

Equipping for the Office of the Church

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1. Insights from the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions

1.1 Biblical impressions

If we look at the Bible, we quickly realize that there are very different people whom the triune God calls into the ministry of preaching the Word and into leadership positions. There is Moses, of whom we know that he was “slow of speech and of tongue”.¹ We meet people like Jeremiah, who says of himself “I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.”² These are probably not necessarily the people we would have encouraged to receive theological training. On the other hand, there are - admittedly more rarely - also persons like Isaiah, who - after a liturgical preparation - can say quite courageously: “Here I am! Send me.”³

It is obvious that none of those mentioned has received formal theological training in a modern sense. However, it is reasonable to assume that individuals whom God has called into His service have received a comparatively good education elsewhere. This applies to Moses at the court of Pharaoh.⁴ And this might also be true of Isaiah, who, according to all we know, belonged to the “educated upper class”.⁵ In any case, it applies to Paul, who saw himself as a student of Gamaliel. With this he went through what in those days would have been the closest equivalent of studying theology today. But he’s an exceptional case.

In New Testament times the picture obviously does not change significantly. Fishermen and tax collectors were not necessarily the educated elite to whom one would have entrusted the important task of proclaiming the Word of God. The “training” of the apostles obviously corresponded to the way rabbis taught their students in Jesus’ time.⁶

¹ Ex 4:10 (ESV).

² Jer 1:6 (ESV).

³ Is 6:8 (ESV).

⁴ Cf. Ex 2:10.

⁵ Jan Kreuch, “Art. Jesaja / Protojesajabuch”, <https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/stichwort/22428/> (27.1.2020), (my translation).

⁶ See Eduard Lohse, “Art. ῥαββί, ῥαββουί” in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Vol. VI*, Gerhard Friedrich (ed.) (Stuttgart 1959), p. 962–966, p. 965 (my translation).

In the way of following Jesus, the disciples listened to his words, they perceived his miracles and signs and had the opportunity to ask questions and talk to him again and again. In addition, they themselves were sent out for practical “training on the job”.⁷ This life together is then also the condition for the election of the apostle Matthias after the death of Judas Iscariot.⁸

The following requirements applied to deacons, who apparently also took on preaching tasks:⁹ Those should be “men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom”.¹⁰ Only the latter aspect (wisdom) is something that may be acquired through training. The other two requirements are mere character traits or spiritual gifts.

The same applies to the catalogue of virtues for the bishops according to 1 Tim 3:

“Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.”¹¹

Of all the conditions mentioned, only being “able to teach” could be understood as a study goal of an academic theological education. Everything else are rather character traits and as such then ultimately also unavailable gifts of God.

⁷ Cf. Lk 10:1–17.

⁸ Cf. Acts 1:21–22.

⁹ Cf. Acts 4:5.

¹⁰ Acts 6:3 (ESV).

¹¹ 1 Tim 3:2–7 (ESV).

But it can also be seen from the Epistles to Timothy that of course there has also been a learning process from the beginning, with which church leaders have been trained directly or indirectly for their task, and in which the Holy Scriptures have been at the center.¹²

Without having comprehensively presented the biblical record here, it is nevertheless evident that the qualification of a minister goes beyond the purely academic, intellectual skills. Questions of attitude, faith and example in life are at least as important. At the same time, it becomes manifest that in the end it is God himself who calls people into his service and then also enables them to do so.

1.2 Reflections from the Lutheran Confessions

If we now jump into the beginning of the Reformation period, we find by no means a well-ordered training system for the new generation of pastoral workers, but rather catastrophic conditions of education. Luther gives a devastating testimony to preachers in his preface to the Small Catechism:

“The ordinary person, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about the Christian faith, and unfortunately many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers.”¹³

And indeed, one cannot speak of a general academic education during the dusk of the Reformation period. Marcel Niden explains:

“Academic studies were nowhere mandatory. Anyone who desired higher consecration reported to the responsible bishop. Although canon law regulations made it inculcated in him the duty to examine the moral integrity of the candidates, they remained mostly

¹² Cf. 2 Tim 3:14–15.

¹³ Martin Luther, “Der Kleine Katechismus” in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche. Vollständige Neuedition*, Irene Dingel (ed.), (Göttingen/Bristol 2014) [=BSELK], p. 852–910, 852:11–14, quoted after *The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (eds.), (Minneapolis 2000), p. 347.

under-determined with regard to the prerequisites for intellectual admission or, when they became concrete, rather only made low intellectual demands that could be acquired without attending a lower, let alone a higher school".¹⁴

"According to the relatively low requirements, many of the late medieval clergy had acquired their education at the municipal Latin schools or through an 'apprenticeship' with an active pastor whom they accompanied for a while."¹⁵

An academic education seems to have been the way forward only for the ambitious clergy.¹⁶

The lack of teaching competence, which Luther complained about, weighed so heavily not least because the Reformers called the office of the church a "ministry of teaching the gospel".¹⁷ And the church is defined as the place where, next to the right administration of the sacraments, "the gospel is taught purely".¹⁸

Accordingly, CA XXVIII focusses the tasks of a bishop - and we could certainly say a pastor in general - on preaching and teaching:

"The same power of the keys of the bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching God's Word and by administering the sacraments to many persons or to individuals, depending on one's calling. Not bodily but eternal things and benefits are given in this way, such as eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life."¹⁹

There is no doubt that the task of teaching the Word of God was given special emphasis by the Lutheran Reformation. On the other hand, it would also be a mistake to assume that training and expectations of pastors were limited to this. A passage from Article X of the Formula of Concord,

¹⁴ Marcel Nieden, *Die Erfindung des Theologen. Wittenberger Anweisungen zum Theologiestudium im Zeitalter von Reformation und Konfessionalisierung, Spätmittelalter und Reformation. Neue Reihe 28*, (Tübingen 2006), p. 23 (my translation).

