students into groups that contain students that choose different stanzas. Have them recite in the groups and share why they choose those stanzas.
7. **Homework:** Assign the *Hymnology Journal Entry* to be handed in next time.

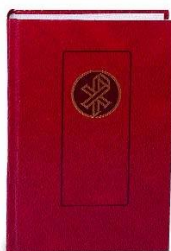
### *Goals for Lesson*

1. For students to become familiar with the practice of baptism by going through the *Order of Holy Baptism*.
2. For students to review the teaching of baptism.
  - ↳ Elements of Baptisms
  - ↳ The Institution of Baptism
  - ↳ The Blessings of Baptism
  - ↳ The Power of Baptism
3. For students to recognize and explain the role of baptism in their daily life.
4. For students to think critically about the stanzas of the *God's Own Child I Gladly Say It*.
5. For students to apply the middle stanzas of *God's Own Child I Gladly Say It*. Use them to show how they can use their baptism to live as a child of God.
6. For students to share the comfort they receive from baptism with one another.
7. A few different strategies will be involved to help the students retain this hymn overtime.
  - ↳ Applying this hymn to their future struggles will help them remember the benefits of turning to their baptism.
  - ↳ Allowing them to share with one another the comforts they receive from the hymn will emphasize the benefits of baptism in their daily lives.

# Baptism



AIM: How does God equip you through your baptism to live as his child?



## Devotion

Open a hymnal to the *Order of Holy Baptism* printed on page 12.

Scavenger Hunt...

3 min

Scavenger the *Order of Holy Baptism* for the following aspects of baptism. Quickly write down the location. Find as many as possible.

Earthly Element	The Institution of Baptism	The Blessings of Baptism	Triune God
God's Name	Daily Use of Baptism	The Power of Baptism	Who needs baptism?



God's Own Child I Gladly Say It! - Listen to Stanza One

1. What does the hymn writer call you in Stanza 1?
2. How does the hymn writer assure you that you can make such a bold statement about yourself?

3. Underline the parts of Romans 6:1-11 that describe what it means to be baptized into Christ.

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

4. How does the hymn verse reflect the Apostle Paul's words in Romans 6?



God's Own Child I Gladly Say It! - Listen to Stanzas Two, Three, and Four

5. Who are you addressing when you sing these stanzas?
6. What are they seeking to do to your faith? Use the passages to expand on what the hymn verses say.

**Sin** — Psalm 32:3,4

**Satan** — 1 Peter 5:8

**Death** — Psalm 55:4,5

7. The Order of Holy Baptism has the pastor saying these words after a child is baptize:

*The almighty God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — has forgiven all your sins. By your baptism, you are born again and made a dear child of your Father in heaven. My God strengthen you to live in your baptismal grace all the days of your life. Peace be with you.*

These hymn verses talk about living in your baptismal grace as you fight against these enemies of your faith. In what ways do they describe this?

Vers 2	Vers 3	Vers 4



God's Own Child I Gladly Say It! - Listen to Stanza Five

8. The hymn writer describes baptism as a "lifelong comfort sure." What does he mean by that?



5 min

By yourself, write down some points from this hymn that will challenge your life as God's own child. Then in your own words, how does baptism give you lifelong comfort as you face those challenges and struggles.

**AIM:** How does God equip you through your baptism to live as his child?

**Homework:** Complete the *Hymnology Journal Entry* for baptism. When we next meet, this journal entry will be handed in.

**Memory Work:** Baptism is a lifelong comfort. Therefore, choose two stanzas from *God's Own Child I Gladly Say It* which give you comfort. Be prepared to share why you chose them.



# Hymnology Journal

## *God's Own Child / Gladly Say It!*

**Journal Entry:** Nothing compares to the lifelong blessings of baptism. Compile a list of three blessings in your life and briefly explain their importance. Then compile a list of three blessings God gives you through baptism. Finally, answer the question at the end of the page.

### *Earthly Blessings*

1.

2.

3.

### *Baptismal Blessings*

1.

2.

3.

*There is nothing worth comparing to this lifelong comfort sure!*

What makes the hymn writer speak about baptism like this?

# Lord's Supper

## *What is This Bread?*

*Lesson Objective:* That students are introduced to the teaching of the Lord's Supper.

### *The Hymn's Purpose*

*What is This Bread?* (Hymn – 742 CWS) nicely summarizes Martin Luther's discussion on the institution and blessings of Holy Communion as outlined in his Small Catechism. The purpose of this hymn is to introduce the students to the teaching of the Lord's Supper and to be sung throughout subsequent lessons.

### *The Lesson's Focus*

1. This lesson is an introduction to the Lord's Supper. The hymn breaks the lesson into three parts. The first two stanzas explain the earthly elements of the Lord's Supper. The third stanza discusses who should receive the Lord's Supper. Stanza four and five give the power and blessings of Holy Communion.
2. The main focus of this lesson is the cognitive goal of getting the students introduced to content of the Lord's Supper; however, they will also be introduced to *What is This Bread?*. A version of this hymn will be played using YouTube for discussion.

