

# 2011

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Bishop Weber



Nkosi Jesu Christu Sikelel' iAfrika (*Lord Jesus Christ bless Africa*)

Maluphakanyisw' uphondo lwayo (*May your glory be lifted high*)

Yiva imathandazo yethu (*Hear our petitions*)

Nkosi Sikelela (*Lord bless us*)

Thina lusapho lwayo (*Us your children*)

Yihla Moya, (*Come Spirit*) 6x

Yihla Moya oyingcwele (*Come Holy Spirit*)

Nkosi sikelele (*Lord bless us*)

Thina lusapho lwayo. (*Us your children*)

**[TRAINING LUTHERAN PASTORS IN AFRICA USING THE BOOK OF CONCORD]**

## 1. Advocating a confessional curriculum

The Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tshwane [LTS] is putting great emphasis on the learning and teaching of theology from a confessional perspective as given in the Lutheran Book of Concord [BoC].<sup>1</sup> It tries to use the BoC as fundamental text on three different levels. Firstly to train individual pastoral candidates to know, understand and apply the theology propagated in the BoC both in broad outlines and in detail. Secondly it uses this confessional base in agreement with other Lutheran Churches in Africa, so that these can be assured that the preaching, teaching and confessing practiced at the LTS ultimately serves confessional Concordia in Lutheran mission throughout this continent specifically, but also globally. Thirdly it uses the BoC as its point of departure which characterizes its style of theology whenever it deals with other individuals, institutions or entities from different denominations and confessions across the ecumenical spectrum be that in other tertiary educational institutions like seminaries or universities and in academic, ecclesial or public dialogue, dispute or discourse.

The BoC is the authoritative text, whose study, practice and doctrines add the distinctive flavour to all LTS educational activity not only for its own good, but to ultimately promote the truth of the Christian faith everywhere.<sup>2</sup> The commitment to work on this premise on the long-term, with hopefully growing expertise and efficiency seems to me to be the right direction in theological education at the LTS as we pursue to improve the ongoing training of Lutheran Pastors throughout Africa. I pray

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was first presented at the Lutheran Seminaries Conference at Leriba Lodge in 2008. A few alterations and updates have been added.

<sup>2</sup> This is driven by the conviction that the study of the BoC is not just focused on understanding the historical success of the Concordists overcoming the reigning confusion, misunderstanding, errors and heresies concerning God's revelation in Law and Gospel of the Old and New Testament in the Lutheran Churches in post-reformation times, but that it is effective in achieving this faithful unanimity in addressing and overcoming serious theological dissension and conflict in pastoral responsibility even in this our time and place. [cf. Arand 1990:213f; Klän 2005:332f]

that it will also improve the cooperation and partnership among Lutheran Churches. The promise of Christ still holds true: *"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* [Joh.8,31b-32 cf. Tswaedi 2003] As the BoC is the faithful exposition of just this biblical truth, I proceed in the conviction that its devoted study and reliable application will serve the Church and this continent well. That is the point I attempt to make in this paper.

This conviction and purpose affects the entire six year academic program at the LTS. Presently the BoC informs beginners during Pre-Seminary about authentic theologizing by studying Luther's Catechisms and the Augsburg Confession bi-annually. In two consecutive years this confessional introduction is confirmed and extended through an intensified study of both Apology of the CA and the Smalcald Articles plus the Treatise in one and the Formula of Concord [Epitome and Solid Declaration] in the other year. Two final years address specialised topics in the theology of the BoC facilitating at least some in-depth understanding and relevant application. It is our hope that when LTS students are eventually called by their various Churches to enter their respective vicarage or ordination programs, they are familiarized with this Lutheran way of doing theology in theory and practice. The predominance of the BoC in the LTS curriculum is to ensure that future pastors of the Lutheran Church are enabled to practice theology and fulfil their gospel mission in the African context from an authentic Lutheran perspective and with a definite confessional bias. That is the trademark of LTS teaching. [cf. Günther 1984:75, Klän 2006:168f]

In the secluded setting of the LTS such confessional training goes mostly without questioning – at least from the side of faculty. I presume that this position holds true for most ILC partners in theological education. This

position is echoed from across the globe as voices from confessional Lutheran Seminaries in Brazil [cf. Seibert 2006:266f], Germany [cf. Klän 2006:169] and Korea [cf. Ji 1996:261; Park 2006:277] bear witness. However if we are vying for a Lutheran post-graduate chair at the University of Pretoria and are striving to add definite Lutheran flavour and substance to this institution in the process, we will have to argue this case convincingly and give substantially more credit to critical questioning than before, because the fundamentals of Lutheran confessions have never been adopted in the reformed realm. Serious thought on how to promote the relevant contextualisation of an authentically Lutheran theology and practice will be required when getting involved in academic debate at UP. [cf. Trillhaas 1975:209f] Although this is doubtless a daunting challenge, I believe this too is part of the Lutheran mission in Africa. Lutherans need to participate actively in the public discourse even at university level. That is another way of promoting Lutheran faith and witness in the public realm.

Lutherans have played a significant part wherever theology was taken seriously. Lutherans in Africa are no exception. They take theology serious. They want their pastors, teachers and bishops to be well trained and equipped to be competent as confessional theologians. They are not satisfied with leftovers falling from other tables, but partake in the divine table fellowship of their Lord and Saviour, who serves them with his most precious grace in word and sacrament. [cf. Simojoki 2006:253]

The Lutheran Church has done this for a long time in a memorable and faithful way considering that they have always been limited to do this on a shoestring. A change however is inevitable now that cooperation, networking and constructive partnerships are feasible and very real possibilities. All of this does not need to be restricted to single churches or

individual nations, but can involve confessional Lutheran Churches, dioceses, congregations and individuals from all over this continent and abroad. That is in line with the traditional Lutheran way of doing things confessionally – and not in a sectarian, particularistic and isolated fashion.