¹⁵ Nieden, *Erfindung*, p. 24 (my translation).

¹⁶ Cf. Nieden, *Erfindung*, p. 24.

¹⁷ CA V, in *BSELK*, p. 101:2–9, 101:2 (quoted after *Book of Concord*, p. 41).

¹⁸ CA VII, in *BSELK*, p. 103:4–11, 103:6 (quoted after *Book of Concord*, p. 43).

¹⁹ CA XXVIII, in *BSELK*, p. 186–220, 189:25–30 (quoted after *Book of Concord*, p. 92).

which deals with Ecclesiastical Practices, makes it clear that the reformers certainly also had an eye on the fact that other factors can also belong to good church practice:

“Therefore, we believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every time and place has the right, power, and authority to change, reduce, or expand such practices according to circumstances in an orderly and appropriate manner, without frivolity or offense, as seems most useful, beneficial, and best for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the building up of the church.”²⁰

Here it becomes clear that in order to “build up the church” humanly ordered structures - and here I apply this to education: - human competencies also may be necessary.

Although at the Wittenberg Faculty of Theology a focus was put on the examination of the biblical texts,²¹ it nevertheless becomes clear in Melanchthon’s “Brevis discendae theologiae ratio” that also philosophy, rhetoric and other subjects which are not theological in the strict sense are necessary for the education of theology students and future pastors.²²

1.3 Further historical landmarks

The fact that the situation of the training of theologians did not improve abruptly during and after the Reformation period is shown by individual historical studies. For example, only for a good half of Hamburg’s sixty Protestant chaplains up to the year 1600 is it possible to prove enrolment at a university at all. And only for fourteen of them is there proof of obtaining a Master’s degree. Obviously, studies were particularly for those necessary who wanted to make a career in the church.²³

²⁰ FC.SD X, in *BSELK*, p. 1549–1561, p. 1550:24–30 (quoted after *Book of Concord*, p. 637).

²¹ See Nieden, *Erfindung*, p. 53.

²² See Nieden, *Erfindung*, p. 74.

²³ See Rainer Postel, “Hamburger Theologenausbildung vor und nach der Reformation” in *Bildung und Konfession. Theologenausbildung im Zeitalter der Konfessionalisierung*, (*SuR.NR 27*), Herman J. Selderhuis and Markus Wriedt (eds.), (Tübingen 2006), p. 51–60, especially p. 59.

In other regions the visit of the artists' faculty seemed to have been relatively frequent. Fewer of the students subsequently also visited the theological faculty. The decision about admission to the church service was finally made by territorial committees - which in part have not been very uplifting, as Frank Kleinhagenbrock states:²⁴

"Before entering the church service [...] every candidate and applicant was examined by sample sermons and interviews by court preachers and council members: although a university visit, even academic examinations, could have preceded it, the examiners [...] were sometimes horrified by the results of their interviews".²⁵

Altogether the intellectual requirement profile for future clergymen can be summarized with Kleinhagenbrock as follows:

"The stock of knowledge that was sufficient for the existence of a territorial examination and for the exercise of the parish office, in particular a sufficient knowledge of the Scriptures, the awareness of the writings of Luther and the confessional texts, could certainly have been deepened at the Faculty of Theology, but it was by no means necessary in order to exist in a rural parish".²⁶

It is interesting, however, that when there were special confessional challenges, there were also special requirements for applicants for a pastoral position. Once again Kleinhagenbrock with an example:

"Since the parish 'bordered on the papacy', i.e. was almost exclusively surrounded by Catholic parishes of the High Monastery of Würzburg and the German Order, it was necessary to send there a *respectable [ansehnliche]* and *experienced [geübte]* person. He

²⁴ See Frank Kleinhagenbrock, "'Ansehnliche' und 'geübte' Personen für die Seelsorge an der Grenze zum Papsttum. Lutherische Pfarrer in fränkischen Reichsgrafschaften um 1600" in: in *Bildung und Konfession. Theologenausbildung im Zeitalter der Konfessionalisierung, (Spätmittelalter und Reformation. Neue Reihe 27)*, Herman J. Selderhuis and Markus Wriedt (eds.), (Tübingen 2006), p. 131–157, especially p. 146–151.

²⁵ Kleinhagenbrock, "'Ansehnliche' und 'geübte' Personen für die Seelsorge an der Grenze zum Papsttum", p. 150 (my translation).

²⁶ Kleinhagenbrock, "'Ansehnliche' und 'geübte' Personen für die Seelsorge an der Grenze zum Papsttum", p. 151 (my translation).

was by no means allowed to be inferior - intellectually and rhetorically - to the neighboring Catholic clergymen, in order to shield the Hohenlohe subordinates from influences of other denominations".²⁷

These may only be a few examples of the fact that even after the implementation of the Reformation a comprehensive academic education was by no means a prerequisite for all pastors of a territory.

