

Georg
Scriba

“Back to Basis”

Martin Luther’s Message in the Small
Catechism for South Africa today

Abstract

Celebrating 500 years Reformation this year, we turn “back to the basis of faith”. Besides the Bible, Martin Luther’s Small Catechism, has become the most transported and translated Lutheran book. Responding to visitations conducted among evangelical congregations, Luther published both *The German* (or *Large*) *Catechism* and the Small Catechism in 1529, later illustrated with woodcuts, for homes, churches and schools,

During the 17th, 18th and 19th Century, sailors, settlers, missionaries and pastors of some ten “Lutheran” mission societies and immigration groups brought with them their confessional writings to Southern Africa. Besides Reformed influences, Luther’s Small Catechism was soon used as instruction book for Lutheran families, schools and churches. It was translated into most of the different languages and with the Augsburg Confession became part of the basic articles of some 15 independent Lutheran churches, their federations and unions. The syllabi in mission and bible schools, theological training institutions and seminaries for Lutheran evangelists, teachers and pastors included the catechism.

We are asking presently, whether the catechism can still be relevant for present-day learners, students and Christians after 500 years. The strong influences of the scientific age, of the exegetical-critical Bible interpretation, of waning ecumenical co-operation, the explosion of social media, the challenges of injustices experienced in the past, the present challenges of a democratic society, are challenging us to ask whether the catechism can still lead us “back to the basis of faith” and be contextualized for our time.

Luther’s Catechism was formulated as an experiential theology, expressing God’s love and acceptance, in the language of the heart. This article ar-

gues that Luther’s Small Catechism can bring that message to our homes, congregations and in ecumenical encounters, even in a secular world and society of today.

Introduction

The year 2017 marks the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. The anniversary is not only celebrated by Lutherans, but also by many members of the so-called main-line churches, including the Roman Catholic Church. For this reason Pope Francis (RCC) and Bishop Mounib Younan (President of LWF) signed the “*Joint Statement of Commemorating the Reformation*” in the Lund Cathedral, Sweden on 31 October 2016. This is a clear sign that the churches are trying to overcome past conflicts which separated the churches for some 500 years and move toward closer communion.

It was in this spirit that the theme chosen this year for the St Joseph’s Theological Institute Fourth Academic Conference, held 20 April 2017–22 April 2017, was “*Reform and renewal: from conflict to communion then and now – On the 500th anniversary of the Reformation*”. This theme may be seen as a follow-up to the combined service at the (then) School of Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in November 1999 in commemoration of the combined “*Joint Declaration on Justification*” which was celebrated within the Cluster of theological institutions in and around Pietermaritzburg by St Joseph’s (SJT1) and the then Lutheran House of Studies (Luthos).

The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation is being celebrated especially by Evangelical Lutherans, of whom some 74 million members worldwide are united in 145 churches of the LWF (Lutheran World Federation) and some 3 million Lutherans in churches not affiliated to the LWF. The theme of the 12th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Windhoek/Namibia from 10–16th May 2017, was: “*Liberated by God’s Grace,*” with three sub-themes (in which we can discover the three articles of faith, believing in God’s creation, the Lord’s salvation, the Spirit’s communion): “*Creation – Not for Sale; Salvation – Not for Sale; Human Beings – Not for Sale*“. The words “not for sale” remind us of Martin Luther’s Ninety-five Theses against the sale of indulgences, which he reportedly nailed to the Castle Church door at Wittenberg on 31st October 1517 and which is said to have marked the beginning of the Reformation.

Some of the theses are still as true for us today, in our so different situation, as 500 years ago, e. g.:

1. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, said, “Repent” [Matt. 4:17], he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.
43. Christians are to be taught that to give to the poor or to lend to the needy is a better work than the purchase of indulgences.
62. The true treasure of the Church is the most holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God.
94. Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their head, through penalties, death, and hell.
95. And thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace [Acts 14:22].

Lecturing the History of Reformation at the UKZN, I assisted students by summarizing Luther’s life and major works on one page, which some readers might find helpful (Appendix: Martin Luther on One Page. Here in German translation: Luthers Leben und Theologie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung).

“*Back to Basis*”¹, which I chose as part of the heading, can be understood as the thrust of the whole movement of the Reformation. It is the call of Martin Luther (1483–1546), among others, to delve back to the original (Greek and Hebrew) sources when translating the Bible into German (NT 1522 and the whole Bible by 1534). But it is also a call to revert back to the core contents of Scripture, the basis, which Jesus described as “the foundation on the rock” (Matthew 7:24–27).

1. The Historical Background of the development of Luther’s Small Catechism (SC)

Leading Christians “*Back to the Basis of Faith*” is also the attempt of Luther’s Small Catechism (SC) of 1529. The SC has been influential as a learn booklet, as devotional book in the homes, as syllabus for religious and confirma-

¹ The term “Back to Basis” is chosen above the term “Back to Basics”, which is often used as a political slogan in South African political circles (see Internet), as well as by English PM John Major, for his conservative party in the 1990s.

tion instruction and as one of the confessional writings and foundation formulations of the emerging Lutheran church, throughout the past 500 years, and even today.

Walther von Loewenich, a renowned theologian on Martin Luther, maintained that Luther’s main influence, besides the translation of the Bible in the German vernacular, was the publication of his Small Catechism in 1529. “*Next to his translation of the Bible, the Catechism is perhaps Luther’s greatest accomplishment.*” (Loewenich 1986: 312). Luther himself acknowledged that this was really his heart-piece, alongside the treatise on *The Bondage of the Will*.

“The Small Catechism is one of the greatest masterpieces of religious literature, equally distinguished for its brevity and its precision, its polished formulation and depth of content. It is not only a book to be memorized, but also to be prayed. Generations have learned from it and been edified by it.” (Loewenich 1986: 311)

Luther wanted to reform the existing church, not create a new church. But after his excommunication in 1520 and being outlawed after the Diet of Worms a year later, a break with his mother-church seemed unavoidable. Although he did not want a new church to be called after himself, a sack of maggots (“*Madensack*”), yet the original negative connotation of his opponents stuck and the church was called “Lutheran”. Within the pro-Luther states and city states and some individual cities and congregations there was a determination for such reform. In his address “*To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*”, Luther, in 1520, had emphasized the priesthood of all believers [or of all baptized] which gave them the right to elect their own pastors and be responsible for the furtherance of the Christian message in their respective area of influence. For this they would be responsible to erect schools for boys and girls. And in 1523 Luther placed the responsibility of interpreting Scripture in the hands of the congregation with his address, “*That a Christian Assembly (or Congregation) has the right and power to judge all teaching*”. A country-wide organizational structure above the congregation was necessary to form a unified order of worship. With the disbanding of cloisters and collegiate churches and the appointment of pastors, financial questions, e. g. payment of pastors’ salaries, had to be addressed by a combined church leadership, as the masses were unable to govern themselves.

After the Imperial Diet of Speyer in 1526, the territorial princes wished to introduce the Reformation in their own regions. And so, Luther and his co-workers requested them to reorganize the church. “Emergency bishops” (later: “superintendents”) were to be introduced as an interim measure to

carry out the reform, as Luther expressed himself in 1528, in his foreword to Melancthon's "*Instructions for the visitors of parish pastors in Electoral Saxony*". Although the princes and rulers were not to teach and to rule in spiritual affairs, they had the supervision of the church in their territories. Luther understood each territory as being confessionally unified, which later led to the principle, as stated in the Peace of Augsburg of 1555: „*Cuius regio, eius religio*” – „The religion of the prince is the religion of the land.“

In 1525 Luther and some of his colleagues, with approval of John the elector, conducted visitations, region by region, by both theologians and jurists, and in some instances by Luther himself. The visitors found that congregations and pastors were often in a spiritual abyss. Some pastors could not even recite the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, nor preach the basic message in their sermons. Some who decided to remain in their old faith were dismissed, but others had to be provided for (Loewenich 1986: 310).

Philipp Melancthon (1497–1560) provided directives in electoral Saxony in his "*Instructions for the visitors of parish pastors*", to preach the law as well as the faith of the gospel. Superintendents were inducted, who had to regulate general church matters, such as conducting marriages. The university at Wittenberg, with its slogan of teaching the "*theology of the cross*", was also being reformed e.g. concerning the conferral of degrees. The philosophical and the theological faculties were expanded, the latter to consist of three regular professors and one extraordinary professor. After 1535, prior to ordination, all candidates for the ministry were examined at a faculty hearing and had to lay down an oath of allegiance to the *Augsburg Confession* and to the three ecumenical creeds (Loewenich 1986: 310).

The experiences of the visitation had shown Luther and his colleagues the necessity of clear and explicit forms of teaching and a catechetical textbook. Luther requested that his colleagues Justus Jonas (1493–1555) and Johannes Agricola (1494–1566) prepare such, but he then sat down and wrote this himself, the Small and the German or Large Catechisms.

In the Introduction to the book edition of the SC, Martin Luther wrote:

“The deplorable, wretched deprivation that I recently encountered while I was a visitor has constrained and compelled me to prepare this catechism, or Christian instruction, in such a brief, plain, and simple version. Dear God, what misery I beheld! The ordinary person, especially in the villages, knows absolutely nothing about the Christian faith, and unfortunately many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers. Yet supposedly they all bear the name Christian, are baptized, and receive the holy sacrament, even though they do not know the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Ten Commandments! ...

In the first place, the preacher should above all take care to avoid changes or variations in the text and version of the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, the sacraments, etc., but instead adopt a single version, stick with it, and always use the same one year after year. ...

In the second place, once the people have learned the text well, then teach them to understand it, too, so that they know what it means. ...

In the third place, after you have taught the people a short catechism like this one, then take up a longer catechism, and impart to them a richer and fuller understanding. Using such a catechism, explain each individual commandment, petition, or part with its various works, benefits, and blessings, harm and danger, as you find treated at length in so many booklets. In particular, put the greatest stress on that commandment or part where your people experience the greatest need.” (Martin Luther quoted in Kolb 2000: 347–351).