In line with Seibert's suggestions made in Brazil years ago [cf. 2006:265f] a post-graduate university program would supplement the existing itinerary supplied by Seminaries like the LTS. It would add another valuable resource to carry out Lutheran Missions responsibly on this continent. For Lutheran Missions to establish genuine Lutheran Churches on this continent, who are not only Lutheran in name, it will require advanced theological study programs. This goal requires a lot of profound research, intensive contextual studies and the ongoing discourse of confessionally sound Lutheran theology as promoted by Seminaries. [cf. Scaer 2004:394] This is not a short-term or quick-fix issue, but rather necessitates long-term commitment by the Lutheran Church in Africa and globally. If God allows, Lutherans are here in Africa to stay and make a significant difference theologically.

## **2. Back to basics in pastoral service**

Wherever Lutherans live and worship they will train, evaluate, call, bless, send, ordain and install suitably gifted men to enable the public service of teaching and preaching God's infallible Word in Law and Gospel together with the appropriate administration of the Lord's precious sacraments [cf. Kolb 2000:222f; Preus 2001:5ff ] in accordance with His institution. This leads to the trustworthy performance of any further work or office of the church as the Lord himself instructed his Church from the outset. [cf. LCSA 1993:5.1; Kolb 2000:323f] This complex ordination process is a prerequisite of the Lord for his Church to enable sustainable functioning of

His ministry to His people. It is a diverse service even if it has only the one goal: the salvation of people to live with the triune God eternally. [cf. Kolb 2000:319,4] The multiplicity is illustrated in various biblical illustrations of this pastoral office from gardening, farming, hunting/fishing, building, managing and nursing.

For over 2 thousand years the Church has fared well in adherence to the divine instructions. They are his authoritative directions concerning best practices in Church and its mission, which set valid and lasting benchmarks. Coming to grips with and sticking to these divine basics in good and bad times, remains key for any faithful and orthodox program of training Lutheran pastors – even in Africa.

The authoritative institution and binding mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ has established the office of the ministry in his one, holy Christian Church, thereby he has furnished it with the divine means to create and keep a congregation of faithful saints throughout this world and its ages. This office of the ministry has been the true Shepherds means to collect, gather and keep them, who follow his voice faithfully, who trust, love and fear him above all else throughout history, in all continents and amongst all people in his fold. The functionality of this office serving God's people with his means of grace in the forms of Word and Sacrament has absolute priority in church and mission and therefore also in any of its training programs, where candidates for this office are cultured and those already in this office are continually nurtured. [cf. Schulz 1993:163f]<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Lutherans like all Christians need pastors to take care of them on an ongoing weekly and even daily basis. They need pastors to equip them as Saints of Christ to be enabled [i.e. sanctified] to do godly works he has called them to do in this world benefitting neighbours and pleasing to the heavenly father. This is part of the Churches outreach, evangelization and mission activity. Without these pastors [not *dominees*, *sangomas*, *shamans*, oracles, priests or prophets!] the people would be like sheep, without a shepherd – like a garden without a gardener and a house without a caretaker. [cf. Mt. 9, 38]

The Church is confident that this pastoral work of the Lord – serving his people with his holy word - is never in vain, but does what he wants done. Wherever his word is sown it brings forth justification by faith and the fruit of sanctification when and where it pleases God. [cf. CA V] Due to his good and gracious will this salvation process through the service/ministry/office of the church will not cease until he comes in glory. Therefore the Christian congregation is confident in all calamity that this Church as confessed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Article of the Apostolic Faith “must be and remain ... at all times.” [Kolb 2000:42f, 1] Talking to you about this, is like preaching to the choir and carrying coals to Newcastle!

### 3. Ordination as pivot in theological training

Training Lutheran Pastors is an ongoing endeavour and therefore deserves careful elaboration. In the individual life theological training can be at best a life-long process of growth and development. For systematic reasons this personal training can roughly be divided into two distinct parts, namely pre- and post-ordination training.<sup>4</sup> This obviously is only a schematic division, because pastoral training properly understood remains God’s practice throughout the life of his called servants and is never completed by any candidate in this life as Luther’s last testament illuminates so fittingly: “*Wir sind Bettler. Hoc est verum.*” [cf. Bayer 1999:280-301] It occurs in the continual triadic cycles: *meditatio*, *oratio*, *tentatio*. [cf. Bayer 2007: 27-40; Kleinig 2006:18ff]

For methodical purposes allow me to use the time-line of theological training before and after ordination. Evangelical ordination to the ministry of the Church is a very real water-shed and a suitable demarcation in theological training, because the Lord of the Church continues to give

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<sup>4</sup> eg. Visitations & Chemnitz “Enchiridion”

special gifts and grace by the laying on of hands in ordination [cf. 1.Tim. 4, 14]. The ordained has been put into a new responsibility by this divine vocation. [cf. Lk. 12, 48; 17,10]

At ordination the previously trained, examined and tested candidate is required to promise to preach, teach and live in accordance to pure gospel teaching and the scriptural administration of the sacraments and thus to be bound in mind, heart, conscience – with body and soul – as entire person - by the supreme authority of God's holy Word in both Old and New Testament as *norma normans* and the Lutheran Confessions as the truthful exposition of this divinely inspired truth [*quia* and not just *quatenus*] as the *norma normata* of all his writing, speaking and thinking. [cf. Wendland 1996: 171] This is a voluntary subscription by the ordinand, which serves the “unity of the Church by preserving the truth of biblical doctrine and thus expressing the conformity with all faithful teaching of the church throughout the ages...” [Klän 2006:188 cf. Forde 1991:316] Training future Lutheran Pastors should always have this goal in mind, assisting the prospective ordination candidate to be aware what he is letting himself into and thus doing everything possible to enable the voluntary self-obligation [*Lehrverpflichtung*] whereby he commits himself to this confessional principle as demarcated in the binding Summary, Basis, Rule and guiding principle of theology as spelt out in both the Epitome and Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord [*summarischer Begriff*]. Therefore training future Lutheran pastors before their ordination should focus specifically on the BoC as a source of truthful and dependable theology aiming at a willing acceptance and adherence to its contents as is presumed in the subsequent ordination.

Just as pre-ordination training focuses on teaching the true Christian faith as laid down in the BoC, the post-ordination education of pastors strives

to keep in accordance with this foundational outlook. This focus assists Lutheran pastors in the sense of an “internal regulation” [*Innenregulierung*] expressing the vital obligation to remain in the parameters of faithful service. [Klän 2005: 334f] Pastors of the Lutheran Church are not only reminded of what they have learnt in the “good old days”, but rather are motivated to practise this authentic theology in their congregational context by addressing pressing issues of their people, situation and culture in the referential framework of the Lutheran confessions. To abide in this confessional treasury of the Church they need to continue to read and learn it.

