

Confessional Lutheran Theological Education in Latin America from Its Beginnings to the Present: Part One¹

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I. Introduction

Lutheranism and the formation of pastors have been present in Latin America for about 120 years. The aim of this essay is not to present an official history but only to highlight the main events, intentions, and forms of theological education (pastoral formation) in Latin America. Our sources include published books, reports, articles, personal consultations, and documentation from Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis (CHI).² This work is complicated because the information is scattered

¹ The Spanish original of this article is Sergio Fritzler, “Modelos de La Educación Teológica En Latinoamérica,” 2023, <https://media.ctsfw.edu/Text/ViewDetails/21688>.

The following abbreviations commonly occur in this article:

CETAL	Conferencia de Educación Teológica de América Latina (Conference of Theological Education of Latin America); same as LATEC
CITM	Centro Internacional de Treinamento Missionário (International Missionary Training Center), Instituto Concórdia de São Paulo
CLET	Centro Luterano de Estudios Teológicos (Lutheran Center of Theological Studies), Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala
CMSCR	Centro de Misericordia y Seminario Concordia “El Reformador” (Mercy Center and Concordia Seminary “The Reformer”), Palma Arriba, Dominican Republic
EdeM	Escuela de Misioneros (School of Missionaries)
ETH	Educación Teológica para Hispanoamérica (Theological Education for Hispanic America)
FPH	Formación Pastoral para Hispanoamérica (Pastoral Formation for Hispanic America)
IBL	Instituto Bíblico Luterano (Lutheran Bible Institute), Iglesia Luterana Confesional de Chile
IELA	Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina (Evangelical Lutheran Church—Argentina)
IELB	Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil), or Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Boliviana (Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church)
IELCHI	Iglesia Luterana Confesional de Chile (Confessional Lutheran Church of Chile); now abbreviated ILC-Chile
ILC	International Lutheran Council
ILV	Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela (Lutheran Church of Venezuela)
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LATEC	Latin American Theological Education Conference; same as CETAL

² This includes 3000 documents about the mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in Latin America.

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among the institutions and people who have been leading them in the past or present.³ Our aim is to present reflections that can lead to fraternal and honest discussions of our past and present, in order to look to the future.

To begin, it is important to set some foundations and premises in place. Theological education is inseparable from the man of faith (cf. 1 Tim 6:11),⁴ because it is about teaching God's word for redemption in Christ. :“The *fear* of the LORD is the beginning of *wisdom*, and the *knowledge* of the Holy One is *insight* [Spanish: *inteligencia*]” (Prov 9:10; my emphasis).⁵ “Wisdom” (חָכְמָה) is an ability such as dexterity, mastery, aptitude, or experience of the “fear of the LORD” (such as awe and reverence, recognition of who God is), which has to do with faith.⁶ “Knowledge” (דִּעָה) is a synonym to reaffirm the first phrase, and its object is the “holy,” or the “holy things.” The result is “insight” (intelligence or prudence, which is a chiasm⁷ with “wisdom”). It is not a question of speculative wisdom, like philosophy, but of something real and concrete, namely, knowing the triune and holy God. Therefore it is fundamentally the doctrine of faith.

Wisdom is the central theme of the book of Proverbs, because it is a type⁸ of Christ (especially in Prov 8). So, everything refers to him and is centered on him. Wisdom begins, Solomon says, with the fear of the Lord, which involves knowing and understanding the Holy One as the true understanding. Fear is only the beginning; the fear of the Lord establishes a basic foundation upon which knowledge and a life of godly wisdom in Christ is built. To fear is to worship and show reverence to God. It means to understand, to know, to comprehend who he is: the Holy One; the one who has no spot, no wrinkle, no blemish; the one who despises corruption and sin; but above all things, the one who loves his children.

Fearing and revering the Lord of Sinai is without meaning or purpose if it does not culminate on Mount Calvary. True wisdom is found only through the Son,

³ Erní Seibert states, “As histórias da igreja e da Educação Teológica na América Latina são de difícil pesquisa. Elas têm os seus registros espalhados em arquivos, bibliotecas e instituições, sendo trabalhosa e onerosa sua reunião.” Erní Seibert, “Educação Teológica Missionária Luterana na América Latina,” *Erní Seibert* (blog), May 17, 2009, <https://erniseibert.wordpress.com/2009/05/17/educacao-teologica-missionaria-luterana-na-america-latina/>.

⁴ The Old Testament notes that biblical education/catechesis/teaching occurred in the home (Deut 6:6–9; Exod 12:26), but it is also suggested that there was a school of prophets for the study of the Law in the time of Samuel (1 Sam 19:18–21, 10:5, 10:10) and also in the time of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:1, 2:3, 2:5, 4:38). The New Testament mentions the school of the apostle Paul under the teacher Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) and indicates that the apostle Paul used a school in Ephesus (“school of Tyrannus”) as a meeting place (Acts 19:9).

⁵ All Bible quotations are from the ESV.

⁶ Cf. SC, First Commandment.

⁷ A chiasm is a grammatical structure in repetition and reversal of word order. (A) The principle of wisdom is (B) the fear of the Lord; (B') knowledge of the Holy One is (A') understanding. This emphasizes the true nature of wisdom: fear and understanding of the Lord, the Holy One.

⁸ A “type” is an event, person, or thing in the Old Testament that has its fulfillment (antitype) in the New Testament in Christ.

because whoever has seen Jesus has seen the Father (John 14:9). Jesus is the fullness of Wisdom, because he is the fullness of deity (Col 2:9), as the apostle Paul wrote: “that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God’s mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:2–3). This brings us to the place where Christ can be found: the gospel. The writer to the Hebrews says, “In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb 1:2a). And there is assurance that we hear his voice in the living and active word of God (Heb 4:12; Rom 10:17; Luke 10:16). And through that word we are made “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim 3:15), by receiving through faith the incarnate Wisdom (in word and sacraments, for wisdom comes from the means of grace and grows through them). C. F. W. Walther affirms,

A person may pretend to be a Christian though in reality he is not. As long as he is in this condition, he is quite content with his knowledge of the mere outlines of Christian doctrine. Everything beyond that, he says, is for pastors and theologians. To understand as clearly as possible everything that God has revealed—all of that is irrelevant for non-Christians. However, the moment someone becomes a Christian, there arises in him a keen desire for the doctrine of Christ. If they have not yet been converted, at the moment of their conversion even the most uncultured peasants are suddenly awakened and begin to reflect on God and heaven, salvation and damnation, etc. They start to wonder about the deepest problems of human life.⁹

This is what theological education is all about: it is the action of the Holy Spirit in the knowledge (experience) of Christ (Wisdom) through faith (fear) for redemption (through the holy things). The purpose of theological education is the salvation of people through the preaching of the word to the ends of the earth. Therefore, theological education and mission are parts of the same reality—namely, the gospel.

Some important premises for this essay are: (a) Saint Matthew says (9:36–38), “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’” The multitudes without any shepherd, the compassion of Christ, the abundance of the harvest, and the scarcity of laborers are the reality of *a permanent context* until Christ returns. (b) Lutheran doctrine establishes the “whole” of theological education: the what, the why, the how, and the when. (c) Theological education establishes the future of the churches and their development, as stated by Prof. Claudio Flor: “The consequences of changes,

⁹ Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, *Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*, ed. Charles P. Schaum, John P. Hellwege Jr., and Thomas E. Manteufel, trans. Christian C. Tiews (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 17.

redirections, or simplification of theological training can be seen and measured only in 5 or 10 years, when those who are students today will be involved in active ministry.”¹⁰ And Flor adds, “Everything that is done today is sowing for tomorrow. This is why it is so important to make good decisions today,”¹¹ because theological education is never an end in itself but belongs to Christ and to him as the head of the church (his bride), which He directs and in which He is active by the means of grace. (d) Theological education, throughout the centuries, has dealt primarily with the office of preaching instituted by Christ, the prophetic and apostolic ministry. (e) Theological education demands a subscription to the true faith (cf. Josh 24:15). It deals with a distinction: either Christ and his gospel (theology revealed from above) or men, their history, and their context (theology from below). Fidelity to Christ demands theological coherence.¹² The importance of a solid, healthy, serious, confessional theological education has been the concern of all times (cf. 1 Tim 5:22).¹³

II. Education Is Determined by Its Theology (Theological Education)

Theological education is always a current and permanent theme, because it deals with the life of the church, the ministry and the mission of Jesus—that of preaching the gospel to all nations. For faith to exist, the word is needed. For the word to be proclaimed, flesh-and-blood people are needed to preach. And for it to be in accordance with Christ’s command, sending is needed, as the dynamics of the word in Romans 10 affirm (invoke, believe, hear, preach, send; or, send, preach, hear, believe, invoke). This dynamic of the word is taught in the early articles of the Augsburg Confession as the order of salvation, under the sequence of doctrines: God, sin, Christ, gospel, office of preaching, good works, church, and sacraments.