Luther had preached on the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer as early as 1516–17 and again 1523–28 (RPP, Fraas 2007: 425). He had formulated the personal Prayer Booklet (“*Gebetbüchlein*”) in 1522. The immediate occasion for compiling and writing the personal Prayer Book was the rapid and confused advance of the Reformation while he was absent from Wittenberg and in hiding at the Wartburg. Returning to Wittenberg in this crisis he realized that evangelical piety had to be communicated in terms that any layman would readily accept and understand. In 1528 he republished it with 48 woodcut illustrations, mostly by Lucas Cranach and Virgil Solis (Scheig, 1979: 24). In several writings of the early 1520s, especially on the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520, see Pelikan, LW vol 12: 11–126) but also in his discourses on Holy Communion with Zwingli (1526–29), he had written on the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. He used the transcripts of some of these sermons to write *The German Catechism*, which later was given the title the *Large Catechism*, which appeared in April 1529, as guidance and reading material for pastors, teachers, parents, and adults, to prepare their sermons and lessons.

In his article on “*The Structure and Dynamics of Luther’s Catechism*” visiting lecturer to the University of the Free State in 2011, prof. Klaas Zwane- pol from Utrecht, Holland, compared Luther’s Catechism with catechisms in use during the Middle Ages. Luther omitted the treatment of the “Ave Maria”, though it was included in his “*Gebetbüchlein*” of 1522. Luther changed the order of the three main parts of the Catechism: Ten Commandments – Creed – Lord’s Prayer. The Middle Age catechisms had organized these three either as Faith → Prayer → Command or later: Prayer → Faith → Command. Luther crossed that order by using the sequence: Command → Faith → Prayer. He deliberately starts with the Law and continues with the Gospel. Luther, dealing with the method of interpreting Scripture, clearly distinguish-

ishes between Law and Gospel. The Word of God is always on the move by taking us from the sinful positions in which we already are, and bringing us into a condition where God wants us to be. The dynamic way Luther treats Law and Gospel is turning many commonly acquired ideas about this distinction upside down. We cannot simply identify the Old Testament as Law or the Gospel as the New Testament. We cannot equate “Law with everything imperatively worded and anything concerning the Gospel as indicatively phrased. The effect of the Word of God as Law or Gospel fully depends on the situation where it will be spoken of” (Zwanepol 2011: 402–3). “The five parts of this Catechism are best understood in a circular form which challenges its users to go through the material time and again. Only then its specific dynamics will manifest itself which make Luther’s Catechism very suitable for instruction about the Christian Faith at several levels” (ibid: 394).

The original SC of 1529 consisted of the five chief parts: *the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, on Baptism and Holy Communion*. In his later editions he added: *the Morning, Evening and Table Blessings, Thanksgiving, the Household Charts, the Marriage Booklet for Simple Pastors and the Baptismal Booklet* (Kolb 2000: 363–375). Between the fourth and fifth part, Luther inserted in the second edition of 1529: “*How simple people are be taught to confess*” (Kolb, 360–375). This was replaced in 1531 by the earlier “*Short Order of Confession*”, and in later editions, from 1533 onwards, with the children’s explanation on repentance by Osiander, as the order of “*Office of the Keys*”, with the text of John 20:22f included (Peters V 1994: 24–25).

2. “Was ist das?” The simplicity of the text

In the 1980s the Heidelberg professor of Systematic Theology, prof. Albrecht Peters, prepared in great detail a historical background commentary on the catechism and the developments towards its genesis, the influence from other catechisms preceding his, and the writings by other Reformers like Melancthon and Agricola. He especially referenced the different parts and texts with biblical texts, images and quotes.²

² In five volumes these Commentaries were published posthumously by his colleague, Gottfried Seebaß, from 1990–1994 and clearly demonstrate the attempt to go “back to the basis” (Peters, I–V).

According to Peters (1990: 18), Luther wrote the SC with a fourfold motivation:

- to bring the basic truths as a summary of Scripture to the people as salvific act of the triune God;
- to let them learn and take this to heart as a confession of the church and thereby let these texts strengthen their faith;
- to let their everyday lives, whether servant or master, be guided by the central message of Scripture;
- and to address specific issues relevant to the community as an iron ration on their way through life and death.

It is a true layman’s Bible, an introduction to Christian faith, depicting the entire plan of salvation.

The SC was to create an attitude of trust in God rather than of knowledge of him alone, emphasizing the simple accent of the gospel, a living relationship with the living Lord (Scheig 1979: 5). The SC was meant for all three estates: the home, the church and the state. At home the house-father and -mother, he calls them “house-bishops” (Peters I 1990: 25), were responsible to teach the children and servants to daily memorize and take the basic texts of faith to heart, they should explain its content and use it as basis for prayer and devotion.

In his preface Luther reiterated the practical use of the book and about the urgent necessity of Christian education. Children were thereby to be given the entire sum of Christian knowledge in two little sacks, the golden sack of faith and the silver sack of love. In another attempt, Luther encourages children to remember scripture texts from sermons and lessons, to repeat these to the parents and place them as coins into the two sacks. He divides these again into two: the golden sack of faith has two pouches, the one that we acknowledge our sinfulness, the other that we are saved through Jesus Christ. The coins in the silver sack of love are to be placed in the pouch that we should serve each other with love as Christ loved us, and the other pouch that we are prepared to willingly suffer hardships, laid on us (Peters I 1990: 34). „*The catechism is the Bible of the laity, in which is comprehended all of the Christian doctrines believers need to know for their salvation*“ (Loewenich 1986: 311).

As he meditated on the SC daily, so in later years Luther, expected his own children, foster-children and the servants in his house to pray, recite and learn the catechism daily, under the strict observance of his wife, Käthe. From 1532 onwards he also used it as a basis for daily devotions with his family, the

students staying in his house and his guests (Kroker 1925: 138).

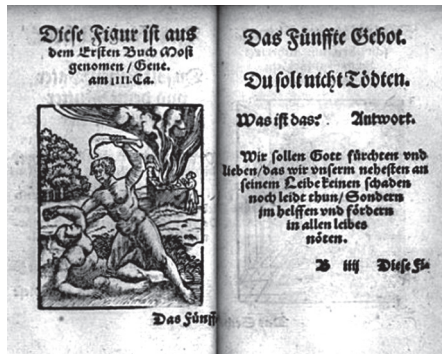
The SC was to help the church to teach the basis of faith to children, to lay-people in their different vocations and for the pastors to have the right foundation for their teaching, preaching and for their pastoral counselling. The state (through the electors and noble-men) and the city states (through mayors and councillors) should see to it that schools be built in their constituencies and children, both boys and girls, be held to go to school, where they should be taught the basis of faith as laid down in the SC (*To the Councilmen of all Cities in Germany that they establish and maintain Christian Schools*).

The texts were formulated in the most simple and easy language, which Luther had observed from the ordinary man on the street (“den Leuten aufs Maul schauen”). The words were to be learnt off by heart, then their meaning taught to be understood, and then to be repeated daily to give guidance. He used the question-answer method to achieve this (Peters I 1990: 30). There are basically three questions for each of the texts: for the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer, they are the question “Was ist das?” (Used 23 x). I would suggest that it should rather be translated in English as “What is this?” It is as if one discovers a rough stone and asks whether it might be a diamond. The simple repetitive answer to the questions all start with the commandment of love: “We are to fear and love God”.

Other questions are “What does it mean?” or “What does it mean for us?”, and in the first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer: “How is this done?” or, for the fourth petition, “What is daily bread?”. For the Sacraments the simple questions asked, are: “What is baptism? What gifts or benefits does it bestow? How can water produce such effects? What does baptizing with water signify?” and “What Word (and promise) of God?” The supporting texts are Matthew 28:18–20, Mark 16:15–16, Titus 3:5–8 and Romans 6:4. For confession the SC asks: “What is Confession? What sins should we confess? What are such sins?” And for the later Office of Keys: “What is the Office of Key? What are the Words of Christ?” with the answer: John 20:22–23 and Matthew 18:18. The questions asked on Communion are: “What is the Sacrament of the Altar? What is the benefit for eating and drinking? How can bodily eating and drinking produce such effects? Who receives this sacrament worthily?” And again: “Where is this written?” The answer is a merged text of Matthew 26:26–29, Mark 14:22–24, Luke 22:17–20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23–26. The SC through these questions leads us back into Scripture.

3. Woodcut Illustrations

The Small Catechism, initially published as posters or panels in January, appeared in May 1529 as a book. It was illustrated with woodcuts in the second edition of that year. In Kolb/Wengert, the themes of 24 such woodcuts and their Biblical texts or references are given (notes on pp. 351–362). Many of the woodcuts seem to have been taken from his 1528 Prayer Booklet (no original or replica of the SC is available).

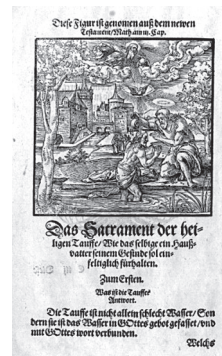
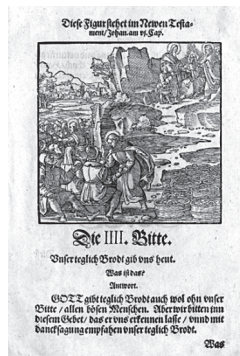


The illustrations above show one of the few still existing panel copies, the title page of the Small Catechism of 1529 (and below the Enchiridion of 1536) and an original page of the 1529 (2nd) edition of the Fifth Commandment. The woodcut for the First Commandment, below, shows Moses receiving the Ten Commandments and the Israelites dancing around the golden calf, with the

caption: „This figure is taken from Exodus 32“ (Kaulfuß-Diesch 1917: 416). In 1979 the German Post Office printed a 450th remembrance stamp on the SC with this woodcut illustration.



In later editions, like the Luther-Brosamer Catechism of 1550 below, the illustrations became more elaborate. Here are shown illustrations of the Third Article with the Holy Spirit descending on Pentecost Day, the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, and of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.



For the 400th Anniversary of Luther's Small Catechism, in 1929, the "Allgemeiner Evangelisch-Lutherischer Schulverein" in Potsdam published a special edition of the SC, but this time not with the original wood-prints but with black-white sketches by the well-known German painter, Rudolf Schäfer. Shown here is the explanation to the Second Article of the Creed (Kropatscheck 1929: 34–35).



Was ist das?
 Ich glaube, daß Jesus Christus,
 wahrhaftiger Gott vom Vater in Ewig-
 keit geboren
 und auch wahrhaftiger Mensch von der
 Jungfrau Maria geboren,
 sei mein Herr,
 der mich verloren und verdammten
 Menschen erlöset hat, erworben, ge-
 wonnen
 von allen Sünden, vom Tode und von
 der Gewalt des Teufels;
 nicht mit Gold oder Silber,
 sondern mit seinem heiligen,
 teuren Blut
 und mit seinem unschuldigen Leiden und
 Sterben;

34



auf daß ich sein eigen sei
 und in seinem Reich unter ihm lebe und
 ihm diene in ewiger Gerechtigkeit, Un-
 schuld und Seligkeit;
 gleichwie er ist auferstanden vom Tode,
 lebet und regiert in Ewigkeit.
 Das ist gewißlich wahr.