By Ordination the Lord of the Church has put us into the yoke of his ministry. We are subject to our ordination vows until we die, because there is no retirement from that ordination vow. Retirement from this divine call would be apostasy, because we stand in “indelible obligation” [cf. Schöne 2007:34]

Sadly it is a widely acknowledged fact that less and less candidates arrive at Seminary with required prerequisites and pastoral competencies. Student’s knowledge of the Bible, Luther’s catechism, the Christian liturgy and hymnody is mostly negligible. We Lutherans in Africa can’t be satisfied with just a basic idea of Lutheran theology, ignoring its full expression in the BoC. Rather we too need to come to grips with the entire expression of Lutheran Confessions as found in the BoC especially as future pastors approaching ordination or as pastors coming from that pivotal hinge in our life. [cf. Klän 2007:22; Simojoki 2006:253]

#### **4. Doing pastoral training in Africa together**

It is my conviction that the Lutheran Church in Africa has come a long way in training its pastors. Countless faithful and God-pleasing pastors

and bishops have been tending the Lord's flock and taking care of his vineyard, garden and plantation over the past decades and even centuries – not only, but also specifically in Tanzania. Praise the triune God for this!

Lutherans in Africa face many similar contextual challenges and opportunities as individuals, as congregations and churches, even as Seminaries. Serious networking of our institutions is the obvious way to go – especially in training of prospective and practising pastors. I believe the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa [LCSA] gives us a practical solution. The LCSA was constituted not as a national entity, but rather a confessional one – incorporating Lutherans from Botswana, Swaziland and South Africa, but initially also from Germany and subsequently from the USA. This Church is not constituted by national boundaries, racial bias, cultural exclusivity or ideological barriers. Rather its constitution gives exclusive priority to confessional ecclesiology as propagated in the BoC – specifically CA VII. That practical orthodoxy [*de facto et lege*] is sufficient for Church unity [*satis est!*] providing space for a wide spectrum of various traditions, usages and customs [cf. Schöne 2007: 45]. I believe that this foundation provides a suitable platform for a sustainable training program of our students.

This points the way forward for confessional Lutherans all over the continent. They are called out of the narrow confines of sectarian parochialism and into the wide open spaces of the community of fellow believers. Obviously viable formats of such cooperating identities like congregations, dioceses and churches have proved favourable and sustainable. My contention is that we are responsible for areas of common concern and are bound by our common faith to cooperate in resolving vexing problems and also to strive to combine limited resources

to facilitate optimum solutions for the greater good of the Church and its mission internationally. That is given with the width and breadth of a confessional approach. The training of Lutheran Pastors in Africa is such a possible global joint-venture of confessional Lutherans. I believe this issue should be addressed with urgency as most Lutheran Seminaries I know have a great desire to train their pastors optimally along the lines of confessional Lutheranism. That is our common denominator in goal and purpose. However we all have more or less limited resources – specifically concerning qualified staff, suitable students, conducive facilities and optimal programs. However these are only some of the requirements to train Lutheran Pastors in Africa optimally. Cooperation to pool limited resources and achieve optimal results seems the obvious choice – especially at higher levels of training i.e. diploma and graduate and post-graduate stages. It is probably most feasible if each partner trains his students as well as possible to the highest level attainable, but for those courses unattainable as yet to seek the help and support from those partners, who have further options open to them. An exchange of students and staff may promote this coordination. Perhaps it will start a healthy competitiveness to strive for the best possible solutions in Seminary training available for the Lutheran Church. Hopefully it will engender a common purpose and drive to optimize the pastoral training on this continent. Lastly the successful cooperation and partnership will depend on our joint commitment to our shared confessional identity and whether we live up to the challenges this brings with it. We are all part of the one, holy, Christian Church and we should not foster false ideas about independence contrary to the prayer of our Lord, that we all be one with him and the Father! Independence is not a spiritual or ecclesiastical criteria promoted by either the apostles or prophets of the Lord. Rather they promoted the cooperation, exchange, networking, communication

and joint-ventures/partnerships between congregations, churches and Christians wherever possible. Doing things on our own is not an essential requirement of being Church. However cooperation, partnership and commitment to unity are! The apostle Paul admonishes the Church in Ephesus and all Christians to strive for those things, which serve the common good – edifying and building each other up. [cf. Eph.4, 11-14]

## 5. Using the BoC in theological training

In an age, where information is overwhelming even the most enthusiastic readers, we need to cut navigational tracks into the literary thicket – putting up helpful markers, study guides and referential frameworks for our students to serve them as advanced orientation in their studies.<sup>5</sup> This we should do by pointing out worthwhile reading material so that they can learn to cope critically with the flood of information threatening to drown them. The standard should be the age-old maxim: “*non multa, sed multum!*”<sup>6</sup> And then also the other dictum: “*Repetitio est mater memoriae/studiorum*”.<sup>7</sup> This not only holds true in societies, where oral tradition holds sway, but especially there! Obviously the reformation slogan “*sola scriptura*” is decisive here. Students need to be familiar with the Bible – and not only with commentaries about the Bible. That is basic to their theological competency. [cf. Benner 2006:359] They should attain a “biblical existence” in the sense of living in, with and under the Word of God as daily nourishment. [cf. Psalms 1 and 119; Josuttis 1991:219] This textual existence of theologians explains the necessity to study the biblical languages and goes a long way to explain why they are

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Gottfried Hofmann handed out a list of required readings from Luther to his students. Prof. Pless from CTS does the same. This is available even now for those interested.

<sup>6</sup> Not so much, but rather well – or not so much emphasis on quantity, but rather on quality.