Regarding the understanding of theology Martin Luther's triad of prayer, scripture meditation and affliction as decisive educational factors for a theologian proved to be of importance in the course of the history of theology.²⁸

This triad was combined with a modification of the Aristotelian concept of habitus within the framework of Lutheran-Orthodox theology, which was to shape Lutheran theology for at least another three centuries.²⁹

Theology was now "[understood] a way, to be defined in whatever way, as 'conduct' ('habitus') and thus as a 'virtue' of understanding and will, which was not given by nature, but had to be acquired through instruction and practice".³⁰

It is important that the habitus in this case is understood by Johann Gerhard and others as a habitus θεόσδοτος. So, on the one hand with the concept of habitus the aspect of the learnability of theology is stressed, but on the other hand with the addition of the θεόσδοτος also the unavailability is captured.³¹

²⁷ Kleinhagenbrock, "'Ansehnliche' und 'geübte' Personen für die Seelsorge an der Grenze zum Papsttum", p. 152–153 (my translation).

²⁸ Martin Luther, "Vorrede zum 1. Band der Wittenberger Ausgabe (1539)", in *WA* 50,657–661.

²⁹ See Niden, *Erfindung*, p. 186–194.

³⁰ Niden, *Erfindung*, p. 187 (my translation).

³¹ See Niden, *Erfindung*, p. 193.

In addition, Balthasar Meissner, for example, modifies the concept of habitus in such a way that he establishes as conditions for its emergence “repeated instruction (‘informatio’) in the articles of faith and their constant practical application (‘exercitatio’), but excludes “natural potency” as a prerequisite.³²

We find this understanding of theology still at the end of the 19th century in the pastoral theology of C. F. W. Walther, when it says there at the beginning:

“Pastoral theology is the practical habitus of the soul given by God (θεόδοτος), obtained by certain means (acquisitus), by virtue of which a minister of the Church is enabled to carry out all the functions which are due to him as such, validly (rato) and legitimately (legitimately) for the glory of God and for the advancement of his and his listeners”.³³

And to this he then goes on to say:

“In order to attain the theological habitus in general, and thus also the pastoral theological in particular, the three articles that are part of the well-known Lutheran axiom are necessary: Oratio, meditatio, tentatio faciunt theologum”.³⁴

1.4 Summarizing thoughts

The reflections so far have shown that training for the ministry of the Church has always presented a certain challenge, that the ways to achieve its goals have been manifold, and that the expected competences have been found in different fields.

Formation to becoming a pastor can be understood as an intellectual, a personal and a spiritual task. In terms of content, training in the Lutheran churches focuses on the study of the Word

³² Niden, *Erfindung*, p. 194 (my translation).

³³ C. F. W. Walther, *Americanisch=Lutherische Pastoraltheologie*, (St. Louis, Mo. 1906), p. 1 (my translation).

³⁴ C. F. W. Walther, *Pastoraltheologie*, p. 6 (my translation).

of God (and derived from it) of the Lutheran Confessions, embedded in a practice of prayer and probation in everyday life.

The idea of habitus presupposes that constant practice is a prerequisite for the success of formation. At the same time, the aspect of human availability of the training goal is always withdrawn. In the end it is God himself who calls someone into his service.

A look at the considerations of the Formula of Concord also shows that the requirements for the church orders and thus also for the educational orders can differ according to time and place. In this context an important criterion is what serves to build up the church.

2. Training requirements for Lutheran pastors

2.1 Impulses from the ILC Seminaries World Conference in Brazil (2001)

In his presentation entitled “Lutheran Pastoral Training Today: The Confession” Werner Klän emphasized at the first World Seminaries Conference of the International Lutheran Council (ILC) in Canoas:

“Undoubtedly, God's word in the Holy Scriptures must be the foundation of our training, since it is the Church's task to proclaim God's Word. [...]

Lutheran confessional writings, as the proper interpretation of the Word of God, play an important role in the formation of this confessional identity”.³⁵

Here Klän emphasizes the character of the confessions as “historical documents”.³⁶ His intention is not to relativize these confessions, but to understand them in their historical context with their historical relations and to discover their contemporary significance.

³⁵ Werner Klän, “Lutherische Pfarrerausbildung heute: Das Bekenntnis” in *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche*, 28 (2004), p. 81–100, p. 84 (my translation).

³⁶ Klän, “Lutherische Pfarrerausbildung heute”, p. 84 (my translation). – Cf. p. 84–88.

At the same time, Klän emphasizes the orientation of the confessions to a central point:

“[...] I do not believe that there is any need for further evidence that theological education, which should form a confessional Lutheran consciousness in our future pastors, teachers and other servants of our church, must focus on the article of justification as the central structure of Lutheran theology.”³⁷

As competencies that Klän has in mind as a goal for the education of Lutheran students, he mentions the following:

- “- thorough exegetical skills,
- a basic knowledge of church history, especially the history of the Christian dogma,
- basic knowledge of the Reformation period,
- the fullest possible overview of the theology of Lutheran confessional writings,
- Hermeneutics of the Confessions in view of the Holy Scriptures as well as the theological challenges of our time,
- a voluntary but firm agreement to confessional theology as a biblically founded interpretation of faith, preferably in a continuous discourse,
- a skill in transferring the confessional position to contemporary problems,
- the effort to champion the truly ecumenical value of the Lutheran confessions and their teaching”.³⁸

The skills listed above obviously cannot be achieved without specific language skills. At the same ILC Word Seminaries Conference, Jorg Christian Salzmänn defined a “maximum requirement and a minimum requirement”.³⁹

The maximum requirement for him may be as follows:

³⁷ Klän, “Lutherische Pfarrerausbildung heute”, p. 92 (my translation).