35

When in 1580 Luther’s Catechisms were included in the “Book of Concord”, a document of unity for many Lutherans, the Catechisms became part of the confessional writings which explained basic truths of Lutheran faith. Even for those Lutheran churches, who did not accept the Book of Concord as the Lutheran code, Luther’s Small Catechism, together with the unaltered Augsburg Confession (formulated by Philipp Melancthon in 1530) formed the basic document of their faith. This is true for all Lutheran churches and individual congregations who have joined the Lutheran World Federation. Also most unified Protestant churches subscribe to at least Luther’s Small Catechism as a part of the doctrinal basis where the church is founded on (Zwanepol 2011: 395).

4. Back to the Basis: the Teachings in Scripture and in the Church³

Every Jewish child grew up with the Shema, Deut. 6:4–5: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all

³ Both the TRE (Theologische Realenzyklopädie, Vol 17, 1988) and RPP (Religion Past and Present, Vol 2, 2007 = German RGG 4th edition, Vol 4, 2001) elaborate on the development of catechesis and Christian teaching throughout the ages from the Early Church, through the Middle Ages to the present in great detail. I will just shortly summarize these accounts here.

your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” and the Ten Commandments – the Torah. Jesus would recite this text with the addition of Leviticus 19:18 “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 22:37–40). With most religions, Jews and Christians share the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12/Luke 6:31): “Do to others what you would have them do to you.” When Jesus gave the command to go and make disciples of all nations by baptising them, he added “to teach them to obey what I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:18–20).

The New Testament writings contain many texts which probably were baptismal teaching instructions (e. g. Phil. 2:5–11), as were many texts of early Christianity (e. g. the *Didache*). The Apostles’ teachings spread throughout the area of Roman civilisation around the Mediterranean Sea, to North Africa, even until the borders of Germanic people in Europe. In the early Middle Ages Christian teachings were spread by missionaries, mendicant monks and through monasteries. Since the Carolingian period, home catechesis had been made the duty of parents and godparents (Synod of Paris, 829). Other vehicles of popular education in the Middle Ages were preaching, confession and instruction in confession, tracts, pilgrimages, veneration of the saints, mystery plays, religious art, and custom. Confirmation instruction provided the foundation, which included the baptismal symbol, the Lord’s Prayer and the double love commandment, from as early as the 4th Century. The *Weissenburg Catechism* (789) contained the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, a list of cardinal sins, the *Gloria* and *Laudamus*. The Decalogue did not enter popular use until after the Synod of Trier in 1227, when it was associated with preparation for confession (RPP II Fraas 2007: 420).

The emphasis and importance of Luther’s *Catechism* changed during the history of the Evangelical church in Europe and the West. It was a book of Lutheran dogmatic truths in the time of Lutheran Orthodoxy.⁴ It then became a call to spiritual renewal in the time of Pietism, and a guideline for correct living according to one’s conscience in the time of Enlightenment. It became the call to renewal with the expanding mission enterprises overseas.

As already stated, Luther had called princes and cities to establish schools to instruct the children in the Christian faith, and the school syllabi in Luther-

4 Johann Arndt, 1643, “Der ganze Catechismus erstlich in sechzig Predigten ausgelegt und erklärt“, Heinrich Sternens, Lüneburg, wants to find the *Catechism* already pre-programmed in the creation story: God’s creation through his Word and Spirit; His command what mankind may eat and human’s reaction in faith; Prayer as form of direct communication; the offering of Cain and Abel (sacrifice) and circumcision of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob as symbol of baptism (p. 1–2).

an lands included the instruction of Luther’s Catechism. In the 20th Century the Catechism was taken out of the public school syllabus and placed in the care of the confessional churches, especially for the use in confirmation classes (Fraas, RPP, vol II 2007: 420/Fraas, TRE vol XVII 1988: 710–722).

The developing ecumenical movement, after the Second World War, started searching for common contents of instruction in the confessional catechisms of the different churches (WCC since 1948). The idea evolved that, besides the confessional Catechisms of the Roman-Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Union, Orthodox, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Old-Catholic denominations, a common “Basis-Catechism” (“*Basiskatechismus*”) be formulated, to be used as an ecumenical catechism in all participating churches of the WCC, besides the individual confessional catechisms.⁵

5. Back to Basis: Luther’s Small Catechism as an Example of an Ecumenical Basis-Catechism

In 1521, before the Diet of Worms, Luther based his judgement of authority on Scripture, clear human reason and conscience: “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason, ... I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience” (Luther quoted in Loewenich, 1986: 195). The Small Catechism is not polemical but an irenic document which wants to address human reason and sharpen human conscience from a scriptural basis. From this basis Christians would be free to decide not merely on human authorities, but on what they believe. With the Augsburg Confession it belongs to those documents which could be used as an ecumenical basis of faith for most Christian churches. No aggressive or coarse language is used in the SC.⁶

5 This Basis-Catechism would contain some of the 80 Sayings (“Logien”) of the Sermon on the Mount with the Lord’s Prayer in its centre, the Commandment of love, the Decalogue (Ten Commandments), the call to baptise (Matthew 28:19f), the institution and administering of Holy Communion (with a unified text of the three gospels and Paul), and one or both of the Symbols, the Apostolic and / or Nicene Creed (Bellinger, TRE vol XVII, 1998: 738–744).

6 Only in the Introduction to the Large Catechism, does Luther speak of his opponents as “lazy bellies and presumptuous saints” and maintains that those who “flippantly despise” God’s Word “deserve not only to be given no food to eat, but also to have dogs set upon them ... and to be pelted with horse manure” (quoted in Kolb 2000: 381).

Luther's Small Catechism soon spread widely in the Lutheran world. It was "almost immediately transported and translated all across Europe, largely by pastors and students", and editions appeared in more than eighteen countries throughout Europe. Some versions were multi-lingual in German, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and versified versions found their way into various hymn books (Scheig 1979: 4). It has been published in more languages than any other book except the Bible. To put it poetically: "its rhythms sang themselves into the hearts of Lutherans everywhere" (Zwanepol 2011: 394).

Many generations grew up with Luther's Catechism providing them a canon of what belongs to the Christian tradition. The Christian faith in its Lutheran outfit touched the souls of young and old. The Small Catechism was supposed to be known by heart: a five year old had to enumerate its five components, and at eight you had to know Luther's explanation as well and knowledge of the entire text of the Small Catechism was required before being confirmed (ibid: 395). Teaching the SC became a method of transferring the energetic power of the Gospel of Christ to others. The advantage of Luther's Catechism as a life book (and not so much a text or confessional book), might succeed in pulling Christian faith deeply into life and conversely to immerse life in the fountain of Christian faith. "Luther's Catechism therefore has to be recaptured as a guideline where you can continue delving deeper into and from which you never stop learning. It should permanently revert you to the points which till now evaded you and direct you to points you were not ready for" (ibid: 408).

6. Back to the Basis, the Small Catechism comes to Southern Africa

Not woodcuts, but linoleum prints of *People under the cross* and *People listening to the message of Jesus at the Sermon on the Mount* by Azariah Mbatha might depict the scriptural message of God's love for people in Southern Africa (Mbatha in Sundermeier, 1977: 49 and 69, see front and back covers of Scriba, Credo 2014).⁷

⁷ While working on this project, the Library of the Lutheran Theological Institute (LTI) closed down in October 2016. Cleaning up the LTI Library, I discovered a box with an archival collection of mainly Luther's Small Catechisms used in different churches in South Africa, from 1780–1984, collected by Hans Bodenstein and Reino Ottermann, which had not been included in the library. With my own archival collection this selection has some 94 Catechisms in German, Dutch, Afrikaans, English, Tswana and

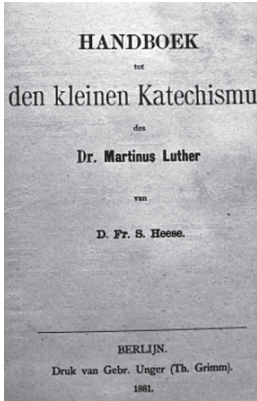


When Lutheran sailors and settlers, missionaries and pastors of some ten different “Lutheran” mission societies and immigration groups (including the Moravian mission), mainly from Germany, Norway, and Sweden, came to Southern Africa in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century they brought with them their own confessional writings of the Reformation. The Lutheran faith that came to South Africa however was not unified. The missions were divided among themselves, not only by nationality and language, but by their form of church governance, by their liturgical traditions, by the varying degrees of emphasis they placed on the Lutheran confessions, and by the extent of their willingness to cooperate with non-Lutherans. Most Lutheran mission societies emphasized the importance of language and culture as the incarnation of the Word of God in this world. Especially German mission work was interpreted to aim at planting specifically national churches (in German: “Volkskirchen”), in which Christianity would be expressed in the language and culture of individual African and immigrant peoples. As a result a patchwork of distinct Lutheran churches spread through Southern Africa (Scriba in Elphick, 1997: 173).

Some German Lutherans arrived as settlers at the Cape, together with the Dutch (Jan van Riebeeck) in 1652 and afterwards. By 1774 they counted about half of Cape Town’s male population and were only then allowed to erect a Church in the Strand Street. Only in 1778 was religious freedom granted (Hoge 1939: 10–59, with a list of members on pages 42–52). Although

isiZulu. It is comprehensive, but not exclusive – many translations have not as yet been included. As archival overview I have taken photos of the front-piece with names and dates (some were without date) and arranged them in a Power-Point Presentation, (Scriba, 2017).