<sup>7</sup> Repetition is the mother of memory/studies.

something different to therapists, pedagogues, social workers, managers and councillors [Josuttis 1991, 220f] .<sup>8</sup>

Prof. William Schumacher [CS St. Louis] only half jokingly declared: „At St. Louis we still study texts!“ Well, that is what the study of theology is largely about: Studying texts! For Lutheran Pastors the BoC is the text after and subject to Holy Scriptures, which definitely demands and deserves dedicated study because it is founded in Scripture and leads back into these. Theologians are “grammarians” as Luther says and theology is the grammar of biblical language [cf. Bayer 2004:405]. Studying theology therefore is learning to think, understand, and speak biblical language. The BoC functions as a key to an appropriate and authentic understanding of this biblical language. [cf. Klän 2007:17]<sup>9</sup>

Living at Seminary is an intensive training program in a communal Christian lifestyle centred on the divine worship [*Gottesdienst*] in the sanctuary, classroom, and library, dormitory and on the street to experience and practice of God’s word addressed to his people in Law and Gospel. Both inside and outside the Seminary the gift of faith schools Seminarists amidst all temptation to put their trust solely in God, whereby the BoC continues to give faithful orientation in this existential study of biblical existence.

The academic study of the BoC in the classroom and its personal perusal at home links up with the continual reading of sections from the BoC in

<sup>8</sup> I am grateful that professionals like Dr. Ian Butler [UP] assist new students at the Seminary to gain competency in reading, learning, and understanding the English language, which assists all of us, who are not fluent in this foreign tongue to attain some level of fluency in writing and articulacy speaking as did his predecessor Dr. Jacomien van Niekerk [UP], using texts from the BoC, which are constructive even in this regard.

<sup>9</sup> The confessional summary as defined in the Epitome/Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord is indeed helpful here! Exemplary learning is key, but it goes hand in hand with an overall and solid grounding in the biblical revelation – so that the life-long learner becomes more and more at home in the Word of God. This is a *conditio sine qua non* of Lutheran theology. An appropriate introduction, understanding and familiarization with the BoC can underline and emphasize exactly this biblical foundation and authority in the practice of authentic theology, because it functions as fitting key to an apt and joint understanding of Holy Scripture. [cf. Wenz 1996:137; Klän 2005:330f; 2007:17]

the various devotional services at the LTS! Worship in the sanctuary and study in the classroom and at home go hand in hand, underlining each other, supporting and emphasizing the common sense found in these texts. An ongoing and meaningful learning experience and practice does not only take on the academic meaning of something, recalling it at a given moment, but rather embodies this as a part of life. [cf. Fluegge 2008] Reading, hearing, understanding and learning how to think, believe, confess, preach and teach orally and in writing to conform to the Lutheran way of doing these things is the intended outcome of these endeavours – where and when it pleases God. [cf. Phil.2, 12f]

## **6. The Ecumenical Creeds: Apostolic, Nicene and Athanasian**

The three universal Christian Creeds make up part of the ongoing theological learning at the LTS. Although there is a quarterly course [Module] teaching these articles to students in an academic fashion, they form regular corner stones and building blocks of the Seminaries worship life too. The ecumenical creeds are texts prayed and confessed in unison with the entire Christian Church. [cf. Abate 1990:237] They demonstrate the very real connection of theory and practice in our daily theological existence. One cannot be separated from the other. They belong together not only at Seminary, but also in the pastor's parish life and in his daily way of doing things.

The initiation into the Christian faith through the “one baptism for the forgiveness of sins” [Kolb 2000:23,9f] has always and everywhere been imbedded in the confession of the Apostolic Creed. That is sanctified tradition in the entire Christian Church. At the LTS this precious gift of a new beginning by God's grace is commemorated every morning following the order of the responsive prayer [LSB 282-287]. Obviously this is in

accordance with Luther's reminder what to do first thing in the morning or before going to sleep at night. It's all about first things first!

Every Sunday together with the entire Church – glorified, suffering and militant – the Trinitarian faith as verbalized in the truly ecumenical Nicene Creed is confessed in the divine Order of the Lord's Supper. Even the Athanasian Creed has its place in the liturgical calendar on the Sunday of the Holy Trinity. Thus the basic tenets of the Christian faith keep the confessors in the holy framework of God's doing, allowing them to breathe the wholesome air of God's gospel, recuperating them in all life's situations and invigorating them to live the life Christ has granted them under his guidance and care.<sup>10</sup>

The liturgical calendar emphasizes the Trinitarian outlook, when in the festive circle it uses various scripture readings, spiritual songs, prayers and sermons to elaborate thematically the various stations and topics of the basic Christian belief.<sup>11</sup>

The Trinitarian basis of our faith, shared with the entire ecumenical community, is fundamental to the theological outlook and life at Seminary preventing sectarian deviation even as the Christological salvation is kept in specific focus. Seminarians experience, yes, suffer *Gottesdienst* [divine service] in their practise of the *theologia passiva*, which does not reduce their life at Seminary to contemplation, but rather oscillates them in the constant rhythm of *meditation, oratio et tentatio* as the Holy Spirit reminds

<sup>10</sup> Again and again the mighty works of him, who is the be all and end all, are repeated for all to hear and believe, emphasizing that our creation, salvation and sanctification is and remains solely His doing in the past, present and future. This confessing "hints at the rhythm and heartbeat of the Christian life – the speaking of God and the antiphon of man." [Arand 1990:215]

<sup>11</sup> The Christological incarnation, suffering, death and burial, resurrection and ascension are imbedded in the creative and preservative work of the triune God from the very beginning and give us living hope to face confidently not only the coming end and ruin of all things, but also the final coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to carry out the Last Judgement and to fulfil his work of salvation and sanctification in glory everlasting. In the common time [non-festive season] after Pentecost the themes of this triune God's grace and mercy are celebrated by the worshipers, maintaining the community of believers in the one true faith, which is far beyond us ever fathoming or measuring out.

and imprints on them in his word, what Christ is, does and means *pro nobis et pro me* on the backdrop of creation and in view of the ongoing sanctification. This learning under the spiritual guidance of the Holy Spirit is not restricted to the sanctuary and the liturgy celebrated there. No, even in the classroom the Trinitarian and ecumenical creeds are meticulously studied to come to grips with the keywords, historical elements and blessed facts professed in them.<sup>12</sup>

As the venerable August F.C Vilmar pointed out with his polemic booklet, we are busy here not only with the style and theory of linguists concerned with the ancient art of rhetoric, but rather are fixed on the realities God has called to be through his omnipotent word: *Let it be!* [cf. 1968] These are not empty words, but do and hold, what they promise. So the Trinitarian Creeds hold Seminarians to faithfully view themselves and fellow Christians as baptized into the family of the triune God [and dead to sin, death and devil] and are thus encouraged to discover in a lasting journey of theological enterprise what this means every day anew. As practising theologians they are called to this ongoing hermeneutical existence – under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In His word they learn to understand the value of being created, saved and sanctified by the triune God to eternal life in heavenly realms. As this faithful existence on earth is constantly afflicted and threatened by disbelief, doubt and other kinds of temptations, all Christians, but specifically Seminarians as obvious targets find out the meaning of the theology of the cross, following Christ and being formed into his likeness more and more. Thanks to God that he does not let us be tempted too much, but sees to it, that the temptations remain bearable and lead to a God pleasing end.