³⁸ Klän, “Lutherische Pfarrerausbildung heute”, p. 98 (my translation).

³⁹ Jorg Christian Salzmänn, “Lutherische Pfarrerausbildung heute: Sprachanforderungen”, in *Lutherische Theologie und Kirche*, 28 (2004), p. 101–114, p. 111 (my translation).

“Such a Lutheran pastor should be able to speak in his mother tongue to people with the same mother tongue. To have a feeling and perception for translation processes, he should at least be able to communicate fluently in a foreign language. He should have a thorough mastery of the original biblical languages in such a way that he is able to make his own translations and check foreign translations. He should be well trained in the interpretation of texts, especially the biblical texts in the original language.

At the same time, a proper knowledge of Latin would be desirable and, moreover, especially for a Lutheran, German, in order to have access to the most important sources for the development of the Christian faith and the Lutheran Church. Finally, English would have to be added as the modern language of international communication, if this is not already one of the two modern languages that our pastor, who has the best language training, masters. Incidentally, English is also of outstanding importance for many people because there are no commentaries, textbooks or specialist literature in their own language”.⁴⁰

As the target is indeed recognizably set high here, Salzmann also mentions some ways of adapting these requirements to the given framework conditions. One example would be to reduce the knowledge of Greek to Biblical Greek (instead of learning Classical Greek). Another idea would be, in exceptional cases, to limit the learning to accessing knowledge of one biblical language, preferably the one that is more foreign to one’s own tongue. And finally, Salzmann suggests that not every pastor in a church must have the same language skills, but rather “especially gifted theology students [...] could become language experts” for their churches.⁴¹

2.2 Impulses from Detlef Lehmann

Already about another 20 years earlier Detlef Lehmann, a former professor of Practical Theology at Lutherische Theologische Hochschule in Oberursel, had already compiled some basic

⁴⁰ Salzmann, “Lutherische Pfarrerausbildung heute”, p. 111–112 (my translation).

⁴¹ Salzmann, “Lutherische Pfarrerausbildung heute”, p. 113 (my translation).

principles for the training of theologians, which - even forty years after their publication - seem to me to be of lasting importance.

In a first train of thought he describes the relationship between “church and world”:⁴²

“The pastor of tomorrow, like the pastor of today, will have to know our world. He must be familiar with the life and thought of our world. [...]

But he will not be allowed to stop at the questions and problems of the respective time. [...]

The pastor of tomorrow must know the world without losing himself to it. He will know it and the people in it if he lives as an attentive fellow. This does not require any special additional studies. He must learn - and theology should teach him to do so - to read the Bible with the eyes of the world and the world with the eyes of the Bible. This means: In the Bible not only the past is to be found, but our present world is reflected in its deepest essence in it and the person, how and who he is in truth. [...]

This is the real challenge of our secularized world to the Church: that she does not lose herself to the world, but rather focuses on what is her own and brings it to light”.⁴³

In a second train of thought he stresses the “primacy of Holy Scripture over all ecclesial tradition”,⁴⁴ before in a third step he turns his attention to the area of tension between “science and piety”.⁴⁵ In this context he states:

“A theology that is committed to science alone remains blind if it is not at the same time rooted in the faith of the Church. [...]

Therefore, the study of theology must be integrated into the life of the believing church and congregation. Study without prayer and worship will - instead of knowing God in

⁴² Detlef Lehmann, *Was heißt Theologie studieren?*, (*Oberurseler Hefte* 15), (Oberursel 1982), p. 5–7 (my translation).

⁴³ Lehmann, *Theologie studieren*, p. 6–7 (my translation).

⁴⁴ Lehmann, *Theologie studieren*, p. 7–10 (my translation).

⁴⁵ Lehmann, *Theologie studieren*, p. 10 (my translation).

depth - easily become deluded by God, question the witness of the Holy Scriptures, and make its own image of God".⁴⁶

At the same time Lehmann warns against simply playing theological science and piety off against each other:

"Both need each other. For it is and should be the task of theology to protect the faith and piety of the church and congregation from going astray. It should be, as it was said in the word quoted above, the 'compass and conscience' of the church - just as it was in the Reformation theology of its time".⁴⁷

After reflections on the pastoral relevance of the training⁴⁸ (e.g. through internships) and following to thoughts on "freedom and commitment",⁴⁹ which in some respects are in the line of what has been elaborated above in referring to the thoughts of Werner Klän, Lehmann finally concludes his thoughts with reflections on "piecework and completion".⁵⁰

Perhaps these thoughts are even more relevant today than when they were written – in our times when the various subjects and disciplines have become more and more differentiated and a wealth of information is available on the Internet, which can never be captured by an individual.

