

# A History of Education: The Evolution of Christian Instruction and Catechesis Methods

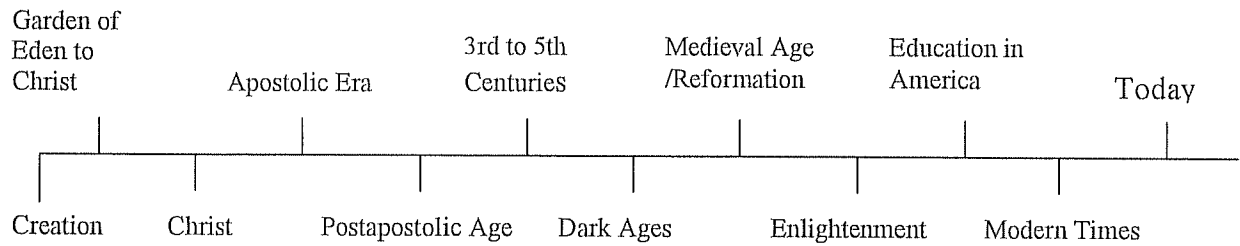
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Why study an evolution of Christian education and methods? I have chosen to study this topic because of its impending relevance to the ministry that lies before me. As a student who will be assigned, God willing, to a parish within a number of months, it is my goal to understand the way education of Christians has been done in the past and is done at the present time. I have been given a duty to instruct others to the best of my ability, and understanding the history of teaching others the truths and doctrines of the Bible is preparing myself for that task.

God has always taught men his will, whether it be the handing of the Old Testament Law to Moses to the sermons of Christ to the crowds during his ministry, even up to Luther's desire for all people to understand the basics of Christianity. The history of educating the people through the Word is ancient and timely as we in the WELS are in a period of transition and change throughout the world and its approach to instruction in the Word. I will attempt to examine the evolution of instruction in the Word through periods of history, highlighting some of the methods used and why these methods were chosen over others.

I begin with a definition of the word "κατηκεω". In Romans 2:18 and 1 Corinthians 14:19 we understand it to mean "to instruct". This word is the choice of Paul in his letters to speak about instruction of a catechetical nature. Certainly methods have evolved throughout time in ways to instruct, but the message is still the same, God's love for man. With this as the backdrop to why we instruct, we must begin with the Word. Matthew 28:19 serves as a good verse from which to start. To teach and instruct a person about Christ is fulfilling the mission he gave us to spread His Word. What better reason than this exists to instruct others in the Word? In this paper I will move from antiquity to

modern times. Here is a timeline of discussion.



I. In Old Testament times, the home was the major place of instruction. Fathers taught sons, mothers taught daughters. In this way instruction was implemented into daily life. One cannot exclude religion from daily instruction, since from the Garden of Eden people instructed and taught orally. Israelite parents taught their households about God and his Promise. With no written record of past events, oral teaching was the mainstay of education. No doubt Israelite boys learned from an early age their ancestral line to the Patriarchs. With our confidence of Moses as the author of the Pentateuch, we see how history was recorded through oral transmission from generation to generation. But more important than facts about the seasons and behavior of the flocks was the instruction of God. It permeated the life of every Israelite. Before the Flood, no doubt generations of men told the history of Adam to their current generation. The Promise was carried along in this history, and in a sense Christian education was achieved.

When God had finally had enough and was grieved about mankind and its rejection of Him, he sent the Flood. No doubt Noah's father had instructed him about God that he and his family became the last believers on earth. After the Flood, this tradition of instruction about God was continued with a new beginning. Unfortunately the sinfulness of mankind once again led people to shun God and belief in Him. With Abraham's call by God to be the father of the nations, this tradition was continued. A

man who knew God closely and one who was given many promises, as well as having many miracles fulfilled in his sight, he led a family of believers.