### *Teaching the Lesson*

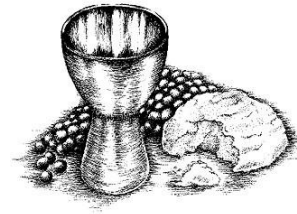
1. Handout the student lesson guide for this lesson.
2. Begin the lesson with devotion on Matthew 26:26-29.
3. Remember these parts are only for introduction. The students will receive a much deeper instruction in these matters throughout the next lessons. This three parts focus primarily on getting the concepts out there for the children.
4. In discussion of stanzas one and two, the students will do some comparing and contrasting. Using the hymn stanzas they will compare them with the Gospel accounts of Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper.
5. In discussion of stanza three, the students will be asked to answer its initial question. "So who am I that I should live and he should die under the rod?" To lead this discussion, they will walk through the *Personal Preparation for Holy Communion*.
6. In discussion of stanzas four and five, the students will discuss the real presence. In this discussion the power and blessing of the Lord's Supper will be applied to their lives.
7. Because the students may not be familiar with *What is This Bread?*, they will not sing it during the devotion. A version of it will be played at the start of the lesson after the devotion and throughout the lessons.
8. **Homework:** Assign the *Hymnology Journal Entry* which will be handed in at the end of the unit on the Lord's Supper.
9. **Memorization:** A different procedure will accompany this hymn. The students will become familiar with this hymn and eventually it will be sung by the class in church during the distribution.

### *Goals for Lesson*

- 1) For students to be introduced to concepts that will be explored furthered in coming lessons.
- 2) For students to become familiar with the *What is This Bread?* through listening and discussion. Throughout the course of this lesson the students will hear the hymn a total of three times.
- 3) For the students to discuss stylistic components of Concordia Nebraska's rendition of *What is This Bread?*  
↳ **Material Note:** You Tube is needed for this. Also, you will not find questions to this on the student guide.
- 4) For students to attach the introductory information on the Lord's Supper to the stanzas of *What is This Bread?*
- 5) For students to communicate the truths of the Lord's Supper in their own words.  
↳ Students will be asked to write in their own words a definition of the real presence.  
↳ Students will be asked to compose with a partner a synopsis of what the Lord's Supper means with a follow student. Using the hymn as their outline.



# Lord's Supper



AIM: What is the Lord's Supper?



## Devotion

Matthew 26:26-29



What is This Bread? - Listen to the Entire Hymn

1. What five questions does this hymn ask?

**Stanza 1 -**

**Stanza 2 -**

**Stanza 3 -**

**Stanza 4 -**

**Stanza 5 -**

- 2.

5 min

Take a look at how God's Word answers the first two questions. On your own, look up each section from Scripture and write down the answer each one gives.

**Matthew 26:26-29**

**Mark 14:22-24**

**Luke 22:19, 20**

**1 Corinthians 10:16**



What is This Bread? - Listen to Stanzas One and Two

3. How does the hymn answer its own questions in these stanzas?



## What is This Bread? - Listen to Stanza Three

4. This stanza asks two questions that are very similar.

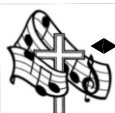
↳ ***So who am I, that I should live and he should die under the rod?***

↳ ***My God, my God, why have you not forsaken me?***



Open your *Christian Worship* hymnal to page 156. As we walk through this page together as a class, think about what portions the hymn writer might have been contemplating while writing this verse. Consider those portions yourself. How would you answer the stanzas' questions?

5. The hymn writer doesn't answer the questions. He ends the stanza by saying, "Oh taste and see — the Lord is free." By yourself come up with a reason why he did this. Then talk about it with your table partner.



## What is This Bread? - Listen to Stanzas Four and Five

6. These two stanzas talk about an important aspect of the Lord's Supper. It is the teaching of the real presence. What phrases from these two stanzas talk about this teaching.

7. Use these phrases to define the real presence in your own words.

Key Term: Real Presence -

8. In stanza four, where does the hymn point us to know that the real presence is true and not just some myth?

9. Why is Word capitalized? **Read John 1:1-3.**

10. What promise did the Word attach to this bread and wine?

This \_\_\_\_\_.

This \_\_\_\_\_.

11. In stanza five, what comfort do we receive from the real presence?

12. How did the hymn writer lead us to this point?



### What is This Bread? - Sing the Entire Hymn

With your table partner, use the five verses of *What is This Bread?* to answer the aim for today lesson. *What is the Lord's Supper?* Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper and hand it in when you are done.

**Homework:** Begin work on the *Hymnology Journal Entry* for the Lord's Supper. This journal entry is meant to be completed overtime and it will be handed in at the end of the unit on the Lord's Supper.

**Memory Work:** Sing this hymn to your parents. Get to know it. Our goal is to sing it in church!



# Hymnology Journal

## *What is This Bread?*

---

**Journal Entry:** Questions, questions, and more questions. We discussed in class how this hymn asks a question to begin each stanza. Luther uses questions in his Small Catechism to help explain what the Bible teaches. Throughout the lessons on the Lord's Supper, we will be discussing Luther's questions about the Lord's Supper. Your hymnology journal entry is to write about how the hymn's questions compare to Luther's. How did Luther ask the question and answer it? How did the hymn writer ask the question and answer it? Use this sheet of paper and whatever extra paper you need.

---