In this situation, it is worth remembering that the study of theology can never provide all the competences that would be desirable for the exercise of the parish ministry. Here is still true what Detlef Lehmann describes:

"As Christians and theologians, we will remain students throughout our lives. The study of theology is nothing else than instruction for further study. [...]"

How do I pass on the Gospel? - This basic question, especially of the so-called Practical Theology, is not learnt during the study of theology. Much has already been achieved, if

⁴⁶ Lehmann, *Theologie studieren*, p. 11 (my translation).

⁴⁷ Lehmann, *Theologie studieren*, p. 13 (my translation).

⁴⁸ See Lehmann, *Theologie studieren*, p. 13–16.

⁴⁹ See Lehmann, *Theologie studieren*, p. 16–18.

⁵⁰ See Lehmann, *Theologie studieren*, p.19–20.

alertness and awareness are alive, that in our rapidly changing world we must always be newly a learning person”.⁵¹

2.3 Impulses from a *Dies Academicus* in Oberursel in 2014

In view of the fact that in the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) (as in many other German churches) there has been a lack of young theologians for some time now and that the phenomenon of Burnout is repeatedly spreading also among pastors of the church, there had been a conference in Oberursel in fall 2014 on “Pastors in areas of tension”. This day was extremely well attended by pastors and parishioners and showed the urgency of the topic. Various speakers dealt with the issue and described their perception from different perspectives. The focus of this day was the pastoral work and less the training. Nevertheless, some impulses can be found which could also be important in the future for equipping for the ministry of the church. I first would like to pick out just a few of the ideas that have been presented back then.

Theological education should also include spaces for self-reflection: “What is my personal relationship with the church and congregation? What are my needs? Where are my limits? To what extent am I prepared to place myself fully at the service of the church?”⁵²

Furthermore, in our time, in which we also have to deal with breakdowns in various places and unfortunately often less with new beginnings, it also seems to me to be significant to acquire here, too, competencies on how to deal with failure and defeat in our pastoral activity.⁵³ And thirdly, we should ask to what extent in the theological training which leads to the parish ministry, questions of personnel support and leadership also should have their place. This competence seems to me to be essential, especially in view of the lack of full-time staff.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Lehmann, *Theologie studieren*, p. 19 (my translation).

⁵² Christoph Barnbrock, “Pfarrersein in Spannungsfeldern” in *Pfarrersein in Spannungsfeldern. Dies Academicus 2014, (Oberurseler Hefte, 54)*, Christoph Barnbrock (ed.) (Oberursel 2015), p. 13–34, p. 20 (my translation).

⁵³ See Barnbrock, “Pfarrersein in Spannungsfeldern”, p. 22–24.

⁵⁴ See Barnbrock, “Pfarrersein in Spannungsfeldern”, p. 24–26.

Among others, a young pastor's wife was asked to describe from her perspective the areas of tension that arose in her husband's work. She, who herself has studied communication psychology, notes:

"However, I increasingly find myself in the situation where my husband asks me about my studies for his work. For example, my husband works in a congregation in which there are a lot of smoldering conflicts - and conflict management was an important part of my communication psychology studies.

I am beginning to be annoyed that these topics are eating up our time together - especially when I remember how much my husband studied theology for his exams and how little he studied, for example, how to conduct conversations. And it is precisely conversation that I experience as his daily bread."⁵⁵

Here it becomes clear from the perspective of an external and yet close person that there are considerable deficits in the training for the challenges of parish work.

The questions of how work can be organized efficiently and how family and work life can be responsibly combined were also aspects that were mentioned several times at this conference. Not all these problem areas can be dealt with comprehensively in the context of training - but perhaps they also should not be completely excluded.

⁵⁵ Sibylle Heicke, "Erfahrungsberichte aus der Perspektive einer Pfarrfrau" in *Pfarrersein in Spannungsfeldern. Dies Academicus 2014, (Oberurseler Hefte, 54)*, Christoph Barnbrock (ed.) (Oberursel 2015), p. 39–44.

3. Two examples of theological training programs in confessional Lutheran churches

3.1 Theological Education and Continuing Training in the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK)

The regulations for the course of studies in Protestant Theology with the degree “Ecclesiastical Examination in the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church” describe four different phases for the training of (future) pastors:

- “- Phase 1: Academic studies”,
- “- Phase 2: Vocational induction period as vicar” [Vikar, not yet ordained],
- “- Phase 3: Vocational initiation period as a parish vicar” [Pfarrvikar, already ordained],
- “- Phase 4: On-going training”.⁵⁶

It differentiates between two different training objectives. The first phase serves the “acquisition of a pastor’s professional qualification [Berufsfähigkeit]”, the further phases serve the “professional skills [Berufsfertigkeit]”⁵⁷.

The regulations for the course of studies in SELK are based on the “General regulations for the course of studies in Protestant Theology” of the Protestant Theological Faculty Conference [Evangelisch-theologischer Fakultätentag] in 2009.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ “Studienordnung für den Studiengang Evangelische Theologie (Kirchliches Examen in der Selbständigen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche [SELK]) | StuO EvThKE (Fassung vom 08.09.2016 | Inkraftsetzung: 01.10.2016)”, https://lthh.de/images/Downloads/Ordnungen/1201_-_Studienord_KirchlEx_-_El_19.pdf (30.1.2020), § 1,1 (my translation).