With Moses the tradition of written instruction had its beginning when God gave to men his Law. From that point Israel had a written code to follow, as well as to instruct others in. By the evidence of the book of Deuteronomy we know that instruction in God's Word, at this time the Law, was accomplished. Gangel comments:

“Indeed, the teaching role of the family emerges with great strength in the book of Deuteronomy. Rather than taking away from the family's responsibility, the formal center of worship merely became the mortar for attaching the bricks of parental efforts. No one understood this better than Moses, who specified it clearly in Deuteronomy 6:7-9” (23).

Once the Torah was given, religious education was the center of Jewish life. Boys were instructed in the home about the Law and ordinances of the civil, ceremonial, and moral law. It was the essence of the people in this theocracy. God's chosen people followed His Law. This seems to have followed until at some point some individuals were given instruction by the priests. Although we know why Samuel was in the temple at the time God called to him, one could say it is possible that priests, the clan of Aaron, later Levites (2 Chronicles 17:7-9), were part of the education of Hebrew youth. God's Law was the staple of life. Israelite priest wore inscriptions on their garments. Gangel comments that “Few American children or teenagers can recite major portions of the Constitution unless preparing for some fine arts festival, but a Hebrew boy who scarcely walked heard and repeated the Torah until it was woven into the very fabric of his life”(23). When the Jewish synagogues came into existence, formal instruction was apart of the work of the priests. “Nehemiah and others of the school of scribes formed an aristocracy of teachers and established their special houses of learning. Regular instruction in the Law was given

in the halls of the outer temple,” (Gangel, 31). Methods of teaching focused on memorization and recitation. This, it seems, is how instruction was accomplished up to the time of Christ.

**II.** We are not able to speak of education and instruction without mentioning the greatest teacher of all, Christ our Lord. His words in Matthew 28:19 serve to remind us of our mission, not only to baptize and preach the salvation he won for all, but also to “teach”. The great teacher used many different methods to teach and reach out to people. He used rhetoric and truth to show his divinity and bring others to faith. Gangel describes Jesus teaching techniques in this way:

“Jesus Christ was maladjusted to the educational status quo of His day. Initially, it was fashionable and intellectually stimulating to hear Christ speak because of His wisdom and winsome words. But He would not cater to popular taste, and He spoke authoritatively rather than accommodatingly to society’s whims. That style of teaching was antithetical to that of the scribes, who lacked authority (Matthew 7:29) (66).

Jesus’ nickname of “teacher” was well given. He is the Word, so his teaching had all authority and power, yet stressed importance for each individual. “He stressed the personal touch, not mass following. Each soul stood alone, had eternal value, and was worthy of the teacher’s supreme attention. Even when He talked to a group, it seemed as if He directed His teaching first to one, then to another, with a view of meeting the needs of individuals”(Gangel, 72). The instruction style of the priests teaching the people was still in effect as evidenced by Jesus common appearance at the synagogues to chastise the Pharisees and Sadducees. In contrast, the disciples were given “on-the-job” training on how to instruct. They lived and ate with the teacher; they saw numerous examples and methods on how to apply God’s Word to the lives of every person. No better teacher ever lived for them to attempt to emulate.

**III.** This brings us to the era beginning with Pentecost. He had commanded that all people reach out into the world to spread the good news. The early Christians took this command to heart. The greatest evidence being the person of St. Paul. No doubt Paul had been instructed in the ways of the Pharisees. He had been trained since youth in the Scriptures. He knew them backwards and forwards. The Lord made no mistake in choosing Paul to be the pioneer of early church instruction. His letters are unmatched in matters concerning the instructing of Christians. We see how he addressed the congregations to equip the Christians to do the work of the church in Ephesians 4:11-14, to take the instruction of young Christians seriously as to build up the church. This was accomplished through the careful instruction of the Word. Paul clearly tells the Christian congregation in Corinth to use the gifts of its members to bring glory to God and be united in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-10), he is instructing them on these gifts. And in verse 28 of this letter he tells them how God has appointed teachers and apostles and prophets. He uses words that describe the roles given to those who were to instruct converts and immature Christians, he says in Romans 12:7 while speaking about using the gifts of God “if it is teaching, let him teach.” He also sets standards in those who want to be shepherds of God’s flock. In 1 Timothy 3:2 he says that one must be “able to teach”. Paul knew the importance of educating the people. As you might have guessed he had much experience as a mission pastor in the field of training and educating others in the Word. Only one who was properly instructed in the Word would be able to disregard the wave of paganism and idolatry that would surge upon the new convert or even learned Christian in the politics of the community. A Christian would need to be able to rely on God and his instruction in the Word to stand fast in the face of persecution