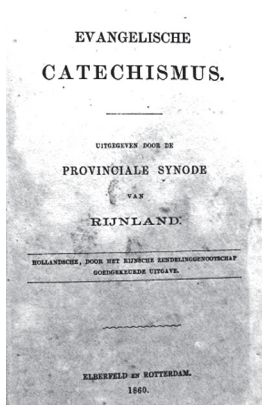
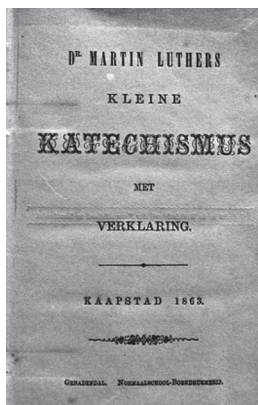
from German background, the services were held in Dutch but singing was in German. The German congregation, St Martini, which later split from the Strand Street as well as the congregations in the Border area (East London, Stutterheim etc.), used the Hannoverian edition of the German Lutheran Catechism, (Ottermann 1995: 11–16).⁸



The earliest evangelical Moravian missionary to the Cape, Georg Schmidt, worked at Baviaanskloof (later renamed Genadendal) amongst the Khoi-Khoi from 1837–44. He was accused by the Dutch Reformed Church clergy of the Cape that he was working outside the perimeters of the agreed rule of 1555 “*cuius region – eius religio*,” because he did not use the Heidelberg Catechism of the Dutch Reformed Church as the book of instruction. We may assume that he used either Luther’s Small Catechism or the old Moravian catechism, which was newly edited in 1747. However some 50 years after Schmidt had left, the Moravians continued their work in 1792 and had some of Luther’s Small Catechisms in Dutch translation sent in 1822 for the instruction of baptismal applicants and school-children (Krüger 1966: 36,

⁸ Some Dutch Lutheran catechisms, edited by J. Parisius 1854, D. Heese 1873 and 1881, found in the archives (Scriba 2017), are attached as examples above. Lately the German Catechism in the *Evangelisches Gesangbuch* of 1995 is used, in Afrikaans the translation in *Laudate Gesangboek van VELKSA* edition (pp. 357–369), and the Credo as English Catechism (or the catechism of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church).

61, 143, 279). In 1828 a Xhosa translation of the catechism was printed at Lovedale (ibid: 171).⁹



In 1829 the Rhenish Missionary Society (RMS), embracing members of Reformed, United and Lutheran churches in the Rhineland, started to work in the Cape Colony at Wuppertal, Stellenbosch and Tulbagh. In 1840 the RMS’s extended their work to the North among the Nama, Damara, Herero and Rehoboth, in present-day Namibia. Here they founded the congregation of Windhoek and some German congregations at the beginning of the 20th Century. Coming from United background, the Rhenish missionaries were advised to use the catechism which they had used in their home congregations. Some missionaries taught the Union Catechism in Dutch, others the Heidelberg Catechism and others Luther’s Small Catechism. A struggle started when missionary Hugo Hahn during 1854–1860 wanted to use only Luther’s Catechism. This led to the question which Catechism was to be used on the mission fields in Southern Africa. The original decision was reciprocated (Kriele 1928: 13–17 and 201–217). At the beginning of the 20th Century some stations in the Western Cape were handed over to the Reformed churches, however, Wuppertal was seceded in 1966 to the Moravians. The churches in South West Africa (Namibia), with their independence, accepted Luther’s Catechism, which missionaries had translated into the different vernaculars.

⁹ As examples a Lutheran Dutch Catechism, printed by the Moravian Mission, and two Dutch Evangelical Catechisms (not Lutheran) of the Rhenish Mission Society are depicted.

The Berlin Mission Society (BMS), founded in 1824 by a number of prominent Berliners, understood itself to be “Lutheran within the Union Church” (Lehmann 1974: 43). Their work spread widely throughout Southern Africa, starting among the Korana (Griqua) in the Orange River Sovereignty (at Bethany) in 1834, moving from there to the Tswana in the Cape Colony (1837), the Xhosa in British Kaffraria (1837), the Zulu in Natal (1847), then to Transvaal (1860), Mashonaland/Zimbabwe (1892–1906) and Swaziland (1930). The largest BMS field was the South African Republic (Transvaal) with stations among the Southern Sotho, Pedi, and Venda, e. g. Botshabelo, „City of Refuge“. They also worked among German speaking immigrants and dependants. Lehmann states that at first catechisms, and specific Luther’s SC, or parts thereof were translated into such languages as that of the Korana, Griqua, Fingu and Tswana, for baptismal catechetics. He then names some missionaries who translated parts or the whole Bible: e. g. Ludwig Döhne starting the Xhosa translation, which was finished by Albert Kropf in 1899. Superintendent Knothe translated the New Testament into Sotho, and the whole Bible was completed by Gustav Trümpelmann. Paul Schwellnus translated the Bible into Venda. Ludwig Döhne in 1862 also worked on the translation of the Zulu Bible, later finished by a commission of Berlin, Hermannsburg and American missionaries and co-workers. Johannes Baumbach translated Lutheran hymns into Afrikaans and other African languages (Lehmann 1974: 110–111). Although not specifically mentioned, the translation of Luther’s Catechism in all these languages usually preceded the translation of the whole Bible.

The Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) began in 1842 as a revival influenced by the farmer/merchant Hans Nielsen Hauge and the Danish pastor-poet N. F. S. Grundtvig. “In Lutheran history, confessional orthodoxy and pietism have often been at odds with one another, but in nineteenth-century Norway the two could go hand-in-hand, despite undeniable inner tensions” (Hale 1997: 6–7). The conservative voices of ‘Repristinatio’ theologians (like E. Hengstenberg, W. Löhe) “resonated in Norway, where a century earlier the pietistic bishop of Bergen, Erik Pontoppidan (1698–1764), had published his immensely influential ‘Explanation’ of Luther’s Small Catechism. ... The men of the NMS sought to propagate amongst the Zulus a form of Christianity which was at once rigidly objective, demanding acceptance of detailed doctrines, and unrelentingly subjective, stressing moral change as a necessary sign of conversion” (Hale 1997: 7, 10). In 1844 Hans Palludan Smith Schreuder arrived in Port Natal and, after attempts in Zululand proper, China and a station Uitkomst near Pietermaritzburg, founded the mission station Umphumulo, just south of the Tugela, in 1850. In that year he publis-

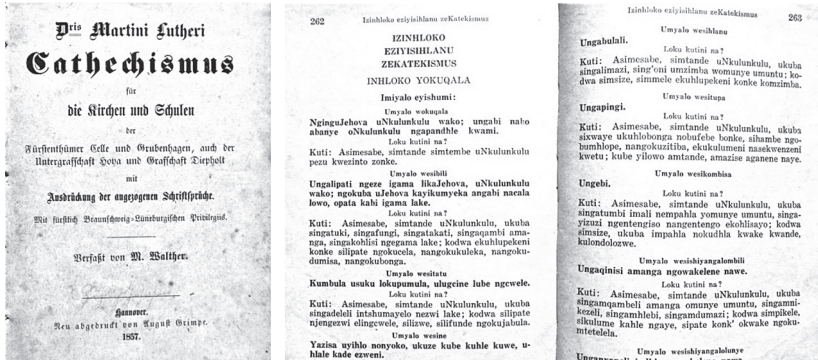
hed a Zulu Grammar book in Kristiania, in view of doing some translations, including the catechism. After healing king Mpande’s rheumatism, he was granted land at Empangeni in the Zulu kingdom. Schreuder, appointed as bishop in 1866, came into conflict with NMS over his powers as bishop, and resigned in 1873. The NMS spread its work in Natal and Zululand (ibid: 20–23). Independent Norwegian congregations, such as Marburg and St Olav’s, used the Norwegian Small Catechism.

After the split in the Norwegian Mission Society, Schreuder aligned himself with the Church of Norway Mission – Schreuder Mission, and started mission work in 1873 at Untunjambili in Natal, spreading to Zululand. In 1928 the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America (ALM) took over the management of the Mission and also founded missions in the goldfields of the Orange Free State. The Americans contributed managerial and administrative skills to the Lutheran missions, as well as a strong Lutheran influence through the American translation of Luther’s SC and Lutheran writings and collections in English.

The Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS) was founded in 1849 by pastor Ludwig Harms (1808–1865) in Hermannsburg, Germany, on strict Lutheran confessional principles (H. Harms 1999: 27–29). Within the Hannoverian State Church a “*Catechism Struggle*” (“*Katechismusstreit*”) had erupted on the influence of the rationalistic Evangelical Catechism. The Hannoverian king thereupon reintroduced Luther’s SC, the so-called Walther’s Catechism, in 1862. The Hermannsburg Mission strongly supported this and L. Harms held a series of sermons on the Catechism which his brother published as a book, posthumously after his brother’s death (L. Harms, 1886 3rd ed). The Walther’s Catechism consists of three booklets in one: the first book contains the Biblical texts and the Creed, the second the same with Luther’s explanation and the third with further explanations, Biblical texts, questions and answers.

The HMS founded its first mission station, Hermannsburg, in Natal in 1854, and from there, daughter stations spread throughout Natal, and later into the Zulu kingdom. At Ehlanzeni the first indigenous seminary for evangelists was established in 1870. In 1857 the HMS took over Liteyane, started by D. Livingstone, and used it as a base for mission work among the Tswana. It also worked among German speaking settlers. “At the Mission Festival of the year 1857, Ludwig Harms mentioned that Luther’s Small Catechism with the explanation by Walther, a Lutheran hymn book ... and a Lutheran agenda, that of the Lüneburg Church Rules, was to be printed for Africa. ... The missionaries amongst the Zulus and amongst the Tswana soon began translating these books. They moulded the piety of the young Christians and sub-

sequent generations” (Voges 2004: 26). H. Wiese states that Hermannsburg missionaries translated Luther’s (Small) Catechism in Zulu, Tswana, Dutch, and New-Syrian for Persia and Telegu for India (Wiese, no date: 4). In the 20th Century the German congregations would opt for newer exponent catechisms, like that of Rudolf Steinmetz (reprinted for the German ev.-luth. Synod of South Africa in 1947 and 1958).¹⁰



A split in the Hermannsburg Mission Society in 1892 led to the establishment of the Hannoverian Free-church Mission (HFM), which worked among the Zulu and Tswana. The Free-Church Lutheran Synod among German-speaking South Africans throughout most of its history has modernised the German Walther’s Catechism and translated it into English and Afrikaans.

The Finnish Mission Society (FMS) was founded in 1859 in Helsinki as a consequence of the 700th anniversary of Christianity coming to Finland in 1157. In 1870 the first missionaries began their work among the Ovambo in northern South West Africa (Namibia). Again Luther’s SC became the foundation of catechesis besides the Bible in Ndonga, which was translated by Martin Rautanen (1845–1926) (Scriba 2015: 16–17).