¹⁰ “Las consecuencias de cambios, redireccionamientos, o simplificación de la capacitación teológica podrán ser vistos y medidos solamente en 5 o 10 años, cuando los que hoy son estudiantes estarán involucrados en el ministerio activo.” Claudio Flor, “Editorial: El Seminario Concordia necesita su ayuda,” *El Nuevo Luterano* (IELA: June 1994): 6.

¹¹ “Todo lo que se haga hoy es siembra para el mañana. Por esto es tan importante tomar buenas decisiones hoy.” Flor, “Editorial,” 6.

¹² According to Pablo González, “La paradoja de toda institución de la iglesia. Servir bajo el ‘temor de Dios’ vs. bajo el ‘temor a los hombres’ (no se puede servir a dos señores = todo seminario luterano por servir a Cristo y al mismo tiempo vivir en el mundo experimenta tarde o temprano esta tensión). Un seminario que se entiende a partir de la revelación, a partir de ‘una teología de arriba’ no puede sino entender su tarea a partir de Cristo y sus dones. Un seminario que se entiende a partir de la experiencia o de la piedad ‘una teología de abajo’, se inclina a entender su tarea a partir de la praxis y de sus propias vivencias. Del mismo modo, el primero busca permanecer fiel a la revelación de Cristo en las Escrituras y el otro mantiene una fidelidad más fuerte hacia su práctica histórica y referentes humanos.” (Pablo González, email message to author, March 20, 2023)

¹³ This was mentioned by Gregory the Great in the opening chapter of his *Pastoral Rule* (*Regula pastoralis*) in AD 590. See Gregory the Great, *Regla Pastoral* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Paulinas, 1991), 30, 176–177.

Theological education is framed especially in articles IV, V, VII, and XIV of the Augsburg Confession, on the gospel, the sacraments, the ministry, and the church.¹⁴ The church confesses the gospel and holds that to obtain saving faith “God has instituted the office of preaching [*Predigtamt*], that is, he has given the gospel and the sacraments” (AC V).¹⁵ The church is mandated to appoint ministers (2 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:5). Since we subscribe to this wholeheartedly, we recognize the vital and integral relationship between theological education and our doctrines, the future of the church, and the evangelistic work of making disciples of all nations. As L. Dean Hempelmann says, “The Church is never built or preserved by our efforts, but only by her Word and Spirit. God’s power and grace are greater than mankind’s greatest achievements and failures. The Word of God endures forever (1 Pt 1:25).”¹⁶ It is not about the particular vision of a church but about what God’s word has established to be Christ’s church yesterday, today, and forever, here and everywhere.

The definition of what a worker in the pastoral office is determines theological education and its curriculum. That is, the answer to the question “What is a pastor?” determines our theological education. The doctrines of the church, the gospel, and the sacraments are the framework to understand theological education as instrumental (not an end in itself), according to what *we believe, teach, and confess*, as stated by Albert B. Collver:

Theological presuppositions frequently affect the shape of theological education. For example, a pietistic theology that has a lower view of the office of the ministry will design theological education differently than a theology that has a high view of the office of the ministry. Ultimately, the shape of theological education is determined by the views held about what is the Church and what is the Ministry (Articles VII and V of the Augsburg Confession). This provides the overall shape, and the views about Church and Ministry shape how the practical disciplines are taught. This stands to reason since the goal of seminary education is to train pastors. Therefore, the answer to what is a pastor will shape the theological education.¹⁷

According to what has been expressed, theological education deals with the formation of workers for the one office instituted by Christ, the office of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. That is, it deals with ordination to the

¹⁴ See also Tr 67; SA II III.

¹⁵ This wording is based on the German version of the AC, and is translated into English from Andrés A. Meléndez, ed., *Libro de Concordia: Las Confesiones de la Iglesia Evangélica Luterana* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 29.

¹⁶ L. Dean Hempelmann, “Concordia Lutheran Seminary, Theological Education, and Lutheran Church–Canada in the Twenty-First Century,” *Lutheran Theological Review* 6, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 1993): 81.

¹⁷ Albert B. Collver III, “Theological Education and the Global Seminary Initiative: A Review and Look to the Future,” *Journal of Lutheran Mission* 3, no. 1 (April 2016): 13.

ministry of teaching the gospel.¹⁸ Formation is necessary for the worker to shepherd “the flock of God” (1 Pet 5:2), to do “the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim 4:5), to be “fit to teach” (1 Tim 3:2), not to be “a neophyte” (1 Tim 3:6), to “hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9), and to “guard” what has been entrusted to him (1 Tim 6:20). Hence the apostle Paul’s recommendation to Timothy: “Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands” (1 Tim 5:22).

The concepts of “what the Church, the Gospel and the Sacraments are will shape mission and theological education. Mission seeks to propagate the Gospel and the Sacraments to form a church, while theological education then prepares people to proclaim the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments.”¹⁹ Mission and theological education go together, although they are distinguished.

In the thematic complex of theological education, a teacher (or professor) is fundamental. The office of “teacher” was very clear from the beginning of the church, and then it passed into the hands of the office of bishop. The apostle Paul calls himself a “teacher” in 2 Timothy 1:11: “I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher.” The teacher teaches only what Jesus taught. The teacher oversees the exposition of the Holy Scriptures and the faithful transmission of the teaching of the gospel.

The Scriptures speak of the teacher in a father-son relationship: “For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (1 Cor 4:15). “That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church” (1 Cor 4:17; cf. 1 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; Phlm 10).

Theological education is also about the tradition that is preserved and transmitted by the teacher in a spiritual relationship from father to son. *The teacher transmits what was transmitted to him.* Tradition is what has been taught. “I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you” (1 Cor 11:23a); “So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter” (2 Thess 2:15). This is the dynamic of Jesus with the Father: “All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matt 11:27). And it is the dynamic of Jesus with his disciples: “For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them” (John 17:8a). Theological education is the transmission of what was taught.

¹⁸ In a broader sense, theological education for auxiliary offices depends on the pastoral office.

¹⁹ Collver, “Theological Education and the Global Seminary Initiative,” 11.

III. The Practice of Doctrine

Theology (doctrine) and practice (life) are not two different components, nor two opponents, because each doctrine has a practice and each practice has a doctrine. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*: the rule for praying and the rule for believing are related. Doctrine and practice are part of the same reality. Thus, Lutheran theology has a definite practice, which is shaped by the requirements for the pastoral office (cf. 1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–16), requirements that are for all times and all places.

A Methodist pastor does not serve the same as a Lutheran, just as a Presbyterian pastor does not have the same practice as a Pentecostal. Lutherans have a common practice that comes from a common doctrine. The rite of ordination of the *Acompañamiento para el cuidado pastoral* (“Pastoral Care Companion”)²⁰ helps to clarify the biblical foundations (texts in which the unity between doctrine and practice can be seen) of the pastoral office, its responsibilities, and its promises.²¹

Doctrine and pastoral practice are established in these biblical texts of the rite of ordination. Doctrine and life do not present a new theological tension that would have to be solved by means of an equilibrium, as if they were two different things. As a theological definition, these are two aspects of the same reality. Those who see two separate things, and not two aspects of the same reality, argue that practice is determined by context, which would imply that context will set the agenda for what needs to be done according to their own needs. This parameter ends up negotiating with doctrine in a dialectic that is thought to be acceptable to all.

The separation between doctrine and practice was promoted by the professionalization of the pastorate by dividing the theological areas under philosophical presuppositions, leaving pastoral, or practical, theology as a separate area, with its own dynamics and function, and making it dependent on human, social sciences (such as sociology or psychology) and not on exegesis, systematic theology, or historical theology. In seminaries this great difficulty was made clear when candidates for the pastorate were formed in “theology” in the classrooms of seminaries, while “practice” was something that happened separately (as if theology had no relation to

²⁰ La Comisión para Adoración de La Iglesia Luterana del Sínodo de Missouri, ed., *Acompañamiento para el cuidado pastoral* (St. Louis: Editorial Concordia, 2015), 159–174; cf. Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Commission on Worship, *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 160–168.