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<sup>12</sup> Numerous Christian Dogmatics still use the traditional Trinitarian setup to structure their doctrinal subject matter. So again the students are confirmed in the legitimacy of this basic thought pattern deduced from the ancient creeds. [cf. Arand 1990:219]

## 7. Luther's Small and Large Catechism [SC/LC]

At Seminary the beginners are introduced to theology with Luther's Catechisms in a year-long course [2 Semesters = 4 Quarters = 4 Modules]. This is where they get acquainted with the basic contents of Christian dogma, introducing them to main issues revealed to us in the Words of God, if they did not have the privilege of learning all this in confirmation class. Seminary gives the opportunity to make these positive experiences with this first introduction to the BoC. It is a vital part of theological studies to not only inform the students about this, but also to enable them to educate and form those entrusted to their care later on in the ministry to which they are called and/or on their way to.

As you all know the Catechisms lay out the basic Christian faith for everybody to see, hear and learn. It is the minimum each Christian should know for his salvation. That is why Christian missions of conventional denominations have always used this tool to teach those, who desire to be inducted into the Christian faith, because here they can find the Layman's Bible, teaching them briefly what Christ has entrusted to his one, holy Christian Church. It is the basic daily ration a Christian needs to live his Christian life in this world.<sup>13</sup> Thus Seminary utilizes the catechism in this double task of teaching and exercising the Christian faith and thereby goes about its main and essential purpose.<sup>14</sup> This is not just a personal learning experience for students, but simultaneously an introduction into the orthodox doctrines of the Church universal. What an advantage if future pastors, missionaries and evangelists speak one

<sup>13</sup> In as many words as we have fingers on our hands, God inducts us in his will and what he wants of his people on earth [Law]. In the Apostolic Creed he informs us about what he has done for us in the past, what he is still doing for us daily and what he is going to do for us in future [Gospel] and in the "Our Father" the Lord instructs his disciples, how they should pray –that is those, who are baptised and on the way to the Lord's Supper. "The catechism provides the access code or password that unlocks the various dimensions of Christian existence." [Arand 2000:147] Or as Nordling puts it: "the Christian's internal 'computer operating system'" [2007:9]

<sup>14</sup> cf. Weber 1993: 179 "*Die theologische Aufgabe schlechthin*."

language and tongue conveying one faithful message as they address those called to believe the gospel of the Lord. It is convincing unanimity.

Luther did not invent the Catechism. It is not his, but the Lord's and his Churches. However during his visitation of the areas around Wittenberg in Saxony, he was confronted with a dire situation. [cf. Kolb 2000:347,1-3] Luther's critique is scathing, however his deductions are encouraging. He does not stop at this frightening scenario to turn his back on these miserable people misusing their freedom so deplorably. Rather he moves forward pastorally sensitive and responsibly composing a simple Dogmatics fit for Mary and John to teach their little children step by step, question by question. Under the same token this basic text is profound enough to keep Doctors and Professors contemplating the width and depth and immensity of the triune God, without ever coming to a perfect ending while navigating the deep waters of our life and death. It is significant for future and present pastors to recognise the dire straits people are in without God's word – they are lost in the shadow of death. It is the duty and task of all Christians, but especially pastors as missionaries that they carry this vital life-blood to those, who are still without it. Luther's Catechisms inform, equip and enable an effective missionary confession targeting and overcoming disbelief, doubt and other terrible shame and vices resulting from our sinful human being.

The students are themselves encouraged by their teachers and studies to make Luther's technique their own. By using the simple method of question and answer he initiates students to question: What is this? What does this mean? What is in this for me? Or with American impertinence: So what? The inquisitive approach to relevant issues of daily life as we find it in normal children throughout the world is positively taken up and used to encourage them to ask even more by providing authentic

answers from God's Word to what they want to know. Actually no explanation is forthcoming, but rather Luther restates, what has just been said in biblical terms equipping parents and guardians to point out the valid and dependable foundation to stand on and to call on their children to occupy this as theirs too. [cf. Arand 2000:103] This venerable tradition of the Church for over 2 millennia is effective even today because it effectively encourages and convinces the ignorant and questioning person, that God is not hiding from us or him/her anymore in some utopia or Nirvana, but wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth [cf. 1.Tim.2, 4].<sup>15</sup> He has revealed himself in Jesus Christ for all to know him thus.

Luther stresses the impossibility of perfect knowledge of the Catechism in his introduction to the Large Catechism. [Kolb 2000:381, 9 cf. 439, 63ff] and underlines this at the end of his days with his testimony on the divine Odyssey [cf. Bayer 1999:280ff]. In the sight of such divine treasures even the most learned theologians truly remain beggars, because God's richness, vitality and depth as revealed in His holy Word are far more than can ever be comprehend in this mortal life. This limitation however should not put us off. Rather we should heed Luther's admonition: "In such reading, conversation, and meditation [of the catechism WW] the Holy Spirit is present and bestows ever new and greater light and devotion, so that it tastes better and better and is digested, as Christ also promises in Matthew 18: [20], 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'" [Kolb 2000:381, 9]<sup>16</sup> Oswald Bayer recommends the

<sup>15</sup> In this very personal and pastoral process, the despairing are enlightened, the poor and meek are made confident and brave to talk/think about God in a truthful and trustworthy way. Even if not all is revealed in this life, we are strengthened in our faith that the time will come, when this too will be revealed to us.