10 Depiction of the Walther Catechism and the first page of the Ten Commandments of the Hermannsburg Zulu Catechism of 1953. The red Confirmation file-book by the Burghardt Verlag, used during the early 1970’s, caused great controversy and subsequently a version by Hans Frauenknecht with more modern photos was introduced. The new “*Evangelisches Gesangbuch*” of 1995, which includes Luther’s SC among other confessional writings, is now generally used in German-speaking congregations (besides the Credo in German, English and Afrikaans).

The „high-church“ Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) was founded in 1874, with the Archbishop as its president. The first Swedish missionaries, O. Witt and C.L. Flygare, arrived in South Africa in 1876 and established the first mission station, Oscarsberg, at Rorke’s Drift. Also within this mission translation of Luther’s Catechism, as well as other Christian literature, became important. The first indigenous worker of the CSM, Joseph Zulu, was ordained in 1901. The CSM extended its work to Johannesburg and Southern Rhodesia and supported the Swedish independent congregations in Johannesburg (Scriba 2015: 16).

Missionaries, evangelists, teachers, Southern African pastors, parents and Sunday teachers have taught Luther’s Catechism at home, in schools and churches. They have contextualised the SC in their specific culture and tradition. They have not only elaborated on the parts from their Scriptural background but also by telling stories of how the parts impacted on the personal life of Christians in Southern Africa. It would be important to collect some of these orally transmitted stories and explanations to create a typical South African exponent Catechism. Such an attempt was made (around 1920) by the Hermannsburg Superintendent Heinrich Wiese, in his collections of stories in *“Regen und Segen im Missionsleben”* (using the Tswanaword “Pula” for “rain”: *“Rain and Blessings of Missionary Life”*) which was compiled according to the order of the SC (Wiese, no date).

7. Back to Basis: Uniting the different Lutheran strands and their struggle for unity

Great strides of unifying the disparate Lutheran mission societies and the later evolving independent Lutheran churches were undertaken, especially in the second half of the 20th Century (see Florin 1965, Scriba 1996). From 1957–1966 some 15 Lutheran (including Moravian) mission churches and self-supporting synods in Southern Africa and Namibia became independent.¹¹

11 (ELC stands for Evangelical-Lutheran Church; ELCSA for Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Southern Africa; SWA for South West Africa; N for Namibia); 1957 Rhenish Mission Church in SWA (ELCSWA – Rhenish Mission); now ELC-RIN = Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia; 1959 ELC in Southern Rhodesia; now ELCZ = Ev.-Luth. Church in Zimbabwe;

They had in common the basic article of their constitution, which named the canonical books of the Old and New Testament, the three Creeds, the unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism (most of them named all books of the Book of Concord). These newly evolved churches would unite and merge more easily due to this doctrinal basis in Federal Groupings, in Mergers and in United churches.

When Lutheran churches were searching for closer co-operation and unity in federations and nation-wide churches, most black Lutherans were united in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA), founded in 1975, and the white, mostly German Lutherans were associated with the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (UELCSA) founded in 1965. These churches, along with the Moravians and Lutherans from other southern African countries, co-operated in the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa (FELCSA), established in 1966, which was reconstituted in 1991 as the Lutheran Communion of Southern Africa (LUCSA). The Unity was based on common liturgical features, common hymns and Lutheran teaching, specifically of Luther's SC.

The ongoing church struggle for unity against the backdrop of the evolving Apartheid structure became apparent especially in the yearly conferences of the Missiological Society, of FELCSA and other groups at Umphumulo from 1964 to 1978 (Scriba 2015: 29–36, Credo 2014: 96). The tension bet-

-
- 1959 ELCSA Tswana Regional Church (ELCSA-Tswana), since 1975 ELCSA-Western Diocese (ELCSA-WD);
 - 1960 ELCSA South East Region (ELCSA-SER), 1975 ELCSA-South Eastern Diocese (ELCSA-SED);
 - 1960 DELKSWA – German Evangelical-Lutheran Church in SWA; now ELCIN (DELK);
 - 1960 ELCSWA Ovambocavango; now ELCIN;
 - 1960 Moravian Church Western Cape;
 - 1961 ELCSA Transvaal Region (ELCSA-Transvaal), 1975 ELCSA-Northern Diocese (ELCSA-ND);
 - 1961 ELCSA (Transvaal Church), since 1981 amalgamated with ELCSA (Hermannsburg) to form ELCSA (Natal-Transvaal) = ELCSA (NT);
 - 1961 ELCSA (Cape Church);
 - 1963 ELCSA Cape Orange Region (ELCSA-COR), since 1975 ELCSA-Cape Orange Diocese (ELCSA-COD);
 - 1963 ELCSA (Hermannsburg), since 1981 amalgamated with ELCSA (Transvaal Church) to form ELCSA (Natal-Transvaal) = ELCSA (NT);
 - 1966 Moravian Church in Eastern Cape;
 - 1967 Lutheran Church in South Africa [Free Church] (LCSA);
 - 1972 Free Evangelical-Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA).

ween black and white Lutheran churches in Southern Africa became a world-wide broadcasted issue when the two small German speaking churches of the Cape (about 4000 members) and Namibia (5000 members) were suspended at the 7th Assembly of the LWF in Budapest in 1984. The allegation was that they had not shown a clearer stance against Apartheid and had not adequately supported the call for unity (Mau 1985: 187f). The third German-speaking church, the ELCSA-NT (with about 10 000 members), withdrew its application for membership. At Budapest the fear and danger of an escalation of the cold war between East and West into a nuclear showdown, seems to have found a ventilation in concentrating on the North – South conflict (Scriba 2011: 207–212). All three German-speaking churches were quietly accepted back into LWF membership at an LWF Executive Meeting in Madras, India in 1992, when the Berlin wall had been torn down and consequently the wall of Apartheid started to crumble.

From 1983–95 a Unity Committee, established between the three churches, ELCSA, ELCSA (Cape) and ELCSA (N-T) attempted, however unsuccessfully, to unite these three South African Lutheran churches. The combined theological training at the Lutheran House of Studies (1990–2003) and then renamed Lutheran Theological Institute in Pietermaritzburg (2003–2016), supported with prayers, future vision and high hopes of this unity, also came to an end last year 2016. However besides their differences all three churches are united in having the same Lutheran basis, including Luther’s SC.

The Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA), formed in 1991 as successor of FELCSA, has 14 member churches: the Evangelical-Lutheran Churches in Mozambique, in Angola, in Malawi, in Zimbabwe, in Botswana, the Ev.-Luth. Churches in Namibia: ELCIN, ELCRIN (Rhenish Church) and ELCIN (DELK), and those in South Africa: ELCSA with 7 Dioceses, ELCSA (N-T), ELCSA (Cape) and the Moravian Church. The total membership of LUCSA in 2014 was about 1 610 000. It has the Lutheran doctrinal writings, especially the unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Small Catechism, as Basis of its Confession in its Constitution. It is seen as the Regional Council of the LWF for Southern Africa.

Luther’s Catechism generally won recognition in religious instruction, as instruction book for family, school and church in Southern Africa. It was one of the first books to be translated into most of the different language groups in the sub-continent. In the curriculum for the mission and bible schools, in theological training for Lutheran evangelists, teachers and pastors at seminaries and universities, the message of the Small Catechism was and remains part of the curriculum for religious instruction and a basis of unity.

The distinctive character of Lutheranism born in Europe, esp. national churches and conservatism, made Lutheranism in SA an appealing choice for Africans at first, but increasingly less so in the 20th Century as they were slow to offer either the tools for dealing with modernity (schools, urban churches, and political protest) or the bridges to African culture that the Pentecostals and Zionists offered. Lutheranism has, on the other hand, put down deep roots in black culture while retaining its role as a preserver of various white immigrant cultures. The distinctive message of Lutheran theology in the South African ecumenical setting may not be silenced: God's love for a fallen world, received through Jesus Christ, by grace alone through faith in him (Scriba 1997: 194).

8. Back to Basis: Luther's Small Catechism a Message to South Africa today?

Many learners and confirmands have complained that Luther's Small Catechism was boring, as were allegedly also the catechetical classes in school or at church. Some remember the Catechism more as a book with which the pastor used to slap their heads with, for not having learnt the parts, than a vehicle to bring God's message of love into their hearts. We have to ask ourselves today, whether Luther's Small Catechism is still able to provide answers to present-day questions. Can it prepare South Africans, or Christians, or at least Lutherans for the present challenges we live in the present situation in South Africa? Can it lead us back to the basis in our faith, to active engagement of love in the tensions we experience in our worship services, in our homes and in the public challenges of daily lives?

The challenges we face today are many-fold: the strong influences of the scientific age on our every-day life, globalization and the explosion of social media due to TV, computers, cell-phones and global connections. There are the challenges of injustices, also due to colonization and Apartheid, as experienced in the past, the present challenges of a democratic society, the scourge of the pandemic of HIV/AIDS (Scriba, 2006b), the fears and anxiety worldwide due to refugees, immigrants and accompanying dangers of intolerance and xenophobia.

Among Christians and also among Lutheran churches struggles are at present being debated and fought out. These include the different interpretations of the Bible, with a fundamental understanding on the one side and a more exegetical-critical Bible interpretation on the other. From this basis

churches are deeply divided on such issues as gender equality and homosexuality within the church. The experience of a waning interest and support for ecumenical co-operation, of financial maladministration, a culture of entitlement are some of the woes of the churches. This has led in our area around Pietermaritzburg to the demise of the FEDSEM (Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa) in the 1990’s (Denis, 2011), the difficulties within ESSA (Evangelical Seminary in SA) at the turn of the century and now the closure of the LTI (Lutheran Theological Institute) in 2016. These and other challenges call in question whether the catechism can still lead us “back to the basis of faith” and at the same time be contextualized for our time.

Above that, the time of missionary or ecclesiastical influences in the teaching syllabus in public schools has changed considerably. In 2003, the then Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, had the “*Policy on Religion and Education*” published, in which was stated:

“As a democratic society with a diverse population of different cultures, languages and religions we are duty bound to ensure that through our diversity we develop a unity of purpose and spirit that recognizes and celebrates our diversity. This should be particularly evident in our public schools where no particular religious ethos should be dominant over and suppress others. Just as we must ensure and protect the equal rights of all students to be at school, we must also appreciate their right to have their religious views recognized and respected. We do not have a state religion. But our country is not a secular state where there is a very strict separation between religion and the state. The Policy recognizes the rich and diverse religious heritage of our country and adopts a cooperative model that accepts our rich heritage and the possibility of creative inter-action between schools and faith whilst, protecting our young people from religious discrimination or coercion” (Asmal 2003: 1).