⁵⁷ “Studienordnung SELK”, § 1,1 (my translation). – See this text also for the following description.

⁵⁸ “Rahmenordnung für den Studiengang Evangelische Theologie (Pfarramt / Diplom / Master Theologiae)” in *Theologische Ausbildung in der EKD. Dokumente und Texte aus der Arbeit der Gemischten Kommission für die Reform des Theologiestudiums / Fachkommission I (Pfarramt, Diplom und Magister Theologiae) 2005–2013*, Michael Beintker and Michael Wöller (eds.), (Leipzig 2014), p. 63–68. – Cf. “Rahmenordnung für die Zwischenprüfung im Studiengang »Evangelische Theologie« (Erste Theologische Prüfung / Magister Theologiae)”, in *Theologische Ausbildung in der EKD. Dokumente und Texte aus der Arbeit der Gemischten Kommission für die Reform des Theologiestudiums / Fachkommission I (Pfarramt, Diplom und Magister Theologiae) 2005–2013*, Michael Beintker and Michael Wöller (eds.), (Leipzig 2014), p. 77–88, and Rahmenordnung für die Erste Theologische Prüfung / die Prüfung zum Magister Theologiae in Evangelischer Theologie, in: *Theologische Ausbildung in der EKD. Dokumente und Texte aus der Arbeit der Gemischten*

The orientation to this framework offers several advantages. On the one hand, the SELK ensures in this way that the requirements of the European “Bologna Process” are observed.⁵⁹ On the other hand, this interlinking of the regulations guarantees that SELK students can also study Protestant Theology at German universities without major problems, which is also intended in the regulations for the course of studies.

Detlef Lehmann had described the significance of the university semesters after the beginning of studies at Lutherische Theologische Hochschule and before the final semesters in Oberursel as follows:

“For a double reason our regulations for the course of study require this: On the one hand, there are still a number of outstanding scholars and theologians who are anchored in the faith of the Church and with whom studying is meaningful and worthwhile. On the other hand, we would like to ask students to come to a clear and conscious ‘yes’ to the confession of the Lutheran Church, in direct confrontation with the current currents of theology. The direct encounter and confrontation with another theology forces students to think through their own position or that of their own church and helps them to understand and explain it even more thoroughly. [...]

Today - and especially in the ecumenical age - studying theology can mean less than ever to condemn everything outside one’s own church and denomination, but rather to recognize what is true and good in other churches and to allow oneself to be enriched by it. And it is also necessary to take a critical look at one’s own tradition and to recognize where erroneous developments in the life of the Church can be felt”.⁶⁰

Kommission für die Reform des Theologiestudiums / Fachkommission I (Pfarramt, Diplom und Magister Theologiae) 2005–2013, Michael Beintker and Michael Wöller (eds.), (Leipzig 2014), p. 89–102.

⁵⁹ Cf. Michael Beintker/Michael Wöller, “Die Arbeit der Gemischten Kommission für die Reform des Theologiestudiums / Fachkommission I von 2005 bis 2013” in *Theologische Ausbildung in der EKD. Dokumente und Texte aus der Arbeit der Gemischten Kommission für die Reform des Theologiestudiums / Fachkommission I (Pfarramt, Diplom und Magister Theologiae) 2005–2013*, Michael Beintker/Michael Wöller (eds.), (Leipzig 2014), p. 17–35, especially p. 17–23.

⁶⁰ Lehmann, *Theologie studieren*, p. 17–18.

This is why the academic program for studying theology as a member of SELK can roughly be put into three phases: the basic studies in Oberursel, which are completed with an intermediate examination; the main studies at other universities, which also include internships in parishes of SELK and diaconal services as well as exchange programs with our partner Seminaries in the USA and Brazil; and finally the final semesters at Lutherische Theologische Hochschule, which serve to critically reflect on what has been learned so far and to prepare for the final examination. All in all - depending on the previous knowledge of the Ancient languages - this results in a length of study of six to seven years.

In terms of content, the basic studies focus on learning the languages Hebrew, Greek and Latin, on biblical studies, which includes all biblical books in five courses, and on a methodological instruction for working in the main subjects of theology (Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Systematic Theology, Practical Theology).

“The main period of study serves to acquire theological knowledge and enable students to think through and evaluate theological questions independently, as well as to acquire further skills for work in their later profession. Lutheran theology is to be placed at the center of the course. Semesters at the university also give the opportunity to explore non-theological disciplines.”⁶¹

The regulations for the course of studies of SELK have a special focus on the study of the Lutheran Confessions. Lutherische Theologische Hochschule regularly offers courses on *all* confessional writings. Participation in courses on the Augsburg Confession, Luther’s Catechism or the Smalcald Articles, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession or the Formula of Concord is obligatory. In most cases, all these courses are taken by the students.

In addition to the lectures in the main theological subjects, courses in philosophy as well as in religious studies and missiology and other neighboring subjects of theology are scheduled. Students

⁶¹ “Studienordnung SELK”, § 5,2 (my translation).

can acquire their first practical experience in a liturgical training, in homiletic seminars and in a catechetical seminar.