²¹ The Institution of the Office of the Holy Ministry: Matthew 28:18–20; John 20:21–23 (Christ’s institution of the apostolic office). The Responsibilities of the Office of the Holy Ministry: John 21:15–17 (shepherding the sheep); Lk 24:46–47 (preaching repentance and forgiveness); 1 Cor 11:23–25 (celebrating the sacrament); 1 Tim 4:14–16 (taking care of the doctrine); 1 Cor 4:1–2 (administering the sacraments); 2 Cor 3:4–5 (sufficiency for the ministry comes from God); 2 Cor 5:17–21 (the message of reconciliation); 2 Tim 4:1–5 (preach the Word, be an evangelist); 1 Tim 3:1–7 (able to teach); Eph 4:11–12 (perfecting and edifying); Acts 20:28 (caring for the church); 1 Pet 5:2–4 (caring and being an example). The Strength and Promise in the Office of the Holy Ministry: Matt 5:13–16 (the light of the world); 2 Cor 10:17–18 (boasting in the Lord); 2 Tim 3:14–17 (the Scriptures for salvation).

practice), and then students united these two realities, being molded in vicarage experiences by the life and practice of the church. Many seminaries continue to struggle with this heritage of theological departments, and in order to bring a healthy understanding that practice arises from biblical and confessional doctrine, they have “crossed” and “related” the areas to pastoral practice and devotional life.²²

This false dichotomy (doctrine vs. life) and the concept that Jesus has given his gifts to the church to use as anyone may want and however he wants²³ are the product of false doctrinal concepts and the thinking of the world. This has led to new approaches and emphases in the Lutheran churches in Latin America: (1) It has led supposedly to more practical forms of theological education, or programs with an emphasis on ministry or mission as opposed to academic seminaries for pastoral formation.²⁴ From this arises: (2) Missionary pastors are seen as opposed to congregational pastors (mission as opposed to church). (3) The emphasis of Theological Education by Extension (TEE) is seen as more practical than a residential seminary. (4) The realization of an indigenous or contextualized (national) theology comes to be valued more than Lutheran theology (which is called “German,” as something foreign and alien to the Latino reality; that is, “Christian” is set against “Lutheran”).²⁵ (5) The functions of the pastoral office are democratized, and the people are thought of as in opposition to the ordained pastor. (A theology or practice that emphasizes the divine calling of the pastor is called “pastor centered” or “clericalism.”²⁶) From the previous points there follows (6) the formation of practical leaders (laity) who help or do pastoral functions (sometimes called the “urgent tasks”) because they do

²² Cf. Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Augsburg Fortress, 1994); Reinhard Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

²³ See Norman Nagel, “*Externum Verbum*: Testing Augustana V on the Doctrine of the Holy Ministry,” *Logia* 6, no. 3 (Holy Trinity 1997): 27–28.

²⁴ As was the case with Seminário Concordia of São Paulo (with emphasis on the missional) and Seminário Concordia of São Leopoldo (with emphasis on the academic), although any of the graduates could serve either in a congregation or in a mission. Or also in the LCMS: “Nos Estados unidos, houve um longo período em que se fazia distinção entre seminário clássico our acadêmico (o que Saint Louis foi desde o início) e seminário prático (o antigo seminário em Springfield), mas nunca se esteve sem o seminário.” Congregação de Professores do Seminário Concórdia, [São Leopoldo], “O Projeto de Formação Teológica do Seminário Concórdia em Convênio com a Universidade Luterana do Brasil,” *Vox Concordiana* 17, no. 1 (2002): 8.

²⁵ When I studied at the Buenos Aires seminary (1992–1999), most of the professors rejected or were uninterested in what was specifically “Lutheran.” They did not say it openly, but they encouraged us to be creative in finding modern answers because the problems were modern. This theological approach always ended in a fascination for what other, more supposedly practical theologians presented as ideas that worked. In fact, many books of other theologies, such as Baptist and Methodist, were used.

²⁶ Instituto Teológico de Extensão Juan de Fries, “En Cristo capacitar para servir: Manual: Documento de Trabajo” (unpublished manuscript, July 2002), PDF file, 14–15. The author of this manual was Marcos Kempff. This document differentiates between a pastor (who is ordained) and a deacon (who does everything the pastor does but with his authorization, and for this he is “installed”).

not have pastors trained “academically” in a seminary (which sets the royal priesthood²⁷ in opposition to the Office of the Holy Ministry²⁸). (7) Doing the work that God left to his church according to the mandate of the “Great Commission” (by the universal priesthood of all believers) is put in opposition to the view of the church in which Christ is the head who directs, actively acts, and places his pastors (emphasizing the institution of Christ and service in vocations). (8) The formation of local leaders who will then be ministers is emphasized over against the task of first forming Christians who will be able to be pastors later according to a divine call and pastoral formation. In addition, the false dichotomy between doctrine and life has led to (9) admiration for the methods and practices of other denominations while despising the Lutheran form as outdated and obsolete, which has also led to the rejection of the use of rites (such as liturgy, hymns, etc.). This has also led to (10) the use of the social sciences as that which should determine the forms or practices of the churches (contextualization of worship, pastoral psychology, sociology for determining mission, etc.).

In the attempts to solve this false dichotomy a third component was implemented: the *missio Dei* (“mission of God”), not only as the mother of theology²⁹ but also as the mother of the church.³⁰ From the Lutheran understanding, the dichotomy between doctrine and practice is a reality for the fallen human being in his flesh, but for God it is false. Rather, this dichotomy consists of two components of that which Luther calls the “passive life” (*vita passiva*).³¹

Although “passive” sounds inert or dead, “passive” is active in the life of faith. It is a life “receptive” to God’s gifts, where God is the subject of theology and the Christian is the object of God’s action. The receptive life of the Christian is the active life of God. Oswald Bayer affirms, “The Christian life therefore is *passive* in the sense

²⁷ See Timothy C. J. Quill, “Theological Education in International Missions in the Twenty-First Century: International Lutheran Conference, Prague, Czech Republic, October 6, 2011,” *Journal of Lutheran Mission* 4, no. 3 (December 2017): 33.

²⁸ As stated in Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina (IELA) in the 1980s: “El Espíritu Santo dotó a la Iglesia con diversos ministerios, ENTRE los que se ubica EL DON DEL PASTORADO” Carlos Drachenberg et al. “Documento: Informe: ‘Comité de Reflexiones – Conclusiones,’” *Revista Teológica*, no. 123 (Buenos Aires: Seminario Concordia, 1986): 33.

²⁹ “A educação teológica sempre precisa usar a visão da missão impelida por Deus como o prisma avaliativo para tudo aquilo que ela faz na teoria e na prática. A missão de Deus precisa ser a matriz que julga cada plano e ação educacional.” Eugene W. Bunkowske, “Educação teológica e missão,” in *A missão de Deus diante de um novo milênio*, ed. Erní W. Seibert (Porto Alegre: Concórdia Editora, 2000), 127.

³⁰ Debates between two routes for ministry in the 2009 PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional [a document that outlines the identity, mission, vision, and pedagogical organization of a school]) of the Seminary of the IELA (Argentine Lutheran Church), where BST (Bachiller Superior en Teología, “Higher Bachelor of Theology”) was the pastorate to sustain the churches and the BSM (Bachiller Superior en Misión, “Higher Baccalaureate in Mission”) was to be missionary and plant churches. Then only one track was determined, the BST with a strong missional emphasis.

³¹ John W. Kleinig, “Pastoral Formation in Theological Education: Retrospect and Prospect,” *Logia Online* (blog), September 12, 2010, <https://logia.org/logia-online/21/>.

that it *suffers*, it *undergoes* God's work and so passively receives it.³² This statement is based on Luther's classic definition: "One becomes a theologian by living, or rather dying and being condemned always, not by understanding, reading or speculating."³³

Theological education is the death of the old Adam with his human reasoning and thoughts, and at the same time, it is life in Christ by the forgiveness of sins, the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16b), true life and salvation by his word. Pastoral formation is a process that aims at the ability "to teach" (1 Tim 3:2), understanding teaching as the proclamation of the good news of Christ, under law and gospel, and the administration of the sacraments. Theological education forms a "*habitus practicus theosdotos*" ("a God-given practical habit"), by which the theologian is formed by God himself, through the continual reception of the Holy Spirit.³⁴ Theology, as *habitus practicus theosdotos*, is not the practical action of the theologian but is the saving action of God in the *passive and receptive life*. Luther taught very well, based on Psalm 119, that learning the Scriptures is a continuous and permanent process consisting of three parts: *oratio*, *meditatio* and *tentatio* ("prayer," "meditation," and "trial").

Oratio is anchored in reading and hearing these Scriptures, which create faith in Jesus Christ and ignite prayer. *Meditatio* is immersion in the biblical text, by which the person is taken out of himself to place him in the promises of Christ (faith) and in the need of the neighbor (love).³⁵ And Luther describes *tentatio* this way: "I didn't learn my theology all at once. I had to ponder over it ever more deeply, and my spiritual trials were of help to me in this, for one does not learn anything without practice. This is what the spiritualists and sects lack. They don't have the right adversary, the devil."³⁶

³² Oswald Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, trans. Mark C. Mattes (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 22.

³³ Martin Luther, *Operationes in Psalmos* (1519–1521), *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe [Schriften]*, 73 vols. [Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–2009], 5:163.28–29 [hereafter cited as WA]: "Vivendo, immo moriendo et damnando fit theologus, non intelligendo, legendo aut speculando."). See Bayer, *Theology the Lutheran Way*, 24.

³⁴ John Kleinig, "Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio: What Makes a Theologian?" in *Preparing Lutheran Pastors for Today: ILC—Theological Seminaries World Conference*, ed. Paulo Moisés Nerbas (Canoas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil: Universidade Luterana do Brasil, 2006), 20. "Habit" implies an activity. But here it refers not to any act of the human being but rather to God's activity in the person. As "practical," this term indicates the purpose of the Scriptures: the salvation of the human being by the concrete administration of the means of grace. As "given by God," this habit is based on the action of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace in the spiritual knowledge revealed through faith, receiving the forgiveness given.