on the horizon. In this light, doctrinal instruction was pivotal to the early Christian church and its focus on the truths of Christ essential.

I must also mention the rest of the apostles in this era. One cannot pass over their part in the early Christian church. Paul wasn't able to accomplish all of his work by himself. With the power of God, the apostles did their part to instruct and educate early Christians. "Worship itself was instructional in the apostolic church" (Reed, 73). If one concludes that Palestine was home base for the early Christian Church, the other apostles must have had a hand in doing mission work and educating believers young in faith. The mission efforts of Timothy for example, show that mission work was being done, and in turn people were being educated and examined in their beliefs. With the breaking off from the Jewish tradition for following the directives of the Sanhedrin, a new community of believers was growing, a group that needed instruction on how to live now that they were out from under the thumb of the oppressive Jewish religious leaders. Instruction in doctrine and practice was needed to show these new Christians how they should live this new life in Christ. Freedom must have felt so new as if the yoke of guilt had been lifted from their backs. Now they understood Jesus, now they had seen the old covenant shattered and a new life ahead of them. As if they had been born again Christians gathered in fellowship. I imagine it as though the scales had been removed from their eyes like Paul, these new Christians needed guidance. The apostles and leaders were to provide that guidance with the fervor of the Holy Spirit and the Word in their hearts.

Gangel promotes three kinds of meetings for instruction and education; 1) teaching of Scripture for the purpose of edification, 2) *agape* meal, 3) Christian community meeting where business of the church like discipline took place (79-80).

These Christians were constantly battling the same battle we fight, that of being Christians who live in a pagan, sinful world. They seemed to shy away from the politics and government positions because of the pagan environment that it served. It is no wonder that Paul speaks of them in the manner that he does in 1 Corinthians 1:19-20, and 26-29. They weren't typically wealthy, wise or noble. Maybe that is why Christianity was attractive to the lower classes of society who gained little in the political and social arena. Murch details the Apostolic Method as follows:

- 1) In Instruction, the *method of Christ* was followed implicitly.
- 2) The whole *program was Christ-centered*.
- 3) The *subject matter of teaching was the Word of God*.
- 4) Soon *elders* were chosen as leaders and given certain authority and oversight in Christian education.
- 5) *Baptism* and the *Communion* had a deep educational significance in their system.
- 6) In the weekly meetings of the assembly, instruction occupied a very large part.
- 7) The home was not overlooked as an important medium for Christian education.
- 8) The apostles insisted upon clear-cut break with the world with its lecherous thinking and living.
- 9) Perfection was the goal of Christian education—the attainment of a spiritual maturity approximately that which had existed between God and man in the beginning. (31-33)

IV. In the post apostolic age instruction continued. “The most important duty of the teachers may have been to educate the new converts—primarily in anticipation of baptism (Reed, 71). The teacher was instructing as he had always done, but with more emphasis.

“In the New Testament, baptism almost immediately followed Christian conversion (Acts 8:30-38; 10:44-48; 16:11-15) and seemed to have little instructional use other than the symbolism and proclamation mentioned above” (Reed, 73).