<sup>16</sup> The learned exposition of Albrecht Peters in five volumes on Luther's Catechisms should be enough "hard" evidence that here is food aplenty for learned minds to feed on many a long semester and probably lasting through all of extended pension also without really ever exhausting its truly extensive reserves. So Seminarians should not be too hasty to move on and away from this foundational groundwork of Christian learning.

catechetical set-up as pattern for doctrinal text-books, because this can help prevent from falling into the trap of systematic speculation and keeping on track with hard-core Christian fundamentals. [cf. 1994:106ff]

Luther suggests three steps learning this vital God's speech, which provides the key to the Holy Scriptures. [Kolb 2000:348f, 7-18] Firstly, the learner is to hear the simple words again and again in unchanging monotony to ensure that these words are truly learnt by heart or as Margaret Krych suggests: "overlearned". [Arand 2000:99f] Who of you pastors cannot recount the blessed situation on the deathbed of a Christian, who can't recount anything sensible, but recites the Our Father, the Words of Institution, the Christian Creed without hesitation? Is that not a living example of the truth that God's word remains in eternity? Secondly the learners should learn the meaning of the words and then thirdly they should move on to the larger catechism and learn to put all things of their life into relation with these essential truths and promises of Holy Scripture. Just as the liturgical calendar elaborates the doings of the triune God, so the liturgy of the divine service and the liturgical calendar grants an extended exposition of the Catechism by coming from and leading back into the faithful study of the Bible.

So we again have the situation that the text learnt by Seminarians in class, meets them in the daily worship - in confessional services and also in the celebration of the Lord's Supper.<sup>17</sup>

The Catechetical text is not only expanded in the Large Catechism, in the traditional liturgy of the Church and its faithful preaching throughout the

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<sup>17</sup> Again this serves to compound and confirm the basic Christian way of faithful existence before the almighty and gracious God and in merciful presence with fellowmen. [cf. Kolb 2000:386, 24-28] It is this the fulfilment of the 3rd Commandment that we must "fear and love God, so that we do not despise preaching or God's Word, but instead keep that Word holy and gladly hear and learn it." [Kolb 2000: 352, ]. Luther does not only warn Seminarians and pastors [cf. Kolb 2000:382f, 17-20], but also those who do not want to obey and follow this catechetical instruction. They should "be sent back ... to the devil himself." [Kolb 2000: 348f, 11]

Church year to further substantiate and validate the same, pure gospel message the triune God is trying to get across to his people, so that they would love, trust and fear him above all things, but also in Lutheran Hymnody. Allow me to briefly point out these spiritual songs in the new LSB to encourage all of you to make even more use of these treasures in your pastoral ministry too verifying the harmony of orthodoxy in all its expressions.<sup>18</sup>

With the Catechisms students are familiarized with Christian Dogmatics, they are introduced to central themes like Law and Gospel, Word and Sacrament, Life and Teaching of the Church in this world, Prayer etc. They are on their way to becoming Christian Theologians, who view and understand and articulate their experience from God's perspective and in his light.

## **8. The Augsburg Confession and its Apology [CA/AC]**

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students go on to study the CA and its Apology. The different setting of this confession from the Catechisms is obvious. Whereas the latter were composed to instruct common folk, the previous was addressed to emperor Charles the V and other dignitaries in the European lands. Whereas the Catechisms take up central Christian texts from the customary Liturgical worship life of the Church, the Confession of Augsburg is a scholarly text aiming at legitimizing the faith, worship practice and doctrine of Evangelicals/Lutherans as orthodox and in line with the teaching of the one holy Christian Church based solely on Holy Scripture as was venerable tradition of the Fathers since the Early

<sup>18</sup> The Ten Commandments [Word of God LSB 581]; The Nicene Creed [Trinitarian Faith, LSB 505; 948; 954]; The Our Father [Prayer LSB 766]; Holy Baptism [LSB 406]; Confession and Absolution [LSB 607]; The Lord's Supper [LSB 617; 627; 960]; Other themes of Christian Faith and Life: Incarnation [LSB 358] Justification [LSB 556; 938]; The Church [LSB 656f]; Sanctification [LSB 768]; Mission [LSB 823f]. Therefore in a sense "homology may be seen as best expressed in the Te Deum laudamus, regarded not only as hymn of praise, but also as a confession of faith." [Arand 1990:232]

Church. This is not a vain endeavour, but part and parcel of the Christian responsibility to “speak of God’s decrees before kings...” [cf. Ps.119,46 and Kolb 2000:31]. This confession creates “a community in harmony, a people called to be one by the Word of God. Such a community is based on a common understanding of the truth of God’s Word and a common understanding of how God’s word is to be applied in specific situations and on specific issues.” [Kolb 1991:17f]

Although the history and context of the BoC is an important issue learnt by the students, they do learn the text of this confession by heart also [at least the first 21 articles], because it too is not just part of a venerable historical tradition, which is no longer valid, but rather still authentically and authoritatively articulates and verbalizes the pure doctrine of the one true Christian Church. Learning the English translation of both the Latin and German original, the students once again are moving ahead in becoming theologically articulate. Keywords and catch-phrases like “original sin”, “justification by faith”; “office of the ministry”; “proper call” become part and parcel of their vocabulary and mindset. Obviously this would be obsolete if the text of the confession was no longer considered valid and binding and viewed merely as a past historical perspective without any present relevance. At the LTS however we understand the CA and the entire BoC as the authoritative key for an appropriate and communal understanding of the Holy Scriptures in Old and New Testament. It is the valid introduction into the Bible, because it centres all attention and expectations on this normative source document, whose faithful, truthful and authoritative exposition it is. [cf. Klän 2005: 331f]

As with the Catechisms, students learn that there is method and meaning in the structure of theological language and texts, especially in these principal writings of the Lutheran Fathers from Reformation times. The

different styles of Luther and Melanchthon become clear as they get to know the one as a soft-spoken scholar and the other as more outspoken, perhaps more down to earth, but no less scholarly.<sup>19</sup> Students further are encouraged to recognise the basic system and logic ruling the arrangement of paragraphs, articles and sections. Being made attentive they recognise it more and more readily. They get to understand the difference in doctrinal and practical issues, gain insight into the contextual issues of that time and the lasting value of these theological elaborations. Here too it's not just empty words, but rather the pure teaching, preaching and confession of scriptural truths revealed to the congregation of Saints in Law and Gospel, in the distinction of the two kingdoms, differentiation of Justification and Sanctification etc.