³⁵ John Pless, "Luther's *Oratio, Meditatio*, and *Tentatio* as the Shape of Pastoral Care for Pastors," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 80, no. 1–2 (January/April 2016): 41.

³⁶ Martin Luther, Table talk of fall 1532, in *Luther's Works, American Edition*, vols. 1–30, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955–1976), vols. 31–55, ed. Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia/Minneapolis: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1957–1986), vols. 56–82, ed. Christopher

Learning theology is a spiritual struggle with the devil. “For as soon as God’s Word takes root and grows in you, the devil will harry you, and will make a real doctor [i.e., teacher of theology] of you, and by his assaults will teach you to seek and love God’s Word.”³⁷

The passive life is about reception, about being in God’s presence like a beggar, learning the word by praying for the Holy Spirit to be the Teacher and Professor. This does not lead to a neglect of exegesis and serious study but rather emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit and the attitude of the theologian as a receiver, as one who begs from God.

The cycle of theological education (*oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio*) occurs in all areas of the life of study in the word, but it is especially identified in the chapel, local church, and devotional life (for *oratio*); in the classroom, library, and study (for *meditatio*); and in one’s service and work in congregations and in one’s personal life (for *tentatio*). And then, it always returns to the liturgy. It is meet and right that God’s word be breathed, thought, and spoken at all times and in all places. A confessional-Lutheran theological education will happen in the various places of a seminary student’s life: the chapel (life in preaching), the congregation (sacramental life), the classroom (teaching), the library (research), the student’s desk (the life of study and reflection), the streets, the houses, the hospitals, the houses of mercy and the squares (the pastoral and evangelistic life), and his dormitory (the daily and recreational life). And this always returns to the chapel or church in the liturgy (the source of theological education).

According to these concepts about theological education, we shall now set forth important documents, situations, and historical events that influenced or marked theological education in large part or in all of Latin America, from the beginning of the Lutheran church in Latin America until today.

IV. The Beginning of Theological Education in Latin America: The Triad of Mission, Seminary, and Church

The first model of theological education in Latin America is the so-called master-apprentice model. The current Seminário Concórdia of São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, had its beginnings under this model, on October 27, 1903, as the “Institute for the Formation of Teachers and Preachers” in the town of Buen Jesús, municipality of São Lorenzo, Brazil.³⁸

Boyd Brown and Benjamin T. G. Mayes (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009–), 54:50, no. 352 (= *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Tischreden*, 6 vols. [Weimar: Böhlau, 1912–1921], 1:147.3–14).

³⁷ Martin Luther, *Preface to German Writings* (1539), in AE 34:287.

³⁸ “At the district convention in Sítio, January 13 to 18, 1908, the name was changed from ‘Institute’ to *Seminário Concórdia*.” Paulo Buss, “Relations Between the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Igreja Evangelica Luterana do Brasil” (master’s thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1981), 125.

The LCMS national convention held in Saint Louis in April 1899 had decided to begin missionary work in Novo Hamburgo, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, at the request of the German pastor Johann Friedrich Brutschin (1844–1919), who wanted to retire upon the arrival of a substitute. Then the LCMS sent missionary Christian James Broders (1867–1932) in 1900. But Brutschin had decided to continue the work. (He later joined the LCMS.) Then “Broders went to look for Lutheran immigrants further south, in Rio Grande do Sul, and founded a new congregation (the first of the Missouri Synod in Brazil) in the São Pedro colony, municipality of Pelotas.”³⁹ In the following years several missionaries arrived and in 1904 formed the first convention of the Brazilian Lutheran Church. The communities were represented by eight pastors, one teacher, and seven lay delegates. On June 24, 1904, the Brazilian District of the Lutheran Church of Missouri was founded.⁴⁰

Before the church was officially constituted in 1904, theological education was formalized in April 1903 with the “Institute for the Formation of Teachers and Preachers.” This is how Paulo Buss describes it: “The matter was considered at the very first meeting of the Pastoral Conference of São Lourenço, from April 20 to 22, 1903. . . . Mahler [the director of the mission] moved that an institute for the formation of preachers and teachers be founded for the work of the Lutheran Church in South America. The motion was adopted. In fact, according to Pastor John Hartmeister, who became the first professor at the Institute, the idea had already been brought from the United States.”⁴¹ The need to have pastoral formation together with mission is expressed as follows, by Pastor Hartmeister himself:

The will to train an indigenous ministry in Brazil went with us from the Seminary in St. Louis. We had before us the example of the fathers in Perry County, Missouri. Most of us had seen the venerable log cabin at Altenburg, which was then standing in a pasture and was pointed out to us as the first College of the Missouri Synod. From church history under A. L. Graebner we had learned by the example of the Swedes on the Delaware that a Church without an indigenous ministry is doomed to extinction. We had come to Brazil to plant the Church of the pure doctrine. If our work was to succeed, we needed a school for the training of native church workers.⁴²

³⁹ Paulo Buss, email message to author, April 26, 2023, trans. author and editors.

⁴⁰ Carlos Henrique Warth, *Crônicas da Igreja: fatos históricos da Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil: 1900-1974* (Porto Alegre: Concórdia S.A., 1979), 24.

⁴¹ Buss, “Relations,” 118–119.

⁴² John Hartmeister, “The Sowing of a Mustard Seed,” *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (January 1950): 166.

An article in the *Kirchenblatt*,⁴³ entitled “An Institute for the Formation of Teachers and Preachers,” gave the reasons for the local training of pastors: (1) The cost of forming pastors on the spot was far more affordable than bringing in teachers from abroad. (2) A goal was to strengthen the church with home-grown leadership. (3) Self-sufficiency, so as not to depend on foreign aid.⁴⁴

The Institute trained for a bivocational ministry: to be a parochial schoolteacher and to be a pastor.⁴⁵ The students lived in a family environment with their teacher in a modest one-story house located in the yard of the parsonage, which served as a dormitory, and the classroom was the church itself (sanctuary).⁴⁶ The first director and only teacher, Pastor John Hartmeinster, carried out all the tasks of theological education within the framework of his house-church-school (the pastoral family and five students). In the morning they worked,⁴⁷ and in the afternoon they were in the classroom, while the pastor in the morning taught in the parish school for boys and in the afternoon in the seminary. This intense life was further complicated by the death of the pastor’s daughter (Rahel) from a whooping-cough epidemic in September 1904, resulting in a collapse, especially for Mrs. Hartmeister, so that, at the beginning of 1905, the seminary was closed. Two students would continue in the

⁴³ The magazine was called *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Kirchenblatt für Süd-Amerika* (Evangelical Lutheran church bulletin for South America), which began in 1903, at the same time as the seminary.

⁴⁴ “S. Lourenço. Ein Institut zur Ausbildung von Lehrern und Predigern. Der obige Titel bezeichnet ein Werk, das erst im Werden begriffen ist, wodurch aber, wie wir hoffen, Ströme geistlichen Segens über unsere Kirche in diesem Lande fließen werden. Zweck und Ziel dieses Unternehmens ist: begabten jungen Leuten soviel theologischen und wissenschaftlichen Unterricht zu geben, daß sie als Lehrer oder Prediger der Kirche in ihrem eigenen Lande dienen können. Ein Zweifaches stand dabei vor Augen, zunächst die hohen Reisekosten für auswärtige Arbeiter in Zukunft zu sparen, so dann (und das ist der Hauptpunkt), die hiesige Kirchen mit hier geborenen und aufgewachsenen Dienern zu versorgen, daß also die Kirche, so zusagen, aus sich selbst wachse und erstarke. Dann erst, wenn die hiesige Kirche selbst ihre Lehrer und Prediger ausbildet, kann sie hoffen, einmal selbstständig und vom Ausland unabhängig zu werden. Ein gesundes Kind will doch zuletzt selbst stehen und gehen lernen.

“Nach den hiesigen Verhältnissen, besonders auf den Kolonien, wird ein zweifacher Kursus eingerichtet werden, einer, in dem Jünglinge in etwa 4 Jahren zu Schullehrern herangebildet werden. Solche könnten eine Stelle übernehmen, wo win Pfarrer aus der Umgegend die Kirchendienste versieht. In diesem Kursus würde eine gründliche Kenntnis der Sachen, die in der Schule Verwendung finden, vermittelt werden; sowie eine genügende Kenntnis der deutschen und portugiesischen Sprache, und notdürftige Einführung in die höheren Rechnungsarten, Geschichts- und Erdkunde und ähnliche Gegenstände.”

J. Hartmeister, “Kirchliche Nachrichten,” *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Kirchenblatt für Süd-Amerika* 1, no. 3 (December 1903): 23; also quoted partially in L[udwig] F[ürbringer], “Zur kirchlichen Chronik: America,” *Der Lutheraner* 60, no. 2 (Jan. 19, 1904): 23.

⁴⁵ A parochial school was an elementary school that was called *Deutsche Schule* (German school), in which language (German), history, mathematics, geography, etc. were taught.