We know that ramped persecution began with Nero's claim of Christian involvement in the burning of Rome. Persecution at the hands of the Roman world meant that the church had to be skeptical with its dealings with individuals. For this reason and the genre of the environment, the church began to examine individuals and their professions of faith. One could imagine the government trying to infiltrate the hiding places and meetings with spies in order to gain access to the names and places the Christians meet. But yet instruction continued:

"The *Didache*, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, appeared during this same period. This early manual of Christian morals and church discipline claims authorship by Jesus and the twelve, but the manual in its present form probably dates from about A.D. 140. Even so, it preserves some early and even primitive church traditions. The moral instructions of the *Didache* show the influence of Proverbs and the ethical teachings of Jesus, especially of the Sermon on the mount. The manual contains instructions regarding fasting, prayer, baptism, Lord's Supper, false teachers, church officers, the Lord's Day, and church fellowship. Because of its content and structure as well as the variety of languages of the ancient manuscripts in which it is found, it may safely be inferred that the *Didache* was widely used as an catechetical manual in the early church"(Reed, 75).

Thus instruction of converts became a job as important as the proclamation of the Gospel.

"Education in the post apostolic church attempted to instruct new converts and to equip church leaders" (Reed, 78). The form of that instruction was oral instruction. Possibly this led to the forming of early catechisms.

"Instruction in the creeds followed the question-answer form of catechism. Oral instruction was necessary; few Christians could read, and writing materials were beyond the reach of even most literate Christians. Yet maintaining an oral tradition in the faith instilled a certain 'life', rather than the message being relegated to the pages of a book, the message *lived* within the heart, mind, and life of the Christian"(Reed, 79).

V. The 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Centuries. After Constantine makes Christianity the religion of the empire many flocked to the Christian church. Arianism, Marcianism, and Manichaeism

had come to prominence. Sects now began to pop up all over the Mediterranean world. Christianity now had to deal with heresy and other forms of ideology that resulted from the combination of Greek and Hellenistic culture with the Christian faith. Leaders had to be aware and point to the authority of Scripture, as well as lead. While this idea had good intentions for education and instruction, it allowed the pastor or bishop to claim authority, even over scripture as became evident in the Catholic Church. Reed comments:

“In this period of persecution, heresies, and a search for church unity as a means to survival, the monarchical bishop became more than a leader and high priest: he became the doctrinal authority. One whose knowledge pretended to go beyond the limits set by the bishop was lost. The bishop held the teaching chair or cathedra. This made him responsible for the education of candidates for church membership. The churches had teachers to instruct the catechumens, and the right and responsibility to supervise these teachers became significant, both as a source of future controversy and for the further entrenchment of Episcopal authority. Implicit in authority over candidates for the clergy was the charge of their education and training. (77-78).

The main form of instruction during this period took the form of the catechuminate. A number of church fathers, as they are known, became leaders in Christianity, trying to rid it of these heresies. Augustine was one these men. A man who was skeptical of religion at first, trained in rhetoric and language of argumentation, became convinced by the sermons of Ambrose that he should serve the church. But he too is not without failings. Because the Church began to examine those who applied for membership, he took part in a movement to require a certain amount of education and instruction before one was given Baptism. In this age of suspicion, the need to begin instruction and examine both the sponsor and the individual who requested membership began.

The instruction of catechesis had begun for Baptism and the Lords Supper and entrance into the congregation. “Augustine was concerned with quite a specific group—

inquirers—and a quite specific genre of instruction—a *first* catechesis. These limits needed to be appreciated. His concern was not to set forth a comprehensive program of catechesis, nor even of evangelization, but rather a small, but critical, aspect of such evangelizing: a first systematic proclamation of the good news of Christ” (Harmless, 109). He mentioned three types of “inquirers”. “He mentions three types: the unlearned; the well educated; and ‘those from the ordinary schools’” (Harmless, 120). Augustine made a point of requiring three years of instruction before baptism, since baptism had become a sacrament of importance. He obtained this number by using Hippolytus’ *Apostolic Tradition*. One would not take lightly to his baptism. Catechumens, as they were called, now had a waiting period and education. Harmless denotes this a rigorist, sectarian strain in catechetical literature (39). Hippolytus set guidelines for the first examination:

“First, he insisted that when newcomers were brought to the church, teachers were to conduct an interview, questioning not only the newcomers, but also ‘those who brought them’. The latter—we would call them sponsors—were to ‘bear witness about them, whether they are capable of hearing the word’” (Harmless, 41).