For the period of learning vicarage and parish vicarage, the “Rules for the formation of learning and parish vicars of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK)” presents the following training objectives:

“(2) The learning vicars [Lehrvikare] and parish vicars [Pfarrvikare] are taught the knowledge required for assuming professional responsibility. (knowledge)

(3) The learning and parish vicars learn,

- to conduct themselves in their ministry and life as befits a servant of Christ,
- to apply their scientific and practical theological knowledge for the ministry of a parish priest in the different areas of church life,
- to process their experiences in critical reflection,
- to deal with their fellow human beings and also with themselves in a humane and Christian way in different everyday situations,
- to represent the position of SELK internally and externally. (skills and abilities)

(4) The learning and parish vicars should reach an inner attitude of who she

- to conduct their ministry in responsibility before the Triune God,
- do their service with loving attention to the people,
- to live from the forgiveness of God and to accept their commitment to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions conscientiously and represent this commitment in ecclesial responsibility. (attitudes)”⁶²

The vicarage lasts two and a half years. The learning vicar is assigned to an ordained pastor as a mentor and gains practical experience at his side. He also participates in four three-week courses of the Practical Theological Seminar, in which the practical experiences with a director and the other

⁶² “Ordnung für die Ausbildung von Lehrvikaren und Pfarrvikaren der Selbständigen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche (SELK) (AbO) (Letzte Beschlussfassung: 24.05.2019 | Inkraftsetzung: 01.10.2019)”, https://lthh.de/images/Downloads/Ordnungen/123_-_Ausbildungsordnung_-_El20_-.pdf (30.1.2020), § 2,2–4 (my translation). See this text also for the following description.

learning vicars are reflected upon. In addition, a ten-week school internship and a three-week missionary internship are part of the vicar's formation.

After passing the Second Theological Examination, a decision is made on the candidate's ordination and he is then sent as a parish vicar to a congregation where he works independently but remains assigned to another pastor. During this time, the parish vicars are offered in a special way the opportunity to exchange views with suitable persons about the challenges in the parish ministry and the relationship between work and private/family life.

If all goes well, the parish vicar receives after one year the qualification to lead a parish office on his own and can receive calls from that moment on. At this point, he will have completed about ten years of instruction. As a pastor, lifelong training and continuing education takes place through participation in the convents of pastors, which also serve this purpose time and again, as well as through participation in other continuing education programs, such as the courses of the SELK "Pastoralkolleg".⁶³ The SELK pastors are obliged to take part in at least one three-day professional training course over a period of five years.⁶⁴

3.2 Theological Education in The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

Of course, the way the study of theology is organized in the SELK is not the only possible one. In order to broaden the horizon, observations on the theological education in The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LC–MS) will be made here. I will limit myself to the training at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Furthermore, in view of the comparatively large variety of study programs there, I will limit myself again to the study of theology, which in the end leads to the Master of Divinity.

⁶³ Cf. <https://www.pastoralkolleg-selk.de/> (30.1.2020).

⁶⁴ See "Richtlinien über berufsbegleitende Fortbildung, Bildungsurlaub und Zusatzausbildung für Pfarrer und Pastoralreferentinnen der SELK (in der Fassung vom 26.3.2011)" in *Kirchliche Ordnungen für die Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche (SELK)*, Kirchenleitung der SELK (ed.), No. 1101, § 7,1.

The “Academic Catalog” of Concordia Seminary lists several educational goals, which I would like to briefly mention in the following:

“Theological Foundations

1. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will accept the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions as authoritative for faith and life.
2. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will appropriate the theological disciplines as frameworks for theological reflection and pastoral practice.

Personal and Spiritual Formation

3. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate a life of spiritual health, characterized by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
4. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate a life of vocational health, characterized by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
5. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate a life of relational health, characterized by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
6. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate a life of cultural health, characterized by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
7. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate a life of physical health, characterized by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
8. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate a life of emotional health, characterized by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
9. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate a life of intellectual health, characterized by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
10. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate a life of financial health, characterized by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Cultural Interpretation and Engagement

11. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will analyze and engage cultural and global realities.

Pastoral Practice and Leadership

12. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate the ability to provide Christ-centered care and counsel to people of various ages and social conditions according to their needs.

13. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate the ability to proclaim the Word for the benefit of the hearers.

14. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate the ability to oversee discipleship in a congregation as a teacher, resource and guide.

15. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate the ability to lead and facilitate the worship life of a congregation.

16. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate the ability to guide and support members of a congregation in their communal life in Christ.

17. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate the ability to prepare and lead members of a congregation to bring the Gospel to those outside the church.

18. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate the ability to guide and support members of a congregation to care for and serve those in need.

19. A graduate of the M.Div. Program will demonstrate the ability to lead a congregation in administrative practices that carry out the goals of a Christian congregation.”⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Concordia Seminary, Academic Catalog, <https://issuu.com/concordiasem/docs/academiccatalog2019-20> (30.1.2020), p. 20–21.