⁴⁶ Paulo Buss, email message to author, April 26, 2023.

⁴⁷ “To help earn their board and room the students worked four hours a day, from 7:30 to 11:30 a.m. One of them helped to prepare the meals and the other four worked in the fields.” Buss, “Relations,” 121; see also 118–120.

United States in order to finish their studies. As for the other three, they were invited to teach at various parochial schools. Two of the latter finished the seminary in 1915 after it had reopened on May 1, 1907, in Porto Alegre.⁴⁸

The first graduation at Concordia Seminary “took place in 1912, when three students completed their teacher-training program. The first five pastoral candidates graduated in 1915.”⁴⁹ At this first pastoral graduation there was a student sent from Argentina (Bertholdo H. E. Ergang, 1894–1977).⁵⁰ But the lack of pastors remained the reality of the nascent church in Brazil and then in Argentina.⁵¹ Buss states, “The need for North American pastors persisted long afterward because the graduating classes at the Brazilian seminary were much too small to meet the demand for pastors in Brazil.”⁵²

In 1953, the thirty-first convention of the IELB decided to separate pretheological studies from the seminary. The issue was resolved in 1959 with the approval of the LCMS, as stated by Rudi Zimmer: “In summary, the LCMS approved the plan, defining the permanence of the Concordia Seminary in Porto Alegre, with a 4-year curriculum, including one year of vicarage.”⁵³ In 1967, the course to train teachers, which began together with the seminary (1903), was transferred to the Vera Cruz School in Porto Alegre. In the convention of 1976, it was decided to unify the pretheological and theological in São Leopoldo, but this happened only in 1982; and in 1983, parallel to the unification, the seminary in São Paulo began.⁵⁴ The decade of the 1980s saw much convulsion concerning concepts of education and educational interests in Brazil.⁵⁵

Two remarkable events in the rich history of Seminário Concórdia in Brazil happened in the 1990s and 2000s:

⁴⁸ Buss, “Relations,” 124, 126.

⁴⁹ Buss, “Relations,” 143.

⁵⁰ Later he was the first director and professor of the preseminary, the Colegio Concordia of Crespo.

⁵¹ The Church of Argentina emerged in 1905 when its first missionary, Pastor Henry Wittrock, arrived from Brazil. The church was part of the Brazil District under the “Department of Mission of the Brazilian District” for 15 years. Samuel H. Beckmann, “El Departamento de Misión (‘Missionskommission’) y su área de actividades,” in *IELA: 90 años de Historia*, ed. Claudio L. Flor (Buenos Aires: Seminario Concordia, 1995), 16. Starting in 1920 it formed the “Missionskommision Argentina,” the Mission Commission for Argentina, although this commission depended on the District of Brazil. Finally, in 1928 the “Distrito Argentino de la Iglesia Evangélica Luterana—Sínodo de Misuri” was organized. Beckmann, “El Departamento de Misión,” 22.

⁵² Buss, “Relations,” 143.

⁵³ “Em resumo, a LCMS aprovou o plano, definindo a permanência do Seminário Concórdia em Porto Alegre, com um currículo de 4 anos, sendo um de estágio.” Rudi Zimmer, “A história da educação teológica na IELB,” *Vox Concordiana* 17, no. 1 (Instituto Concórdia de São Paulo, 2002): 27–43, here at 34.

⁵⁴ Zimmer, “A história da educação teológica na IELB,” 33–38.

⁵⁵ Cf. Zimmer, “A história da educação teológica na IELB,” 35–37.

On December 30, 1994, with the signing of the Agreement on Mutual Cooperation (IELB-ULBRA)—Third Annex: Theological Education, Concordia Seminary entered a new phase of its existence.⁵⁶ Teachers began working at Concordia Seminary and the ULBRA Bachelor of Christian Education Course and students studied at the same time in the ULBRA Teacher's Degree [*Licenciatura*] Course and the Concordia Seminary Baccalaureate Course. After the adoption of this agreement in November 2000, the nomenclature was changed to Baccalaureate in ULBRA and Specialization in Theology and Qualification [*Habilitação*] for the Pastoral Ministry in Concordia Seminary. In October 2002, the Board of Directors of the IELB decided to unify the Faculty of Theology of São Paulo with Concordia Seminary of São Leopoldo, RS.⁵⁷

Seminário Concórdia of São Leopoldo celebrates 120 years of existence in 2023! Up to the present time, the seminary has formed 1,204 pastors,⁵⁸ who have served and still serve mainly in Brazil, but also around the world,⁵⁹ especially in the Latin America and Caribbean region by an agreement between the LCMS and IELB,⁶⁰ with four missionaries serving this year. The seminary also initiated a master's program in 1979, in addition to advanced courses.⁶¹ The master's program in recent years has added several pastors from Latin America.

At present, there have been changes to the agreement with ULBRA, which has resulted in some challenges for Concordia Seminary. The current director is Gerson Linden.

We can conclude this section and affirm the triad “mission, seminary, and church” as the basis for the building of a solid, mature, and responsible church for

⁵⁶ The IELB is the Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil), and ULBRA is the Universidade Luterana do Brasil (Lutheran University of Brazil).

⁵⁷ “Em 30 de dezembro de 1994, com a assinatura do Convênio de Mútua Cooperação (IELB-ULBRA) – Aditivo Terceiro: Educação Teológica, o Seminário Concórdia entrou em nova fase de sua existência. Os professores passaram a atuar no Seminário Concórdia e no curso de Licenciatura em Educação Cristã da ULBRA, e os alunos cursaram ao mesmo tempo a Licenciatura da ULBRA e o Bacharelado do Seminário Concórdia. Com a adequação havida neste convênio em novembro de 2000, alterou-se a nomenclatura para Bacharelado na ULBRA e Especialização em Teologia e Habilitação para o Ministério Pastoral no Seminário Concórdia. Em outubro de 2002, o Conselho Diretor da IELB decidiu unificar a Escola Superior de Teologia de São Paulo com o Seminário Concórdia em São Leopoldo, RS.” “História e Hino,” Seminário Concórdia, São Leopoldo, last modified 2022, <https://seminarioconcordia.com.br/site/historia-e-hino/>.

⁵⁸ Gerson Linden, email message to author, 2022.

⁵⁹ “Como escola oficial da IELB, o Seminário Concórdia já formou centenas de pastores que têm atuado e atuam em cerca de 1900 congregações e pontos de missão no Brasil e no exterior (Chile, Paraguai, Argentina, Uruguai, Estados Unidos, Alemanha, Venezuela, Bélgica, Canadá, Portugal, Guatemala, África do Sul, Inglaterra, Panamá e República Dominicana).” “História e Hino,” Seminário Concórdia, São Leopoldo, <https://seminarioconcordia.com.br/site/historia-e-hino/>.

⁶⁰ Cf. “Projeto Aliança,” *Mensageiro Luterano*, March 5, 2021, <https://mensageiroluterano.com.br/diretoria-nacional/projeto-alianca/>.

⁶¹ These courses for pastors were also offered by the seminary in São Paulo.

its task, which, while strengthened by national ministers, does not leave mission aside but recognizes it as part of the mandate and work of Christ (Tit 1:5, 1:9; 2 Tim 2:2).⁶²

V. The Impact of the World Wars

LCMS missions that began in Brazil (1900) and Argentina (1905) spoke only in German, and pastoral formation at Concordia Seminary in Brazil was also in the same language (as were all the available books).

The First World War changed this. “In January 1918, the seminary [in Brazil] was closed by order of the Military Police because it taught in the German language. The students were sent as vicars to the congregations.”⁶³ By the end of this year (1918) the restriction on the use of German was lifted. “By 1938, eighty-four percent of the preaching was still done in German, while only 16 percent was done in Portuguese.”⁶⁴ They were not prepared to adopt the Portuguese language fully.

In 1939 and the years that followed, Brazil’s “nationalization laws” required all pastors to preach in Portuguese. Then the rule was added that there was no longer a permanent visa for foreigners, and the tourist visa with which they could enter allowed them to stay only six months. All of this complicated the work of the IELB and its seminary (which trained pastors not only for Brazil but also for Argentina).⁶⁵

In August 1942, Brazil declared war on Germany, Italy, and Japan and prohibited the use of German, not only in preaching, teaching, books, etc. but also in daily life and pastoral care, such as pastoral visits.⁶⁶ This also affected the seminary in its

⁶² Timothy C. J. Quill, “Theological Education in International Mission,” in *Propter Christum: Christ at the Center*, ed. Scott R. Murray et al. ([St. Louis]: Luther Academy, 2013), 323. When theological education has not been an initial part in the establishment of churches, they have resulted in weak churches that require constant assistance from outside, both in terms of personnel and finances.