The second examination took place after the three year probation period. It focused on the candidate’s lifestyle, not necessarily the instruction in doctrine. It had rites associated with it:

“This ceremony—the entrance into the catechuminate—included several rites: perhaps, a laying-on of hands; certainly, a signing of the cross on the forehead and a taste of salt. Augustine considered the salt ‘a sacrament’ which, in some sense, ‘preserved’ and ‘seasoned’ the candidate” (Harmless, 150).

The culmination of preparation was in Easter week and Baptism on Easter itself. Much

attention was given to instruction and the preparation of the catechumens. Even after Baptism, more instruction was required either by the pastor or laymen. Only now were the people allowed to take part in the Eucharist. One can see how this was needed in response to great numbers of people coming for membership. Augustine had his own principles of catechesis: the classical background; the narrative: making the case for Christianity; exhortation and endtime (Harmless, 123-133).

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century catechumens enjoyed the benefits of Christianity. It became something of a social status. Some had come to the church for political ties, since Constantine had legalized it; Christianity now had its influence in government. “Christian education and the church itself became intertwined with the government, at times influencing the government, and at other times being influenced by the government” (Reed, 89). Besides this, some came for the sake of marriage to a wealthy daughter of a Christian; some came to escape a harsh master. For these reasons Augustine promoted the waiting period as well for new converts. The tide has shifted, Catechists had freedom to write. But they were to write to save the doctrines of the church, “fourth-century catechists devoted great care to doctrinal issues. Catechists particularly focused in the Trinitarian debate—partly because this was the faith into which catechumens would be baptized and partly because this was the faith that catechumens would have to defend in public fora”(Harmless, 54).

This period was not without the establishment of schools for education. Groups began to open schools with Catechesis in mind. The method used was that of the question-answer method we use today. Leaders of these institutions created them with the expressed purpose of training students to deal with the Greek mind and thought

process that had come to popularity. Greek thought was in its prime. What better way to fight against this rationalistic approach than being trained in it and along with instruction in doctrine be forced to know those who they would be confronting. One of the first known schools was in Alexandria. The purpose seemed to shift after a time, from that of educating students in doctrine to that of training the clergy. They became the seminaries of the day.

Other places of education were the church schools themselves. When leading pastors began to organize and their stature among the people established, they had taken the authority issue to heart. The powerful bishops began to establish schools that would train the congregations in all aspects of life. Cathedral schools, as they were called, were the influential “pets” of the bishop. No longer were catechetical schools just for training clergy, they were schools of education for the whole community.

Many historians will point to the influence of Greek thought as a catalyst for what happened in this time period. That without the emergence of rational, analytical, and humanistic thought, that the church would have gone on to remain united in faith rather than being divided over the heresies that would plague the church. The influence of Greek thought taught people to analyze everything to its basic form, thus the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. and its work in defining the person of Christ. “Had Nicea pointed the way back to the holy Scriptures and the apostolic process much might have been accomplished, but so strong was the influence of Greek philosophy and dialectic that the council became only a steppingstone for the further progress of Hellenism”(Murch, 38). As hindsight is 20/20, the church was bound to encounter problems with its instruction because of the form in which education progressed. The progress in instruction,

especially catechesis was to be overshadowed by the problems now facing the church with the power of the bishops, disintegration of unity if faith, and the various number of heresies that arose. The fact that instruction became arduous and the introduction of Greek philosophy into approaching the process of instructing in doctrine brought about more problems than good.

VI. The reasons above left the idea of Christian education, especially catechesis, in a vulnerable position of which the fractioned Catholic Church took advantage. This lead into the period of the Dark Ages. Philosophy dominated human thought, and thus religion. Popes rose to prominence, and the church split between two camps of Eastern and Western Christianity. It is no wonder that in this chaos the Catholic Church became as powerful as it did.