Having lost this teaching influence in the vast area of education, we have to ask where the churches can still have the opportunity of influence with its salvific message.

In his book “*Martin Luther’s Message for us today – A perspective from the South*“, K. Nürnberger (2005: 10–11), describes Luther not as a systematic theologian but a biblical scholar:

“Among the multitude of Luther’s writings, there is no authoritative source of his theology to which we could refer ... Usually the essays of 1520 and some later works are taken as fairly representative of his thought: On the freedom of a Christian (1520), On good works (1520), On the Babylonian captivity of the church (1520), To the Christian nobility (1520), That a Christian assembly or congregation has the right and power to judge all teaching

and to call, appoint and dismiss teachers, established and proven by Scripture (1523), The Small Catechism (written for the laity 1529), The Large Catechism (written for pastors 1529), The Smalcald Articles (1537). ... Although Luther was the pioneer of a new age, to a considerable extent his thought was still shaped by the Middle Ages. He lived and worked well before the Enlightenment, which profoundly determined modern patterns of thought. He had no time for Copernicus; he saw the devil lurking behind every bush; medieval fears of the last judgment had a profound impact on his theology; he took the legitimacy of the feudal system for granted; he could not foresee that a liberal revolution would lead to a free and just society.”

What is true for Luther’s theology is also true of his catechism: “We have to critically reconstruct his approach, filter out the inconsistencies, discern obsolete assumptions and expose untenable positions” (ibid: 11). We have to modernize and contextualize Luther. That is what Nürnberger attempts in this book, naming the more systematic-doctrinal part: Luther’s experiential theology, and the ethical part on political ethics, social injustice and the HIV pandemic as: Luther’s contextual theology.¹²

Luther’s Catechism has been expounded and contextualized in many varieties, some explained with added biblical texts. In Germany a whole “family of Catechisms” has appeared since 1975 (Fraas in RPP II: 427). The “*Evangelischer Erwachsenen Katechismus*” (Evangelical Adult Catechism), now in its 8th edition is based on Luther’s Catechisms (the SC is included with other confessional writings in its central section in the 7th and 8th editions). These editions present our modern questions concerning most faith and ethical issues, which are presently being discussed and are a great help for German-reading pastors and lay-people also in South Africa and have greatly enriched topics discussed in UELCSA congregations.¹³

12 See also in greater depth K. Nürnberger’s two-volume *magnus opus*, of 2016, “Faith in Christ today – I: Life in the presence of God, II: Involved in God’s project”.

13 The different editions and publications seem to appear every 8–10 years (EEK 1st edition 1975: 1356 pages; EEK 5th ed. 1989: 1447 pages; EEK 7th ed. 2001 (the “illustrated angel catechism”): 866 pages; and the EEK 8th ed. 2010: 1020 pages). However, although the newest edition have included discussions on such present-day issues as homosexuality, it is clearly written for a “Western clientele”, as it does not mention the epidemic of AIDS/HIV which would be so important for the Southern African countries.

9. Back to Basis – “Credo”

In the South African situation of the Lutheran churches, also in their unity discussions, a cheap booklet with the vital or basic confessional writings became necessary.

“It is essential that we have some formulations of our Lutheran faith for members of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa. Pastors, theology students, lay preachers, congregational workers, confirmands and those who want to join our church need a concise and inexpensive overview on our confessions of faith. This attempt is made with this booklet, Credo, which introduces the theological disciplines: Biblical Studies, History of Christianity, Systematic and Pastoral Theology” (Scriba 2014: 4).

“Credo” was published as booklet, first in German (1996), English (1997) and Afrikaans (2001) and then in consecutive editions, the latest being “Credo 2014 – A Booklet of Faith – What Lutherans believe, teach and practice” (Scriba, Credo – different editions).¹⁴

Concerning the content: The Catechism wants to help us find the centre of Holy Scripture, which is Christ. This centre of Scripture is the living Word of God, which addresses us from outside as the “*verbum externum*”. The most important texts of the Bible are those which lead Christ to us, and us to him. In the preface to the OT Luther would compare the Scriptures with the manger containing ordinary straw and swaddling cloths, “but how precious is the treasure we find in it, which is Jesus Christ!” (Scriba 2014: 15; Luther’s quote from LW Vol 35: 122, 236).

14 It contains: The Three Creeds / The Small Catechism by Martin Luther / A Short Overview of Lutheran Theology (by Georg Scriba) / The Augsburg Confession (mainly the first 21 Articles) / Draft Guidelines for Church Life for Discussion: 1. Divine Service; 2. Baptism; 3. The Lord’s Supper; 4. Confession and Discipline; 5. Groups in the Congregation; 6. Gender, Sexuality, Marriage and Divorce; 7. Care of the Elderly, Frail, Dying and Grieving; 8. Membership of Church and Congregation; 9. Christians in Daily Life; 10. Offices and the Structure of Congregation and the Church; 11. The Church in the World; 12. The Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Churches / The Books of the Bible / Contents of the Bible / Words from the Bible / The Church Year / The Lutheran Hymnal and Liturgical Colours / Order of Church Service and Occasional Services. / A Short Review of Church History / Periods in the History of Evangelical-Lutheran Churches in SA.

We differentiate in the Bible between Law and Gospel (John 1:17: “The law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”). The law challenges or frightens us to realize our sinfulness and thereby condemns us. The Gospel comforts the “frightened” sinner. We are both: justified by God’s grace and yet still sinners – “*simul justus et peccator*”. We differentiate three functions of the law: (1) firstly, it has a political role, it is like the lock of the door, prohibiting evil to enter; (2) secondly, it has a theological function, it shows us our situation before God (like a mirror); (3) the third function is that of rules how Christians are to live their Christian lives (propagated especially by Melancthon and Calvin).

The Gospel proclaims the grace of God, the delivering and gladdening message of Jesus Christ. It is the love of God, not our own human achievement that saves us.

The Ten Commandments, accounted for twice, in Exodus 20:1–17 and Deuteronomy 5:6–21, differ slightly in the reason for keeping the Sabbath day holy, and the role of the wife in her household. The Ten Commandments are divided into two tables, the first one concerning our relationship to God (1–3 according to Roman Catholic and Lutheran, 1–4 according to Reformed, Anglican, Presbyterian tradition), the second concerning our relationship among us human beings (4–10 according to Lutheran and 5–10 according to Reformed tradition). They are the 10 signs of protection, protecting God’s authority, name, and worship; secondly those in authority, life, marriage and sexuality, possessions; honour; from envy and greed. If the first table, our relationship to God, is depicted by a vertical line, the second, our relationship among us as humans, by a horizontal line, then both lines together form the cross and work of Jesus. And so, the Ten Commandments are summed up in the New Testament by Jesus’ commandment to love God and our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37–40).

The explanation of the First Commandment explains the core message: „We are to fear, love, and trust God above anything else.“ The emphasis on the Ten Commandments is no longer placed on the (8) prohibitions “You shall NOT”, but in Luther’s explanation rather on encouragements in the positive sense; “to call on God in prayer, praise and thanksgiving” (2nd Commandment); “to help in all physical needs” (5th), “to defend our neighbours, speak well of them, and explain their actions in the kindest way” (8th). In so far the commandments become encouraging signs of a freedom which not only ask “free *from* what?” but rather “free *for* what?” Freedom also means responsibility and duty towards God, our neighbour and society.

In the Creed words are not just to be learnt off-by-heart to be recited, but rather they convey experiences of God’s love and acceptance. *The 1st Article* is formulated in the language of the heart: “I believe that God has created *me* and all that exists ... out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy ...” The love of God is at its centre as Luther would express that “God is a glowing oven, full of love, which extends from the earth to heaven” (Aland 1989: 155 – my translation). This love is shown from the first verses of the Bible. When God’s spirit hovered over the dark waters, God created light. The expression in the Bible seems even more powerful than the scientific sudden explosion, described in American comic strip language as the “Big Bang”. God said “Light!” and there was “Light!”, God said “Life!” and there was “Life!”, God said “Love!” and there was “Love!”. These are the spiritual building blocks of creation, the heart-beat of God: “Light – Life – Love!” This heart-beat is extended throughout the Bible and also in Jesus Christ. He is “the light of the world”, he is the “resurrection and the life”, he shows us “God is love”. God’s heart-beat can be found in all of his creation, but especially in us humans. However God’s heart-beat has its counter-beat of “Darkness, Death and Destruction”. We still live in this constant creative tension, in which our heart beats with God’s heart: lighting-up, life-giving, loving, but also in its counter-beat of darkness, dying, destroying and fearing.

In the 2nd Article the Catechism again personalizes and emphasizes our experience of Jesus Christ: “... he is *my* Lord. At great cost he has saved and redeemed *me* ...” This article concerns our salvation. In early Christianity the fish became a symbol of this personal confession (The Greek letters “ICHTHYS” stood for “Jesus Christ, God’s Son, our Saviour”). Luther formulates Jesus Christ as true God and true human, as Son of the eternal Father and yet born of the human Mary in our time. In seven groups of threes Luther describes the whole work of Christ, what he has done for me: 1. he saved, redeemed and freed me; 2. the lost, condemned, human; 3. from sin, death and devil; 4. with his blood, suffering and death; 5. so that I may belong to him, live under him and serve him; 6. in righteousness, innocence and blessedness; 7. as he is risen, lives and rules eternally.

Concerning the historical Jesus, we differentiate between the four Gospels as Jesus is depicted in different ways: Mark emphasizing Jesus’ suffering, Matthew Jesus’ teaching, Luke Jesus’ loving and John Jesus’ glory. Paul becomes the main interpreter of early Christian theology, emphasizing cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ and expounding on the theological meaning of salvation and reconciliation.

In the 3rd Article Luther again starts with the personal existential confession in the Holy Spirit: “I believe the Holy Spirit has called *me* ..., enlightened *me* ..., sanctified *me* ... kept *me* in true faith, with all Christians etc”. God’s grace and gift of righteousness in Jesus Christ awaits a response from our side. Justification by faith and sanctification belong together. However our response in faith, the growth of fruit in the Spirit is also a gift from God, given through his Holy Spirit, where and when he wants. The Holy Spirit at Pentecost, through confession and baptism (Acts 2) presents us with spiritual gifts, as described in 1 Corinthians 12, of which the greatest, besides faith and hope, is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

The Lord’s Prayer is an instruction on prayer that *spans the whole world* (Thielicke 1960). It is the most widely used and translated prayer, it spans the time of the last 2000 years and hopefully the times to come. It spans the week from Sunday to Saturday. It spans our personal life, through its seven stages (according to Shakespeare’s “*As you like it*”), from the first call “Abba” = “Daddy” of the baby, to the deliverance from evil on our death bed. It is the most personal prayer and can be prayed and meditated in all situations of life.

The Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion are clearly based on the scriptural command by Christ to baptize (Matthew 28:19–21) and to administer and participate in the Lord’s Supper. The benefits of forgiveness, life and everlasting life are spelt out, which we are to receive in faith. The benefits received from these sacraments are forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. “This gift is comfort to the afflicted, a remedy for the sick, life for the dying, food for the hungry and a rich treasure for all the needy and poor” (Luther in Scriba, 2014: 39).

10. Conclusion

The Small Catechism is an ecumenical book, not a polemical one. It does not criticize other faiths, but stating our understanding in a positive way, is an invitation for others to accept. May the message of Luther’s Small Catechism be so contextualized, interpreted, extended and rewritten that it will again become a house-hold book for family homes, a life-book in congregations and churches, and an ecumenical document, to be used together with other catechisms as an ecumenical “basis-catechism” by all Christians. May it assist us in a prophetic ministry in a secular world and society of God’s basic message

of unconditional acceptance and love. May church and society be guided by his constant call to repentance and correct and good action. May our response be a joyful confession of our faith and constant commitment in prayer.

The above article was published, slightly shortened, as, “Back to Basis – Martin Luther’s Message in the Small Catechism for South Africa today”, in the Roman Catholic journal “Grace and Truth – a Journal of Catholic Reflection for Southern Africa” with the title: “The Message of Martin Luther in the Present Context of Southern Africa: the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation (2017)”, edited by Georg Scriba, Volume 34 No 1, April 2017, pp 63–94. During publication, the VELKD announced the publication of an Elementary Catechism on 24 July 2017: „Mit Gott – leicht gesagt: Glaube für Einsteiger aus evangelisch-lutherischer Perspektive“. Although I have only read part of it, I found that the objective was similar to my above article and want to give an overview of it (in my English translation) for further reference:

“With God – talking plainly: Evangelical Elementary Catechism:

1. With God

Believing / Praying / Helping;

2. Living with God

Coming into life – Baptism;

Becoming aware of foundations – Confirmation;

Having doubts;

Becoming guilty;

Experiencing acceptance;

Living together – Marriage;

What remains of life? – Memorial Service – Funeral;

3. Celebrating with God

Interrupting daily life – Sunday;

Celebrating our Fellowship – Eucharist / Holy Communion;

How shall I receive you? Christmas;

Trusting in God’s Love – Good Friday;

Truly rising – Easter;

Being inspired – Pentecost;

Thanking the Creator – Harvest Thanksgiving;

Hoping for home in saying farewell – Eternity Sunday;

4. Core texts

Apostolic Creed;

The Lord's Prayer;

The Golden Rule (Mt 7:12) (Commandments);

Beatitudes (Mt 5:3–10);

Baptismal Command (Mt 28:19–20);

Psalm 23;

Aaronite blessing (Num 6:24–26);

Words of Institution of the Last Supper.”

References

- Aland, K. (ed). 1989. *Lutherlexikon. Uni-Taschenbücher 1530*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Arndt, J. 1643. *Der ganze Catechismus erstlich in sechzig Predigten ausgelegt und erklärt*. Lüneburg: Heinrich Stern.
- Asmal, K. 2003. Policy on religion and education (as approved by the Council of Education Ministers on 4th August 2003). Available at http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/religion_0.pdf, accessed 2. 5. 2017.
- Bellinger, G. J. 1988. *Katechismus. 'IV. Konfessionskundlich/Ökumenisch'*, in *Theologische Realenzyklopadie (TRE)*. Band XVII. *Jesus Christus V – Katechismuspredigt*, edited by G. Müller et al. Berlin/New York, 738–744.
- Denis, P. and Duncan, G. 2011. *The native school that caused all the trouble – A history of the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- ELCSA-NT, 1991. *The guidelines for the church life of the ELCSA (N-T), adopted by Synod in 1991*.
- Elphick, R. and Davenport, R. (eds) 1997. *Christianity in South Africa: A political, social and cultural history*. Oxford: James Currey / Cape Town: David Philip.
- Florin, H. 1965 (1967 – 2nd edition). *Lutherans in South Africa: Report on a survey 1964–1965*. Benoni: Mercentiel Printing Works / Durban: Lutheran Publishing House.
- Fraas, H.-J. 1988. *Katechismus. 'I. Protestantische Kirchen: I/1 Historisch (bis 1945)'*, in *Theologische Realenzyklopadie (TRE)*. Band XVII. *Jesus Christus V – Katechismuspredigt*, edited by G. Müller et al. Berlin/New York, 710–722.
- 2007. *Catechism. 'IV. Protestant Katechisms'*, in *Religion Past and Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion (RPP = RGG)* vol. II, *Bia-Chr.*, edited by H. D. Betz et al. Leiden/Boston, 425–427.
- Hale, F. (ed) 1997. *Norwegian missionaries in Natal and Zululand: Selected correspondence 1844–1900*. 2nd Series no. 27. Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society.
- Harms, H. 1999. *Concerned for the unreached – Life and work of Louis Harms, founder of the Hermannsburg Mission*. Addis Ababa and Hermannsburg: Verlag Missionshandlung.
- Harms, L. 1886 (3rd ed). *Katechismuspredigten*. Hermannsburg: Missionsverlag.

- Hoge, J. 1939. Die Geschichte der ältesten evangelisch-lutherischen Gemeinde in Kapstadt. München: Ernst Reinhardt.
- Kaulfuß-Diesch, K. (ed) 1917. Das Buch der Reformation – Geschrieben von Mitlebenden. Leipzig: Voigtländers Verlag.
- Kolb, R. and Wengert, T. (eds) 2000. The book of concord – The confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Kriele, E. 1928. Geschichte der Rheinischen Mission, Erster Band, Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat. Barmen: Missionshaus.
- Kroker, E. 1925. Katharina von Bora – Martin Luthers Frau – Ein Lebens- und Charakterbild. Zwickau (Sachsen): Johannes Hermann.
- Kropatschek, G. (ed) 1929. Der Kleine Katechismus D. Martin Luthers – Mit Bildern von Rudolf Schäfer. Potsdam: Stiftungsverlag.
- Krüger, B. 1966. The pear tree blossoms – A history of the Moravian mission stations in South Africa, 1737–1869. Genadendal: Genadendal Printing Works.
- Lehmann, H. 1974. 150 Jahre Berliner Mission. Erlangen: Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission.
- Loewenich, W. 1986. Martin Luther – The man and his work. Translated by Lawrence Denef. Augsburg: Augsburg Publishing House.
- LW. Luther's Works vols. 1–55, edited by J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, and H. T. Lehmann. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers/St Louis: Concordia Publishing House. [The entire edition is available in digital format on a CD, available from Libronix Digital Library System].
- Mau, C. 1985. Budapest 1984 – 'In Christus – Hoffnung für die Welt' Offizieller Bericht der 7. Vollversammlung des LWB. Budapest Ungarn, 22. 7.–5. 8. 1984. LWB-Report Nr. 19/20, Kreuz Verlag.
- Nürberger, K. 2005. Martin Luther's message for us today: A perspective from the South. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- 2016. Faith in Christ today: Invitation to systematic theology. Volumes I & II. London: Exlibris / Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
- Ottermann, R. 1995. The centenary of the Synod 1895–1995, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church). Cape Town: CTP Book Printers.
- Peters, A. 1990. Kommentar zu Luthers Katechismen, Band 1: Die Zehn Gebote. (Herausgegeben G. Seebaß) Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- 1991. Kommentar zu Luthers Katechismen, Band 2: Der Glaube – Das Apostolikum. (Herausgegeben G. Seebaß) Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- 1992. Kommentar zu Luthers Katechismen, Band 3: Das Vaterunser. (Herausgegeben G. Seebaß) Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- 1993. Kommentar zu Luthers Katechismen, Band 4: Die Taufe. Das Abendmahl. (Herausgegeben G. Seebaß) Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- 1994. Kommentar zu Luthers Katechismen, Band 5: Die Beichte. Die Haustafel. Das Traubüchlein. Das Taufbüchlein. (Herausgegeben G. Seebaß) Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- RPP = RGG. Religion Past and Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion. 2007, vol. II, Bia–Chr, edited by H. D. Betz et al. Leiden/Boston.
- Scheig, H. F. 1979. The 450th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism 'What does this mean?' Wisconsin: Aid Association for Lutherans Appleton.
- Scriba, G. 1996, 1997 (2nd ed), 2009 (3rd ed). Credo – ein Glaubensbüchlein der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche im Südlichen Afrika (Natal-Transvaal). Pietermaritzburg: Luthos Edition.

- 1997, 2005 (2nd), 2009 (3rd), 2014 (4th) Credo – A Booklet of Faith for the Evangelical-Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa. Pietermaritzburg: Luthos Edition.
 - 2006. The 16th century plague and the present AIDS pandemic: A comparison of Martin Luther's reaction to the plague and the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Southern Africa today. J TSA no. 126, November 2006: 66–80.
 - 2011. Das Zeugnis der lutherischen Kirche im südlichen Afrika von Christus als Hoffnung für die Welt in der Auseinandersetzung mit der Apartheid, in Lutherische Kirche in der Welt, Jahrbuch des Martin-Luther-Bundes Folge 58:199–220.
 - 2014 (4th edition). Credo – A booklet of faith for the Evangelical-Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa. Pietermaritzburg: Luthos Edition.
 - 2015. The growth of Lutheran missions and churches in Southern Africa. History of Christian faith(s): Discovering the Way, the Truth and the Life. From text to historical discovery of faith in the Lutheran missions and churches in Southern Africa. Fifth-Year Course in Howick. [Unpublished].
 - 2017. Martin Luther's Small Catechism. A Power-Point-Presentation, Archive of Old and New Catechisms and Connected Material – 100 slides. Howick, 14 March 2017. Available at 2 Lakeview Road, Howick.
- Steinmetz, R. 1927. Martin Luthers Kleiner Katechismus – in Fragen und Antworten ausgelegt. Hannover: Stephansstift [1947 and 1958 reprinted for the Hermannsburg 'Deutsche evangelisch-lutherische Synode Südafrikas'].
- Sundermeier, T. 1977. Südafrikanische Passion – Linolschnitte von Azariah Mbatha. Luther-Verlag Bielefeld, Ausaat Verlag Wuppertal.
- Thielicke, H. 1960. Our Heavenly Father – The prayer that spans the world. Sermons on the Lord's Prayer. Translated by John Doberstein. New York: Herper & Row.
- TRE. Theologische Realenzyklopadie. 1988. Band XVII. Jesus Christus V – Katechismuspredigt, edited by G. Müller et al. Berlin/New York.
- Voges, H. 2004. Vision: Global congregation – The task in Southern Africa (Translated by A. Hambroek). Pretoria [Deutsche Fassung in Ernst-August Lüdemann, 2000, Vision: Gemeinde weltweit – 150 Jahre Hermannsburger Mission und Ev.-Luth. Missionswerk in Niedersachsen, Verlag der Missionshandlung Hermannsburg, 233–353.]
- Wiese, H. 's a'. Regen und Segen im Missionsleben. Nach lutherischer Katechismusordnung in Beispielen dargeboten. Hermannsburg: Missionshandlung.
- Zwanepol, K. 2011. The structure and dynamics of Luther's catechism. Acta Theologica vol. 31, no. 2, 394–411.