⁶³ “Em janeiro de 1918, o seminário foi fechado por ordem da Polícia Militar, sob alegação de que ensinava em alemão. Os alunos foram enviados como estagiários para as congregações.” Zimmer, “A História da Educação Teológica Na IELB,” 31. Zimmer continues, “Em abril foi possível reabri-lo. Dois candidatos voltaram, e o prof. Kunstmann deu-lhes um curso intensivo, de modo que em setembro se formaram e partiram para o ministério. Depois disso, os outros três candidatos receberam curso semelhante e formaram-se em fevereiro de 1919.”

⁶⁴ Buss, “Relations,” 157.

⁶⁵ Buss, “Relations,” 157–163.

⁶⁶ Buss writes, “In August 1942, Brazil entered the War against Germany and its allies. Immediately thereafter, mob rule broke out and several pastors and lay members of the district suffered harsh persecution. A church in Passo Sant’ Ana, RS, was destroyed and burned. The libraries of seven of the pastors were confiscated because the books were in German. The use of the German language was entirely forbidden. Even the use of German in pastoral care in private homes led, in some cases, to imprisonment and the prohibition of preaching. Indeed, about seven of the pastors were not even allowed to preach in Portuguese. Nineteen of the pastors were imprisoned for varying terms, but all, with the exception of two, were released before the end of the year, 1942. Among the imprisoned were Pastors August Heine, the district president, and Germano Beck. Heine was sentenced to thirty years of prison, and Beck to twenty years. But after four years, in December

classes.⁶⁷ It was then closed, as were many German parochial schools, and most public church activities ceased as well. However, all this favored two very important situations: (1) translations or publications in Portuguese began to be made, and evangelistic work was extended beyond the German-speaking population,⁶⁸ and (2) the Seminario Concordia in Argentina began in 1942.

The Iglesia Evangélica Luterana Argentina (IELA) already had a preseminary⁶⁹ when it founded, in 1926, the Colegio Concordia at Crespo that trained parish teachers.⁷⁰ Students who finished teacher training in Crespo went to the seminary in Brazil.⁷¹ As a result of the war, the border between Brazil and Argentina became impossible to cross.⁷² (The last student was briefly imprisoned until he was able to cross into Argentina, because of the German-language theological books he was carrying.)

This is how Prof. Érico Sexauer describes the situation: “But as time passed, it became increasingly difficult to send our students to Brazil: The language issue in the face of the increasing nationalization of work in both countries; the high cost of travel, and distance; the near impossibility of crossing the border when World War II was also felt in the South American subcontinent—all these were factors that led to the conviction that, in order not to lack pastors in the future, we had to train our own pastors.”⁷³

1946, both were declared innocent, released, and allowed to continue their work” (Buss, “Relations,” 159–160).

⁶⁷ “Instructions at the theological seminary suffered for a while because of the prohibition of the use of German. All the theological courses were taught in the German language before the war. With the exception of the Portuguese Catechism, no textbook was available in Portuguese. Since ‘Pieper’s Dogmatics, Guenther’s Symbolics, Walther’s Pastoral Theology, Stoeckhardt’s and Kretzmann’s commentaries’ could not be used during the war, all instruction had to be given without the aid of textbooks.” Buss, “Relations,” 160–161.

⁶⁸ Buss explains that the war led the district to adopt the Portuguese language and spurred on translations and publications in that language. Most importantly, the district extended its work beyond the German-speaking population. Buss, “Relations,” 164.

⁶⁹ “Ofrecía un curso preparatorio de seis años que habilitaba para hacer el examen de maestro o para iniciar estudios de teología. El que habiendo egresado del Colegio Concordia deseaba seguir la carrera del sagrado ministerio, se matriculaba en el Seminario de nuestra iglesia hermana de Porto Alegre, Brasil.” Federico Lange, “El Seminario Teológico de nuestra iglesia,” in *90 Años de Historia*, ed. Claudio Flor (Buenos Aires: Seminario Concordia, 1995), 23.

⁷⁰ “El fin prioritario era brindar la necesaria preparación previa a los estudiantes que pensaban ingresar en el Seminario de Porto Alegre; y en segundo término, el Colegio debía surtir de maestros a las escuelas parroquiales en la Argentina.” Bertoldo H. Ergang, “Mirada retrospectiva al trabajo de nuestra iglesia en Entre Ríos,” in Flor, *90 Años de Historia*, 50.

⁷¹ The Seminário Concórdia of Brazil formed a total of fourteen Argentine pastors between 1912 and 1939.

⁷² Argentina was a neutral country at the beginning of the war.

⁷³ “Na medida que passava o tempo, tomava-se cada vez mais difícil enviar nossos estudantes ao Brasil: O problema da língua, diante da crescente nacionalização dos dois países; a distância e o alto custo das viagens; a quase impossibilidade de cruzar as fronteiras durante a segunda guerra mundial. Tudo isto nos dizia que, num futuro próximo, deveríamos formar nossos próprios pastores.” [Érico Sexauer], “Igreja Evangélica Luterana Argentina: ‘Um intercâmbio entre as duas igrejas podem trazer muitas bençãos,’” *Mensageiro Luterano* 60, no. 4 (April 1977): 16.

Pastor Albert Ernst Heinrich Lehenbauer (1891–1955), who was the director of the Colegio Concordia at Crespo since 1938, took on the task of organizing the seminary in 1941. Two houses were rented in the Federal Capital, and it began in 1942 with two teachers and two pastors who helped. Professor Federico Lange describes this: “The first theological class of the seminary in Argentina was formed by 10 students: 5 former teachers, 4 graduates of the Colegio Concordia at Crespo, and Emanuel Lichtenstein, of the Judeo-Christian mission ‘El Mesías’ of the United Lutheran Church [Iglesia Luterana Unida]. A good start, for sure!”⁷⁴ According to Sexauer,

Overall, it was a fairly modest start. However, it was once again demonstrated that God does not necessarily require a large and perfect apparatus to advance the work of his kingdom; he knows how to make do with something small and imperfect. The fact is that the weak little plant called “Seminario Concordia” managed to grow. In 1946, the upper class of the Colegio or Preseminary in Crespo was transferred to Buenos Aires, followed little by little by the others. The number of teachers was increased, and finally, in 1948, after having moved the seminary from Belgrano to another rented house in Villa Ballester, they were able to take “the great step forward.” On February 8 of that year, they inaugurated the current Seminario Concordia in José León Suárez, which is 24 km from Buenos Aires, on its own land of 30,000 m². It is a two-story building with a frontage of about 60 m, with a capacity for 32 pupils, 3 classrooms, a library that currently [1977] has 10,000 volumes.⁷⁵

From its inception, the doors were opened to serve the churches of South America.⁷⁶ For the fiftieth anniversary of IELA (1955), Lange writes that the seminary is “a bulwark of Lutheranism for South America.”⁷⁷ In 1979 it is recorded, “In the 30

⁷⁴ “La primera clase teológica del Seminario argentino en la Argentina quedó formada por 10 estudiantes: 5 ex-maestros, 4 egresados del Colegio Concordia de Crespo, y el señor Emanuel Lichtenstein, de la misión judeocristiana ‘El Mesías’, de la Iglesia Luterana Unida. ¡Un buen comienzo, por cierto!” Lange, “El Seminario Teológico de nuestra iglesia,” 24.

⁷⁵ “O começo foi bastante modesto. Mas isto mostra mais uma vez que Deus não necessita, necessariamente, de grande aparato e construções luxuosas para realizar a obra em seu reino. E a pequena planta, chamada ‘Seminário Concórdia’ cresceu: Em 1946 foi mudado para Buenos Aires a classe superior do Colégio de Crespo; o número de professores foi aumentando; em 1948 o Seminário Concórdia de Belgrano foi mudado para Vila Ballester, quando também foi possível dar ‘o grande passo’: Em 18 de fevereiro daquele ano foi inaugurado em José León Suárez, a 24 Km de Buenos Aires, em terreno próprio de 30.000 mt², o atual Seminário Concórdia, edifício de dois pisos, com capacidade para 32 alunos, 4 salas de aulas e biblioteca, que atualmente conta com 10.000 volumes.” [Sexauer], “Igreja Evangélica Luterana Argentina,” 16. He adds, “Ao lado do prédio foram construídas 3 casas para os professores, e mais um anexo com lavanderia, sala de reunião, etc.”

⁷⁶ The first were the Colombian brothers Gerardo and Pausanias Wilches, of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission in Colombia. Lange, “El Seminario Teológico de nuestra iglesia,” 27.

⁷⁷ “Un baluarte del luteranismo para Sudamérica.” Lange, “El Seminario Teológico de nuestra iglesia,” 23. He adds, “El fin último es formar obreros fieles y capaces para la propagación del evangelio. Y este fin, evidentemente lo va cumpliendo; pese a los pocos años de existencia que tiene este Seminario, ya son 29 estudiantes los que han cursado en él sus estudios teológicos completos; y de

years of existence of the seminary here in J. L. Suárez . . . 81 [candidates for the pastorate] graduated. Most of them serve in Argentina, but some have also gone to serve in other countries (Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay) or to other Lutheran churches like those 3 who arrived from Colombia.”⁷⁸

The Colegio at Crespo, which served as a preseminary, was integrated into the seminary in 1950.⁷⁹ There was also another preseminary in the late 1960s, the Colegio at Oberá, which is the current “Colegio Concordia” of Oberá.⁸⁰

To this day, with eighty-one years of existence, Seminario Concordia of Buenos Aires has formed about 200 pastors, not only for Argentina but also for the world. It also has an online program for pastoral formation, *Educación Teológica para Hispanoamérica* (ETH), and another program for non-pastoral church workers. Its current director is Sergio Schelske.