Where there is smoke there is fire. This concept is concise enough to explain the way education would turn. Greek philosophy had ruined much of Christianity in the East. The cathedral and catechetical schools eventually became monasteries where monasticism got its foot into the door. Those seeking to make their way into the clergy were forced to decide into which sect they would study. Education of the congregation had gone by the wayside. Now those willing to take the vows of a monastic life were educated, but with focus heavily upon philosophy over the scriptures, Murch suggests that “Although the monastic system contributed nothing of itself to pure Christianity, it rendered an unwitting service in the preservation of the most ancient documents of Sacred Writ. For this service, Christianity must be everlastingly grateful” (44). This new way of education had been tainted. It had evolved to Mysticism.

“The method of mysticism may be briefly stated as: *The discipline of the mental for the sake of the spiritual.* This discipline was to be secured by

three steps: (1) the purification of the outer life; (2) the illumination of the inner life and (3) the contemplation of the upper life” (Murch, 45).

These types of thought and examples had diminished the Church in the eyes of the world. Monks and priests lived according to their order. Eventually sermon preaching had nothing to do with the Bible, except to enforce the authority of these “learned” men over the populous. Possibly one of the most notable men who had carried on the torch of Christian education was Pierre Waldo. He lived in the twelfth century. Upon his discontent with the church, he set out to revive instruction of the people. He gave his life to instructing families in the Word of God. His method was that of instructing a family, who in turn went out and found someone else to instruct and so on. This method made people once again familiar with the Scriptures. His followers became known as the Waldenses. He tried to form his own little Christian society within the church, but was driven out by Rome. This continued into the medieval ages of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**VII.** Medieval times had long still retained monastic orders. It is in these orders that the clergy were retained. Class divisions were deep and made it difficult for education to be done. Instruction was in Latin and most people were unable to read. Meyer claims that since about 600 A.D. instruction methods had changed drastically because most people were unlearned (3). Bartling says “As a matter of fact, not a single synod concerned itself specifically with the instructions of the young. At home, parents and sponsors became increasingly indifferent and incompetent in teaching” (1). In this environment, Martin Luther and other reformers progressed. Luther had gone to school, entered the monastery and had his experience. He had seen the “light” and come to know his loving God. As he and other reformers like Calvin, Melancthon, Zwingli, and

Erasmus had seen the faults that existed in the Catholic Church and its traditions. Luther broke away from the monastic life and focused on biblical education. His works of translation of the Bible into the common language of the people meant more for education and instruction than he could have imagined. Catechisms had been written before, “Some of the early reformers—Gerson, Colet, Wycliffe, Occam, Eckhart, a Kempis, Erasmus—attempted to elevate instructions in the catechism” (Bartling, 2). But Luther saw the need to write in a form which made explanation with the verses learned important. His experience in dealing with the Catholic Church had forced him to have people explain what the Bible meant along with memorization and recitation. Especially after the visit of the churches in Saxony was Luther convince he needed to write a useful instructional book. He writes “The common people, especially those who live in the country, have no knowledge whatever of Christian teaching, and unfortunately many pastors are quite incompetent and unfitted for teaching” (Bartling 2). Luther chose to teach many things in his sermons and writings, his A Short Form of the Ten Commandments, A Short Form of the Creed, and A Short Form of the Lord’s Prayer had been produced earlier in the decade. In 1528 Luther began the last of his three series of Catechism sermons. These sermons were the basis for the Large and Small Catechisms, which Luther would write the following year. These took the form of placarded pictures, which led to better understanding of the instruction as it meant visual association with the Bible, also since most could not read they needed a different method of instruction. This once again put instruction into the hands of the head of each household, and the duty to carry it out. With the people beginning to once again read and learn the Bible for themselves, instruction became an important aspect. But Luther preferred the Ten



Commandments, the Apostles Creed, and Lord's Supper to be the most important part of instruction, but he also stressed learning the Lord's Prayer with these other topics for children. He considered them the minimum if someone was to claim to be a Christian. Instruction was not only for the home, but also had a part in worship. Luther's *Deutsche Messe* had included time for catechetical instruction.