Websites and Information:

(Unofficial Website) ELCSA:

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Meadows/7589/elcsa.htm>

(Unofficial Website) Moravian Church:

http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Meadows/7589/morav_en.html

ELCSA (N-T) Website:

<http://www.elcsant.org.za>

ELCSA (Cape Church) Website:

<http://www.uelcsa.org.za/Cape/CapeChurch.htm>

ELKIN (DELK) in Namibia Website:

<http://www.elkin-delk.org>

United Church (UELCSA) Website:

<http://www.uelcsa.org.za>

Lutheran Theological Institute (LTI) Website:

<http://www.sorat.ukzn.ac.za/lti/>

Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) Website:

<http://www.lucsa.org>

http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/religion_0.pdf

Appendix:

*Luthers Leben und Theologie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*¹⁵

Luthers Leben und Theologie als Kampf mit seinen Erfahrungen, als Reaktion auf traditionelle Autoritäten und Kontroversen sowie als Herausforderung zu neuen theologischen Erkenntnissen und geistlichen Einsichten.

Vorreformatoren:

Girolamo Savonarola/Italien (1452–1498);

John Wyclif/England (1320–1384);

Jan Hus/Tschechien-Böhmen (1373–1415);

Petrus Waldes/Lyon (Frankreich) c 1170.

Rechter Flügel Evangelischer Flügel radikaler linker Flügel
[römische Katholiken] [Lutheraner] [Reformierte] [Wiedertäufer/Schwärmer]

Jahre	Die Person	Das Werk	kirchliche Aspekte	politische Dimensionen
1483–1505	Der Mensch Martin Luther: geb. 10. 11. 1483 in Eisleben; Bergmannssohn mit bäuerlichem Hintergrund	Strenge Erziehung und Ausbildung in Mansfeld, Magdeburg und Erfurt; liebt Singen; fürchtet den Tod	Zeit von Aberglauben, Teufeln und Heiligen (Hl. Anna), die Kirche bietet Rettung durch gute Werke an	gesellschaftlich: von bäuerlich-leibeigener zu kaufmännischer Lage; frühkapitalistische Situation; Machtkampf (Papst – Kaiser)

¹⁵ Inspiriert durch: Bernhard Lohse, Luthers Theologie in ihrer historischen Entwicklung und in ihrem systematischen Zusammenhang, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1995, Übersetzung: Rainer Stahl, Erlangen.

Jahre	Die Person	Das Werk	kirchliche Aspekte	politische Dimensionen
1505–1515	Luther der Katholik: 17. 7. 1505 Eintritt ins Kloster: Mönch, Priester, 1510 Reise im Auftrag des Ordens nach Rom, Hochschullehrer, 1512 Doktor, 1517 Professor, 1515 Distriktsvikar des Augustiner-Eremiten-Ordens	Seine Frage: „Wie bekomme ich einen gnädigen Gott?“ Versuchte Antworten: als Mönch: Handlungen der Buße, Beichte der Sünden, Wege der Mystik; als Lehrer: „Ein zukünftiger Heiliger ist in seinen Unternehmungen gesegnet“ (1515)	Einflüsse: Wilhelm von Ockham (1285–1349) Via moderna, der Hl. Augustin, Bernhard von Clairvaux (Mystik), Humanismus: Erasmus von Rotterdam (besonders dessen Neuausgabe des griech. Neuen Testaments); Johannes Reuchlin (vor allem dessen hebräische Grammatik)	1502 Gründung der Universität von Wittenberg durch Friedrich den Weisen; er beruft 1508 Luther und 1518 Philipp Melancthon an die neue Universität.
1515–1518	Luther der Entdecker: Antwort aus der Schrift: „Turmerlebnis“ Offenbarung von „Gottes Gerechtigkeit“ (Röm 1,17); „Rechtfertigung durch Gnade, Glauben, durch Christus allein“	Arbeiten: Vorlesungen über die Psalmen, den Brief an die Römer, an die Galater, den Hebräerbrief; Briefe; 31. 10. 1517: 95 Thesen gegen den Verkauf des Ablasses. Gegen die scholastische Theologie: „Theologie des Kreuzes“ (Heidelberger Disputation 1518)	Überwindung der Theologie des Mittelalters: Aristoteles, Thomas von Aquins, enge Einheit von Philosophie und Theologie. Auseinandersetzung über die Rechtfertigung aus Glauben	1519 Leipziger Disputation: die Bibel steht über der Tradition: Konzile und Papst können irren; zentral ist Christus

Jahre	Die Person	Das Werk	kirchliche Aspekte	politische Dimensionen
1518–1521	Luther, der Rebell und Marginalisierte: Von Wittenberg nach Worms: zunehmende Kritik am Papsttum, weil Reform ausbleibt	1520: Luthers Hauptwerke: Sermon von den Guten Werken; An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation; Von der babylonischen Gefangenschaft der Kirche; Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen	Hauptsächliche kirchliche Gegner: Tetzl, Kardinal Cajetan, Eck in der Leipziger Disputation, Leo X: Reduktion von 7 Sakramenten zu 2 (3) (Taufe/Abendmahl/Beichte); Unterscheidung zwischen Gesetz und Gnade; Freiheit: frei im Glauben, gebunden in der Liebe	1520 Papst Leo X.: Bannandrohungsbulle; 1521: Bannbulle; 1521: Kaiser Karl V. auf dem Reichstag von Worms verurteilt Luther; Luther beruft sich auf die Zeugnisse der Heiligen Schrift, klare Vernunftgründe und sein Gewissen in Gottes Wort gefangen. „Hier stehe ich, Gott helfe mir. Amen.“
1521–1525	Luther der Reformator: Übersetzer ins Deutsche, Vermittler, Ratgeber: Von der Wartburg nach Wittenberg (Junker Jörg, Freund und Feind der Bauern)	Werke 1522: Übersetzung des Neuen Testaments (gesamte Bibel 1534), erste Lieder, Vorlesungen zur Bibel. 1525 gegen Erasmus: Vom unfreien Willen. Melanchthons Loci Communes (1521); Dass Jesus Christus ein geborener Jude sei (1523)	1522 Invokavitpredigten wegen radikaler Reform in Wittenberg (Karlstadt). 1525 Diskussion über den freien Willen, verborgener und offener Gott; Lehre von den beiden Regierweisen Gottes	1525 gegen Schwärmer Karlstadt und Müntzer. 1525 Versöhner und Ratgeber im Bauernkrieg: erst Freund, dann Feind

Jahre	Die Person	Das Werk	kirchliche Aspekte	politische Dimensionen
1525–1530	Luther als Pfarrer: Heirat mit Katharina von Bora (1525), sechs Kinder; Tischgespräche mit Besuchern. Entwicklung der Evangelischen Kirche; 1528 Bekenntnis als Grundlage für das Augsburger Bekenntnis	Arbeiten für Gemeindeaufbau: 1523: Dass eine christliche Versammlung Recht hat, Lehrer zu berufen; Deutsche Messe; 1525 Deutsche Messe 1526 Taufe, Hochzeitsordnung, Predigten; 1529 Kleiner und Großer Katechismus	1526 Visitationen in Sachsen: innerlutherische Kirchenreform für Gemeinden und Pfarrer. 1526–29: Auseinandersetzung mit Zwingli über das Hl. Abendmahl: 1529 Marburger Gespräch: Verständigung über 14 von 15 Artikeln: Unterschied beim Abendmahlsverständnis	1527 Pest in Wittenberg; 1529 Evangelische Reichsstände protestieren in Speyer, daher „Protestanten“ 25. 6. 1530 Augsburger Bekenntnis (Philipp Melancthon) auf dem Reichstag in Augsburg
1530–1546	Luther als Kirchenführer: Luther in Coburg. Bildung der lutherischen Kirche. Kontroversen innerhalb und außerhalb (Bigamie von Philipp von Hessen). Verschärfung der Positionen gegenüber dem Papst; Verschärfung der Haltung zu den Juden (1543). Luther stirbt in Eisleben 18. 2. 1546	Werke: Vorlesungen über biblische Bücher (z. B. die Genesis); Gesangbuch mit 30 Liedern: 1527 Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott. 1537 Schmalkaldische Artikel; 1539 Von Konziliis und Kirchen (sieben Zeichen der wahren Kirche); seelsorgerliche Briefe zur Beratung von Vornehmen und Freunden.	1534/35 Katastrophe der Wiedertäufer in Münster führt zu Verfolgungen; 1536 Übereinkunft zwischen Wittenbergern und Süddeutschen (Buzer) – zum Abendmahl; 1524–27, 1537–40 Auseinandersetzungen mit Agricola zum Gesetz: Luther unterscheidet zw. allgemeinem und rechtfertigendem Glauben; 1543 Einleitung zu Bullingers Ausgabe des Koran.	1531 Das Schmalkaldische Bündnis vereinigt die Evangelischen (einschließlich Städte und Adel). 1532 Nürnberger Anstand. Wiederholte Friedensversuche bis zum Konzil von Trient 1545–1563; Schmalkadischer Krieg 1546/47 führt zum Augsburger Interim 1548 und Augsburger Religionsfrieden 1555: cuius regio eius religio.