During the first half of the twentieth century, an emphasis on these two seminaries stands out, which, at present, is no longer expressed the same way. The institutions that form pastors were seen as guardians of sound doctrine before the world and as guardians of doctrine in the church (their magisterial role).⁸¹ According to

éstos, 26 actúan como pastores de la iglesia luterana en diversos países del continente sudamericano. ¿Quién podrá decirnos cuántas personas fueron conducidas a Cristo gracias al mensaje predicado por estos 26, a cuántas almas hambrientas les administraron el pan de vida, a cuántos redimidos los fortalecieron en su peregrinaje a la tierra eterna, a cuántos de los que transitaban por sendas erradas, los condujeron al camino correcto? Pero aun hoy se nos abren muchas puertas; aun hoy vale aquello de que ‘los obreros son pocos; rogad, pues, al Señor de la mies, que envíe obreros a su mies’ (Mt 9:37,38). Y esto es lo que también nosotros pedimos al Señor: que despierte en muchos jóvenes la decisión: yo quiero ingresar a nuestro Seminario para prepararme allí, con la ayuda de Dios, para el hermoso oficio de predicador del evangelio. A los docentes empero, a quienes se les ha conferido la tarea, llena de responsabilidades, de llevar a cabo esta preparación, siempre los debe guiar la palabra del apóstol Pablo: ‘No que seamos competentes por nosotros mismos, sino que nuestra competencia viene de Dios’ (2 Co 3:5)” (Lange, “El Seminario Teológico de nuestra iglesia,” 28).

⁷⁸ E. O. Schneider, “Seminario Concordia: Reseña histórica presentada por el prof. F. Lange en ocasión de la conmemoración del 30º aniversario de la sede definitiva en J. L. Suárez,” *El Luterano* 35, no. 2 (February 1979): 24–25.

⁷⁹ “Yo [Lange] venía del Colegio Concordia de Crespo, Entre Ríos, para integrar la clase superior de aquel colegio al seminario como primer paso para la integración total la que se produjo en 1950 cuando el prof. E. O. Schneider se mudó con todo el alumnado de Crespo a Villa Ballester.” Schneider, “Seminario Concordia: Reseña histórica,” 25.

⁸⁰ In Oberá it functioned as a preseminary with the Lutheran Colegio. Otto Heinze reported in 1976 that since the end of the 1960s the Argentina District had operated an intermediate-level study house in the city of Oberá, whose board of control was not elected by the Missouri Synod. The students took secular courses in the local high school or teachers’ college, lived with local host families, and took additional theological courses from Pastor Santiago Roth. [Otto C. Hintze], Report on the 44th convention of IELA, Feb. 1976, 9 pages, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO, 6–7.

⁸¹ “A capacitação de pessoas para o trabalho teológico e pedagógico era uma das justificativas para o Sínodo investir na formação de pessoal, a fim de difundir as doutrinas luteranas e propagar a sua missão, sem deixar de levar em consideração que seria menos dispendioso formar professores e pastores no Brasil do que financiar pessoas vindas de fora para o trabalho. Tinhama consciência de que era preciso fortalecer a educação e a igreja dentro das comunidades já existentes.” Patrícia

Pastor Kramer, “In all the languages of the world only the saving gospel of Christ crucified must be preached. And this seminary will be in the front row not only to teach but also to keep this truth in all its purity.”⁸²

VI. Theological Education by Seminaries

While we have previously mentioned the seminaries in Brazil (1903) and Argentina (1942), several others have emerged throughout the region’s history. Additionally, there were others that, despite not being named as seminaries, provided theological education through residential programs.

Seminario Luterano Augsburgo (Augsburg Lutheran Seminary) officially began in 1964⁸³ in Mexico City to serve Lutheran churches in Mexico, Central America, and part of South America.⁸⁴ Over the next seventeen years, until 1981, the seminary graduated thirty students to serve in pastoral ministry, forming “part of the Theological Community of Mexico, an ecumenical consortium of Christian seminaries that work together to prepare their students.”⁸⁵ One of the main founders, Robert Theodore Hoeferkamp (1927–2012, director of SEMLA 1967–1981), states about the support of the grouping of churches in the “Community,” “The economic support of the seminary was constituted as follows: 47.5% of the budget would be

Weiduschadt and Elomar Tambara, “O Sínodo de Missouri e o Seminário Teológico-Pedagógico,” *Revista HISTEDBR On-Line*, no. 48 (December 2012): 204, <https://periodicos.sbu.unicamp.br/ojs/index.php/histedbr/article/view/8640017/>. “Historically, the terms ‘theology,’ ‘doctrine,’ and ‘sacred doctrine’ were interchangeable. Later, the term ‘theology’ came to be used to the exclusion of the other two.’ The word ‘theology’ and the concept of theology were rooted in the word used in the New Testament for teaching or doctrine, *didache*.” The Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, “The Response . . . to Questions Concerning Lay Teachers of Theology,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (April 2003): 102.

⁸² “En todos los idiomas del mundo debe predicarse solamente el Evangelio salvador del Cristo crucificado. Y este Seminario estará en la primera fila no solamente para enseñar, más también para guardar esta verdad en toda su pureza.” A. T. Kramer, “Guarda el depósito que te fue confiado’: 1. Tim. 6, 20,” *El Luterano* 4, no. 2 (February 1948): 10.

⁸³ “Al final de su segundo año, este centro teológico tiene una facultad de dos profesores de tiempo completo (uno de ellos un pastor del Sínodo de Missouri) y un cuerpo estudiantil de 14 (10 de ellos del Distrito de la Misión del Caribe). Aunque aún se encuentra en su etapa formativa, este enfoque experimental para capacitar a pastores luteranos promete ayudar a llenar una necesidad crítica en México y otros campos misioneros latinoamericanos: un clero nativo.” “Mexico—Looking for a Key,” *Middle America [Mission Digest Reprints]* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1967), 13.

⁸⁴ “Historia,” Seminario Luterano Augsburgo, accessed August 12, 2024, <https://semla.org/historia-1/>. It comprised several groups of Lutheran churches: the LCMS, the American Lutheran Church (a predecessor church of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [ELCA]), and various Mexican and Central American Lutheran church bodies. Robert T. Hoeferkamp, “Iglesia Luterana y Educación Teológica en América Latina del Norte,” *Revista Teológica*, no. 112 (February 1983): 12–13, <https://ctfsfw.net/media/pdfs/HoeferkampIglesiaLuteranaYEducacionTeologica.pdf>.

⁸⁵ “Historia,” Seminario Luterano Augsburgo, accessed February 23, 2023, <https://semla.org/historia-1/>. As of July 2025, this website is defunct but can still be accessed at <https://web.archive.org/web/20241106105903/https://semla.org/historia-1/>.

provided by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, another 47.5%, the American Lutheran Church (ALC); and the remaining 5% would be divided among participating churches in Latin America. It was decided that the name of the institution would be Centro de Estudios Teológicos Augsburgo (CETA), later abbreviated to Centro Augsburgo, and later renamed Seminario Luterano Augsburgo (SEMLA). The courses began in January 1965 with seven students and two teachers.”⁸⁶

It had a total of eight teachers (three European and five North American, none Latino). Sixty students enrolled, of which thirty graduated.⁸⁷ Few pastors have been formed for our confessional churches (Sínodo Luterano de México, Concilio Internacional de Iglesias Luteranas ILC, Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de Panamá, and others). For many reasons, it stopped working in 1981 (it lasted seventeen years), especially due to the lack of students, the difficult economic conditions, and the lack of places that would receive graduates. But what stands out from this experience was the ecumenical aspect (Lutheran organizations or churches of different confessions) that ended in a “hybrid” formation, lacking confessional identity.⁸⁸ As has happened with other experiences (Comunidad Teológica de México, Comunidad Teológica de Chile, Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos in Argentina, etc.), this finally ended up being considerably reduced or disappearing.

It is important to note that Augsburg Seminary devoted most of its efforts in the 1970s to Theological Education by Extension (TEE) and its coordination in six centers in Latin America and the Caribbean, as stated by the regional secretary of LCMS World Mission in 1974: “During the past year, various professors of Augsburg Seminary have traveled to different centers of theological education by extension to conduct courses and to test their new materials. At the present time there are more than 150 students enrolled in six countries,” compared with only ten enrolled

⁸⁶ “El sostenimiento económico del seminario fue constituido así: el 47.5% del presupuesto lo aportaría la Iglesia Luterana-Sínodo de Missouri, otro 47.5%, la Iglesia Luterana Americana (ALC); y el restante 5% se dividiría entre las iglesias participantes de Latinoamérica. Se decidió que el nombre de la institución fuera Centro de Estudios Teológicos Augsburgo (CETA); posteriormente se abrevió a Centro Augsburgo; y más tarde fue rebautizado como Seminario Luterano Augsburgo (SEMLA). Los cursos se iniciaron en enero de 1965 con siete alumnos y dos profesores.” Hoeferkamp, “Iglesia Luterana y Educación Teológica,” 12–13.