His method also encouraged examination often. "In our circles the pastor and minister of the churches are required to instruct and examine the youth publicly, a custom that produces a very good result" (Bartling, 8). Bartling also describes Luther's method of instruction:

"Luther's method of teaching the Catechism was guided by two maxims: (1) Christ's wishing to educate men, became a man, and if we wish to educate children, we must become little children; and (2) the apple must lie next to the rod"(8).

Luther wrote the Small Catechism to be memorized and retained, with the Large Catechism expounding more upon that which was in the Small Catechism. But the difference was that in the Large Catechism Luther added to more parts to the three parts that already existed (The Creed, Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments). He added the Sacrament of Baptism and Sacrament of the Altar, and even later he added a part on confession. But the true genius of Luther's Catechism was the treatment of the Lord's Prayer. He had divided it into three parts rather than the twelve that had become common during medieval times. Three parts concerned our preservation by the Father, our redemption by the Son, and our sanctification by the Holy Spirit (Meyer, 17-18). Reed comments that the Small Catechism has been circulated the most of any book besides the Bible itself. This shows the importance and influence it has had in the world.

Many sources consulted on this topic agree that Luther's work on education and instruction was the foundation of state supported education. His influence is undoubtedly evident in all manners of education even up to this day.

**VIII.** After the Reformation era religion had again become part of the fabric of life. The enlightenment had come. Religion was revived and ready to take off and education went along for the ride. The general populous was not being instructed and active in religious matters since monarchs had taken interest in the religion of their people. *Cuius regio, eius religio* had done much to ensure that the reformation lived. But now, as had happened before, factions and sects had broken apart and brought those old heresies to life once again. Wars, inquisitions, revolts, crusades were done in the name of Christianity. But education continued in the form of catechetical instruction. It had become more available, there were more schools open to those who could afford it, state schools were opening. Generations were gaining knowledge like never before. People like Zinzendorf and Wesley influenced movements to keep instruction active and prevalent. Democracy had come to the America's. Mission schools and societies were training clergy and supporting higher education. The education of lay people in the Word, and formal instruction, was still a mainstay of life. This influence was brought to America by those fleeing Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many, under pressure from authorities, monarchs, and pietists, left Europe to find religious freedom in the "new world". Mission societies trained many pastors and teachers to start vibrant congregations in the Americas.

**IX.** Education in the America. With many flocking to America in search of new lives, fortune, cheap land, and religious freedom, America became a seed bed for many

different religions. Puritans like Jefferson and Washington have commonly been attributed with making sure religion stayed in all matters of life, but the truth was that many different people kept religious education in a place of importance in schools. Mission efforts by Calvinists, Lutherans, and Pietists were all successful in producing literature and methods for instruction, many formed their own catechisms. All had great concern for children in instruction of doctrine. Maybe one of the most influential was Calvin's Methodism. This movement gave instructions and rules of conduct by which its followers were to act as well as instruct. In essence, his ways were not much different than those of other reformers, but his movement was strong and incorporated new ideas of realism and philosophy into education. Synergism was apparent and welcomed.

Lutherans, under the established methods of Luther, continued to place emphasis on the home. Catechetical instruction was still the duty of the head of household, but a shift was happening. Rationalism was rising, Industrial advancement was pressing, the Enlightenment was ramped, Science was advancing, Realism abounded; all of these things fought to keep religion apart from humanistic endeavors. Darwin had published *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. Depending on where you lived, a whole array of ideas and thoughts were cultivated. Civil rights were causing problems in government in America. These times after the Reformation were turbulent to say the least, but some good had come from them. Sunday Schools had been established in England, and then became a norm among evangelism in the Americas. Higher education had become important. Groups of small "synods" had come together for unity and survival. A division of church and state grew roots between 1770 and 1800. The Bennett Law is a good example of this type of division. Religion and its education were starting

to separate from schools. Public Universities were teaching subjects that included no religious ties. The education and instruction of the people had shifted from schools to the church by itself, and its specific institutions which it started to keep religion in schools. The world had changed since Luther.