The CA assists Lutherans to recognise that they are not a revolutionary sect, but that they rather stand in the venerable tradition of the apostolic catholic Christian Church from the earliest beginnings clinging to and being carried by God's Word alone throughout the Ages even against political and ecclesial opposition and in severe persecution by these enemies of the Church. They learn to practise the precise articulation of the true theological position based on scriptural foundations as exemplary citations from the Old and New Testament together with further excerpts from the blessed Fathers prove. However they are also taught to reject and condemn the wrong teachings, heresies and idolatries, which falsify the pure gospel and mislead, corrupt and ultimately condemn those adhering to them.<sup>20</sup> Again this has contemporary relevance as many are

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<sup>19</sup> And it is clearly evident, that the reformation is not Luther's, nor Melanchthon's, but rather belongs into the broader picture of the Lord of all! The triune God is in control and he provides those men he wants to do his work of promoting Christ and his salvation amongst all nations, where and when he wants it done by the power of his Holy Spirit.

<sup>20</sup> The clear missionary witness of the Lutherans is strengthened and optimized by this two edged sword – putting the pure doctrine onto a pedestal and letting its light shine clearly into the darkness, but also contradicting all false teaching vehemently and with the sole purpose of overcoming the darkness, evil and sinful nature with the shining truth of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

today trying to compel Lutherans to understand the historic rejections and condemnations of certain heresies and false practices as no longer applicable, because they don't reflect the true position of present churches etc. Obviously this significantly affects our confessional stance – especially if we think of “Leuenberg” or the “Joint Declaration on Justification.” At the LTS we don't teach our students to fight against windmills like Don Quichotte, [*Pappkameraden*] but rather against genuine enemies and dangers. Therefore these issues are of vital consequence and bearing. However let's reiterate: The “first and chief function of confessing” [Arand 1990:226] remains to unify those confessing as “Confessing unites!”

The CA is suitable to serve as a basic introduction into early reformation history, but it also assists to familiarize the students with the history and theology of the early and medieval Church. The good, the bad and the ugly from Church History comes to light – firstly to encourage and uplift the orthodox way of doing things, but also in putting off the detrimental and misleading in Church practice. Lutherans don't jump straight back into the New Testament temple, but rather recognise the value of Church History, which explains a lot who and where and why we are today, what we are. The ecumenical character of this confession, going back to Asian and African roots just as easily as to the European ones is fascinating – and not only at an African conference like ours. This confession is not a sectarian truth, but rather the ecumenical one for all people from all nations.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Bishop Tswaedi rightly points out: “It is true that the Augsburg Confession originates from Germany, but it came to far away countries as to southern Africa ... It did not start with the Augsburg Confession that the Church in Africa took the stand to confess. The early Church was helped by Africans who understood the Gospel like Tertullian, Clemens of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine to oppose Gnosticism and Manichaeism. Those men did not accept any boundaries between their doctrine and that of Europe. They did not know any boundaries such as oceans, seas, rivers, mountains, colors of the skin, and of languages. The boundary they accepted was the one between darkness and light, truth and error that followed the Church in Europe or Africa. Therefore the Lutheran

The fact that the CA is rejected by the authorities and the AC is required to address the false picture painted by the prejudiced Confutation, illustrates that the truth is not always on the winning side, but is very often suffering rejection, persecution and the cross in this world – although it is never to be vanquished and will finally overcome. Thanks to God’s promise! Students learn that the Church has always faced contradiction, opposition from outside and even inner strife. Trouble in the Church – false doctrine and misleading practises are not desirable, but plague the Church as a rule. These negativities are not to discourage them, once they face them in their own parishes, ministries and Churches.<sup>22</sup>

## 9. The Smalcald Articles [SA]

The Smalcald Articles are part of the theological main course at our Seminary. They grant the opportunity to learn the History of the Reformation already progressed to some kind of stability and formality in structure and purpose. The theological struggle between the ecclesial opposites comes into focus. Here the Evangelicals are no longer alone with the Emperor, but rather are called to face up to the Pope, whom Melanchthon – not Luther – justifiably calls the anti-Christ in the Treatise [Kolb 2000:337,41], because he has usurped Christ’s throne, honour and glory – trying to make him superfluous – by attacking the first and basic article by which the Church stands and falls through the Mass and its dragon tail producing “many noxious maggots and the excrement of various idolatries.” [Kolb 2000:303,11] This battle is to be carried out not

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Church in Africa, also among the Batswana, confesses the Augsburg Confession, it knows that it confesses the truth coming out of Scripture, and it will continue to do so, also tomorrow.

<sup>22</sup> It is not new – and the recipe of the Reformers still works wonders today: Back to the original and authentic sources – the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament – and yes, these do miracles and wonders. The practice of serious theology has the promise of bringing forth good fruit, because God’s word creates ex nihilo. The Evangelicals never gave up the hope, that God’s word and Luther’s teaching based on this pure word of God has the power to overcome all opposition and create common ground in faith, love and hope. That’s encouraging in the message of the BoC too!

at an imperial diet under the supervision of the emperor like in Augsburg, but rather at a free ecclesial council in Mantua and therefore not under the control of the Pope, who wants to be judge even though he is party all along. Luther never tires of rubbing in this inconsistency. [Kolb 2000:297,1ff]

In this very evangelical confession, Luther teaches Seminarians a lot of good. Allow me to highlight only a few specialities.

9.1 Ecumenical dialogue: Although Luther is not at all convinced of a positive outcome of even a free Christian council, he still agrees to give his part. His argument is: “I wanted to do this so that those who live and remain after me will have my testimony and confession to present, in addition to the confession that I have already published.” [Kolb 2000:298,3] A truthful confession is required of Christians, because God wants everybody to come to the knowledge of truth [cf. 1.Tim.2, 4] and we need to give account of the hope that is in us before everyone demanding it from us [cf. 1.Pt. 3, 15], but also because God can do, what he wants and his word will always achieve his purpose. With this confidence the Reformers engage in theological discourse, argument and polemics – always in the hope that God will overcome the disbelief and false teachings of those opposing him and his word.<sup>23</sup>

This faith in God’s effective word promotes faithful pastors to engage in theological dispute hopeful that he will resolve the quarrel through his victorious truth.