Significantly, the M.Div. Program requires a bachelor's degree at college level. The "Academic Catalogue" states:

„Applicants to the M.Div. Program at Concordia Seminary ordinarily must possess a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university [...]. The degree should represent a broad liberal arts background and must include courses in English composition, writing and speech. It also should include courses in the humanities, psychology, social sciences, natural sciences, foreign languages and religion.”⁶⁶

The academic curriculum - including the vicarage in the third year - is designed for four years. Language skills as well as basic knowledge of the Old Testament, New Testament and Christian doctrine must be demonstrated either by (previously) attended courses or by passing appropriate examinations.⁶⁷

In addition to the vicarage in the third year of training, the obligatory "Resident Field Education" offers a further field of practice. The "Academic Catalogue" states:

"The Resident Field Education Program consists of (1) pre-vicarage and post-vicarage congregational field education, (2) institutional field education, (3) cross-cultural field education, (4) evangelism (during vicarage experience) and (5) course-related work. Congregational field education begins with assignment by the Director of Resident Field Education to congregations in the St. Louis area. The student is placed under the supervision of the pastor of that particular congregation. The program is designed to give the student experience with the role and functions of the pastor of a congregation. During his first year of studies, the student completes the institutional and cross-cultural modules of Resident Field Education, being assigned to a specific module for a term. Each module requires approximately half of the student's field education time. The student will maintain as much Sunday contact as possible with his field education congregation.

⁶⁶ Concordia Seminary, *Academic Catalog*, p. 21.

⁶⁷ See Concordia Seminary, *Academic Catalog*, p. 21-24.

Resident Field Education normally should involve a maximum of eight hours per week for first-year students and 10 hours per week for second-year and post-vicarage students.”⁶⁸

In addition, a “Summer Internship”, “Clinical Pastoral Education” and “Missionary Formation Concentration” are opportunities to gain further experience and deepen competencies.⁶⁹

As far as contents are concerned, it is to be emphasized that apart from events in the main areas of Exegesis, Historical, Systematic and Practical Theology, a separate field is also planned for the area “Personal and Pastoral Formation”.⁷⁰

3.3 Comparative observations

When comparing the two training programs, the first thing that stands out is the different length. Even if one adds the time spent studying for a bachelor’s degree to the US model, the training period in Germany is considerably longer with about ten or more years. At the same time, it can be stated that the training via the required bachelor’s degree is broader in scope and is not necessarily restricted to the theological field.

However, the shorter training period also means that in certain areas it is not possible to deepen one’s knowledge or only as a voluntary option. For example, the “Academic Catalogue” 2019/20 does not contain any course offerings that deal with a single confessional document. The Lutheran confessional writings will be presented, among others, in an class on “The Reformation and the Lutheran Church”.⁷¹

It is also noticeable that the practical experience in the US model is more strongly integrated into the academic studies themselves. Just think, for example, of the “Resident Field Education Program”, which is intended to accompany the studies, and the vicarage, which is embedded in the

⁶⁸ Concordia Seminary, *Academic Catalog*, p. 24–25.

⁶⁹ See Concordia Seminary, *Academic Catalog*, p. 25-26.

⁷⁰ See Concordia Seminary, *Academic Catalog*, p. 28.

⁷¹ See Concordia Seminary, *Academic Catalog*, p. 137.

studies. Here, the German model makes a clearer distinction between a more fundamentally and theoretically oriented first phase of training and a more practically oriented second and third phase of education.

Also with regard to the content, it can be seen that in the USA the contemporary relevance of the courses is greater, whereas in the German system questions and connections in the academic studies are at first more fundamentally treated without immediate considerations of application in the reality of the parish.

As far as “Student Learning Outcomes” are concerned, it is striking that the area of “health” in its many dimensions plays a major role in the US educational model. Issues of leadership and guiding people in their work are also more firmly anchored in this training program.⁷²

The possibility of obtaining a different master’s degree and even a doctorate at Concordia Seminary also shows that the individual pastor is integrated into a network in which theologians have acquired expertise in various ways. The same applies to the various cross-cultural training programs that are also offered at Concordia Seminary.

4. Closing remarks

I hope I was able to make it evident in my presentation that there are many different models for training for Church service. The fact that we have reached a certain academic standard in many countries should not be hastily abandoned, but should be recognized as a value worth preserving.

However, it seems to me necessary to point out once again that purely intellectual and academic formation does not yet generate a pastor. Questions of personal formation and spiritual existence are at least as important here and should not be neglected in the educational process.

⁷² See Concordia Seminary, *Academic Catalog*, p. 20–21.

The understanding of theology as “habitus” raises not least the question how the relationship of theory and practice can be determined. It would certainly be helpful here if academic studies were not exclusively under the primacy of applicability. At the same time, however, it would also be desirable to avoid a situation in which theory and practice stand unconnected to one another.

Furthermore, it seems to me worth considering that a church functions like an organism and therefore not necessarily everyone has to be able to do everything. Where can experts take on certain tasks for which another pastor does not have the qualifications, but who may have his strengths in another area?

And finally, the fragmentary nature of all our activities - and thus also of theological education - must be kept in mind. Theological education has always been a challenge, and often pastors themselves or parishioners have had the impression that here and there a deeper education would have been necessary.

For this very reason the aspect of lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important. Not everything needs to be acquired in competencies and skills already in the academic studies. Some things result from practice and further training, which is still possible and desired even then.

However, at any time and in any place, it will always be necessary to reflect anew which competencies are desirable and necessary for pastors beyond what is absolutely indispensable, and which educational pathways can lead to the attainment of these competencies. My thoughts may have been a help in taking on this very task.

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