**X.** Modern times. The incorporation of synods and denominations influenced education. No longer could one attend the nearest school and receive religious instruction true to the Word. The WELS for example, had its own institution in the form of Northwestern University. It had general subject education, but still served the purpose for which it was intended, to train clergy for the Lutheran church. Apart from all of the separation of synods, and departures from the General Council and Synod, Lutheran education still survived. The growth in parochial schools is evidence to the need realized by denominations, and not just in the WELS-Missouri Synod. Pastors and teachers were now the main educators in the Word in the lives of children, a trend which I perceive to be existent to today. Society had shifted from one that valued religion highly in the home, to letting the responsibility rest upon the shoulders of those trained to do so. This shift seems to coincide with massive industrialization. With more parents working outside of the home, time devoted to instruction in the Word seemed to become more of just a Sunday “thing”. I realize this is not the case in every situation, but I am generalizing a bit. Civil rights movements, equality of sexes, synergistic tendencies in some denominations, state and church separation, Modernism; all of these have contributed to the loss of doctrinal instruction in the Word among Christians. For example, both of the World Wars had major influences on society here in America. Mothers were now working in factories, children now became familiar more then before

with politics. President John Brenner had these words about the educational and instructional lives of our members in his words to the 1947 convention:

“We are told by some that our churches should do more for the young. They suggest new organizations that provide safe environment, social life, recreation, and amusement for our children and adolescents. . . Many of the evils of our day are rightly attributed to the braking sown of home life among us. Are all the homes of church members truly Christian homes filled with the presence of the Lord? The remedy? Further aids of all kinds? No, indeed. . . If the Church is to be built soundly, the home must be made conscious of its duties and willing to perform them” (Were, 2-3).

Strengthening the home was important to our synod a number of decades ago and still continues, it's the purpose of our schools. Education in the Word was, and is important. Education in the WELS has grown as is evident by the growing number of Lutheran schools opened. Many have done this work of numbers, so I will leave it to them to expound if necessary. But the focus I have in mind is that of instruction, and although catechetical instruction goes hand in hand with Christian education, I would now like to focus on this aspect of catechetical instruction since it is very important in our day due to the increase in the number of public school students who must be taught and instructed for confirmation.

**XI.** Today. Today I approach instruction in the Word as an important need in our churches. Just as Luther stressed the importance of the home, I believe we need to stress it as well, and I believe we do in the WELS. But how well are we instructing? I give this question not as a doubt of the faithful instruction our pastors around the world are giving to children and adults, but as a question as to the methods which are being used. Times have changed in this postmodern world, and methods of instruction seem to be following change.

Many methods are currently used to instruct in doctrine, but which of them is the

best, or which is dominant among our churches? Many will attribute a certain period of instruction as best, others a gradual learning best. It is best to understand here that I am not an expert on the methods used; some of the more venerable of our clergy may know much better which methods work best. I am simply putting some out there as examples to compare. I was instructed in a Lutheran parochial school, as many are. Over a period of two years I was instructed and confirmed. I know of a few pastors who will advance an idea of instruction that makes a student master the catechism, no matter how long it takes, before examination and confirmation. Some set up a number of weeks for adult confirmation. In the congregation where I had my Vicarship, there was a weekend of three days in which adults were taught the basics of what we believe. Although I was made to partake of this instruction, I did not feel it the best way to instruct in the Word and doctrine.

Comparing these methods would make good sense, if one could accurately account for the spiritual knowledge of the people, but since every congregation is different, it is impossible. We can only use methods which have worked and continue to be effective. And that is my purpose of this paper, to understand how instruction was done in order to evaluate how instruction will change in the future. We all will be in different congregations where the people will determine which method is best, but one thing still has to remain the same: instruction of God's Word in its truth and purity without compromise.

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