9.2 Pyramid of truths: Luther here gives a helpful structure with emphasizing the basis in those fundamental articles commonly held,

<sup>23</sup> Not blind to the desperate situation due to ecclesial neglect, not deaf to the many threats and lies from the opposition, not trusting in their own ability to change things to the better, but rather trusting in God and doing what is right in his sight. He can do, what he wants. That is why Luther also often starts praying directly to God himself, although he is writing the introduction to the Smalcald Articles and explaining why he favours a general council – not for his own sake or that of the evangelicals, but for the people and all the land. [cf. Kolb 2000:299f]

secondly addressing articles in dispute and thirdly pointing out those articles which are open to discussion. There are basic and fundamental truths like the faith in the triune God, the incarnation and the return of Christ to Judge the living and the dead. There is an agreement in these doctrines. [Part I] Then comes that article, which is in dispute like the article of Justification. [Part II] In this central matter there can be no movement, because if this falls, is altered or no longer holds, then everything in the Church falls. That is why there can be no negotiating leeway in these matters. This article determines and decides many others in that those are contrary to the first and main Article of faith – namely “Justification of sinners by faith through grace” e.g. Mass, Purgatory, Monasteries and Schools etc. Other articles may be discussed among learned people and can be seen this or that way. [Part III] However these articles all stand together and none are just irrelevant.

9.3 The Holy Spirit works only through the external means of word and sacrament – all else is sinful enthusiasm [*geistlose Schwärmerei*].

## 10. The Formula of Concord [Ep/SD]

Timothy Wengert has written a commendable book about the FC. It carries the provocative title: “*A Formula for parish practice. Using the Formula of Concord in Congregations.*” Now there you go! That’s wonderful. Again Lutheran students of theology can learn that what they are studying in the BoC is relevant and teaches them something worthwhile, because it will help them in their congregations. Often the FC is misunderstood as being the epitome of lifeless dogmatics. Nothing could be further from the truth. Notger Slenczka underlines that the entire Formula of Concord is extremely sensitive about the gospel not being just another doctrine, but rather *the very* doctrine, which liberates the afflicted from circulating in himself by anchoring him outside in Christ, the

comforter. He goes on to stress that the doctrinal confession is not an abstract construction, but rather very practically serves the exegesis of scripture and its proclamation and that it does this in a specific pastoral and soul-caring [*see/sorgerlich*] context. [cf. Klän 2005:333]

Here we are now in the middle of Lutheran heartland. These are the issues Lutherans worry about. The previous things were mainly straightforward. Sort of: It's us and them. The CA: We are the true Church as our teaching is original and traditional in one. The Catechisms: God has commanded, given, promised and still provides. The SA: The pope has lost it – his Mass, wrong idea about satisfactions, indulgences, monasteries and brotherhoods is just off the right mark and truthful track. No argument – basic, simple! But here in the FC it becomes somewhat tricky. The confessional hardliners like Flacius go extreme and that's already overboard. The diplomatic conservatives like Melanchton try to hold, what they can and threaten to lose all. New faces come along, good theologians – a new generation – and they manage to get the Lutheran act together. Concordia is achieved through dedicated and meticulous theological toil and exertion and a lot of hard cash [Concordia is expensive – even financially]. Thanks to God, who prevented the Lutheran reformation from just passing away even before it was a century old! Here superb craftsmanship built a lasting and enduring flagship of orthodox teaching and practice – under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to the honour of Christ and by the will of the Father. The lesson to learn: theological expertise is not just a luxury, but a necessity of the Church to survive, be sustainable and prosper – even in Africa.

In all the boring questions and hard-fought conflicts preceding the FC its formulators asked, what is pastorally and theologically relevant in these difficult and complicated issues. [Klän 2005:333] They were striving for

solutions, which were biblically solid, but also appropriate, helpful and comforting, because they knew of the dire threat of continual disunity and theological chaos if they did not come up with suitable formulations missing the point and mixing things up more than providing clarity and distinctive answers. As a rule the decisions are always against the extreme options on both the right and the left, rather falling back on the common and middle ground, where the confessors are most confident of the strong position of evangelical faith.<sup>24</sup>

## 11. Conclusion

I have tried to argue for the use of the BoC in the pastoral training of Lutheran Pastors in Africa. The Lutheran Church will only continue to be vibrant, sustainable and in existence in Africa where the BoC will be known and adhered to in its message, confession and witness by pastors and congregations.<sup>25</sup>

May God grant that we, who are entrusted with the training of Lutheran Pastors in Africa, do it in such a way that together we will gladly continue to live and finally die held by God's word and Luther's doctrine!

*Nkosi Jesu Christu sikelele iAfrica!*

<sup>24</sup> Robert Kolb sums up the Concordianist movement's recipe for success, which stemmed "in part from the political support it received from princes, to be sure. However, its success as a confession of faith arises from its author's concern for a confession that was true to Scripture and which spoke to the laity with answers for the doctrinal problems besetting them in the midst of controversy. Their dedication to the goal of creating harmony based upon the Scriptures, as Luther had taught its message to his followers, produced the Formula of Concord." [1978:87] This hope is expressed by Bishop Tswaedi in his preface to the new edition of the Augsburg Confession in Setswana. He writes that it "will be helpful, and it will make a great difference if it does not end in the hands of pastors, but if it will be known, and also used by all members of the congregations. The confessions can be used and applied in whatever is undertaken in the Church. Accordingly it should not be applied by pastors alone to stand for the truth, but also to be a gift to all congregations and believers." [2003]

<sup>25</sup> "It is the overall view of the BoC, that the truth which the Lutheran Church has acknowledged, and accepted, should be passed over to the gentiles and people who have not heard of the Gospel in all its beauty and sweetness, and to acknowledge that no peace can be attained under the law. To confess urges us to do missionary work." [Tswaedi 2003 cf. Rosin 1978:94]

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