⁸⁷ The students came from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, and the United States. Almost all students (including married ones) had full scholarships. The maximum number of students in a year was twenty. Hoeferkamp, “Iglesia Luterana y Educación Teológica,” 13.

⁸⁸ The LCMS regional secretary states about the seminary in 1971, “The past history of Augsburg Seminary was turbulent, and it appears that the major problems have been resolved. At the same time, one can hardly expect the seminary to live in isolation from the revolutionary and explosive climate pervading many countries of Latin America today, a climate compared by some to that existing in Russia during the closing years of the Czar’s rule. Augsburg Seminary has come through its crises better than perhaps most other Protestant seminaries; some of the latter have closed down.” Fred J. Pankow, “Report on Field Visit, February 1–March 21, 1971,” document 02096, 14 pages plus 4 pages of addenda, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO, 4.

in the residential program.⁸⁹ Augsburg Seminary, with its TEE model, has had influence in many countries, including the Juan de Frías Institute in Venezuela at its formation in 1970. In 1971 Co-Extensión was also formed at the impulse of this seminary.⁹⁰

In 1983 the seminary of São Paulo had its beginnings as the Escola Superior de Teologia do Instituto Concórdia de São Paulo (EST/ICSP, Superior School of Theology of the Concordia Institute of São Paulo). The ICSP began in 1948 in Baixo Guandú (Espírito Santo state) as a school to prepare teachers (a preseminary). It moved in 1957 to Rio de Janeiro and then, in 1961, to São Paulo.⁹¹ It closed in 1972. In 1982 the college was started again and the creation of a second seminary was approved (by the board of directors at its meetings on December 9–11, 1982).⁹² The Superior School of Theology began its classes on March 6, 1983, with the installation of its director, Rudi Zimmer, and professors Paulo F. Flor and Ari Lange and with twenty-three first- and second-year students.⁹³

The board of directors of the IELB established in December 1982 the direction of the seminary in five points. The first was that the “Seminary of São Paulo should form pastors and, at the same time, auxiliary ministers. Taking into account that the

⁸⁹ Fred Pankow, “Report on Trip to Mexico, June 9–14, 1974,” June 27–29, 1974, World Areas document following 000037, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO, 2–3. Raymond S. Rosales (World Mission Prayer League) went to the IELA assembly in 1975 and gave four presentations on lay involvement in the church; he also presented his “Plan 70” (from Luke 10) and encouraged his audience to be part of the TEE program of the Augsburg Seminary that already had sixty graduates (in its one-year program). “The graduates are catechists, evangelists, deacons, licensed preachers, readers, Sunday school superintendents, etc.” [Hintze,] Report on the 44th convention of IELA, Feb. 1976, 2.

⁹⁰ Marcos Kempff, “A Journey from Antigua, Guatemala to St. Louis, Missouri: How Theological Education by Extension (TEE) Became a Reality for US Hispanic/Latino Lutheran Leadership Formation,” *Lutheran Mission Matters* 28, no. 2 (November 2020): 297–298. “Since its introduction in Venezuela in the late 1960’s, this theological extension program, along with Augsburg Lutheran Seminary in Mexico and other Lutheran extension programs in neighboring countries, has cooperated in numerous weeklong theological workshops to supplement the ongoing local programs. Thus many laymen and pastors, with full time jobs and families to support, have been able to prepare themselves better for their Christian ministries in Venezuela.” B. Steve Hughey, *The Lutheran Church in Venezuela* (St. Louis: The Board for Missions, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, [1976]), 6.

⁹¹ Zimmer, “A História da Educação Teológica na IELB,” 34.

⁹² Zimmer, “A História da Educação Teológica na IELB,” 37. In 1980, the IELB had become formally independent from the LCMS. Paulo W. Buss, *Um grão de mostarda: A história da Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil*, vol. 2, 1950–2000 (Porto Alegre, Brazil: Concórdia Editora, 2006), 236.

⁹³ Paulo W. Buss, “Instituto Concórdia de São Paulo: Anotações para a História de um Recomeço,” *Vox Concordiana* 5, no. 2 (1989): 8. Its educational philosophy included: (1) Continuous improvement of the academic community; (2) With a view toward the reality of life in Brazil; (3) In permanent contact with mission; (4) Constant use of feedback from all constituents. Buss, “Instituto Concórdia de São Paulo,” 8.

candidates for auxiliary ministers will be, in large part, the leaders of missions and congregations scattered throughout Brazil, it must also function by extension.”⁹⁴

This is how Erní Walter Seibert refers to the creation of this seminary:

The Superior School of Theology of the Concordia Institute of São Paulo, São Paulo, was created at the beginning of the 80s to have an educational profile more focused on the formation of missionaries than the Concordia Seminary of São Leopoldo, RS. That did not mean that this profile was exclusive to a seminary. The decision arose from the fact that seminary of São Leopoldo was located in an environment where Lutheran parishes and congregations were established for a longer time and the seminary of São Paulo was located in a large city where the Lutheran presence was, in percentage relation to the local population, almost nil. It was understood, then, that one and the other had different emphases in their curricula.⁹⁵

The São Paulo seminary developed TEE with great impact on the IELB. On his visit to Brazil, B. Steve Hughey writes in a section of a fifteen-page report, “With over 300 students in the Brazil TEE program and only 68 students at the São Paulo Seminary, it is easy to see why this is a big issue at every Brazil church convention.”⁹⁶ He adds, “While some still question the validity of the TEE program and show concern about the possibility of two levels of clergy, few are questioning the need for some kind of alternative program.”⁹⁷

This seminary opened the doors for Lutheran churches in Latin America in its programs and resources. This is how Seibert highlights the great contribution to the churches in his report on theological education in Latin America:

⁹⁴ “O Seminário de São Paulo deverá formar pastores e, ao mesmo tempo, ministros auxiliares. Tendo em vista que os candidatos a ministros auxiliares serão, em grande parte, os próprios líderes de missões e congregações espalhadas pelo Brasil, deverá funcionar também por extensão.” *Relatórios 49º. convenção da IELB, São Leopoldo, 19-25 de Janeiro (1984)*, 57, cited in Paulo W. Buss, “Instituto Concórdia de São Paulo: Anotações para a História de um Recomeço,” *Vox Concordiana* 5, no. 2 (1989): 8. Extension courses began in early 1988 with courses in Diakonia in Theology, Diakonia in Christian Education, and Diakonia in Evangelism.

⁹⁵ “A Escola Superior de Teologia do Instituto Concórdia de São Paulo, São Paulo, tinha sido criada no início dos anos 1980 para ter um perfil educacional mais voltado para a formação de missionários do que o Seminário Concórdia de São Leopoldo, RS. Isso não significava que esse perfil era de exclusividade de um Seminário. A decisão decorria do fato do Seminário de São Leopoldo estar localizado num meio onde as paróquias e congregações luteranas estavam estabelecidas a mais tempo e o seminário de São Paulo estar localizado numa grande metrópole onde a presença luterana era, percentualmente em relação à população local, quase nula. Entendia-se, então, que um e outro tivessem ênfases diferentes em seus currículos.” Seibert, “Educação Teológica Missionária Luterana na América Latina,” <https://erniseibert.wordpress.com/2009/05/17/educacao-teologica-missionaria-luterana-na-america-latina/>.

⁹⁶ B. Steve Hughey, “Brazil Trip Report, November 12–24, 1996,” Jan. 10, 1997, collection pages 249–263, with separate pagination for the report, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO, 4.

⁹⁷ Hughey, “Brazil Trip Report, November 12–24, 1996,” 4.

Mission Symposia at the International Missionary Training Center—highlights: God’s Mission in the New Millennium and Urban Mission Symposium. Intensive courses offered in February and July in São Paulo.

Bulletin of CITM⁹⁸—trilingual (Portuguese, Spanish, and English).

Student Exchange—[Gerardo] Hands—Venezuela, Mario Condo—Bolivia, Ared [Rodríguez]—Guatemala—studied in São Paulo.

Miguel [Torneire]—Brazil—studied at Seminario Concordia in Argentina.

Professors taught in various countries: examples—Dr. David Coles [started in January 1998 in agreement with LCMS World Mission], Prof. Cláudio Flor [in Argentina]....

Program of Theological Education by Extension of São Paulo is preparing the workers of the Church of Angola, Africa.

Theological journals with publications in Portuguese and Spanish—*Vox Concordiana, El Tintero, Dinamis, Revista Teológica*.⁹⁹

Finally, as already mentioned, in October 2002, the board of directors of the IELB took the decision to close the ICSP and thus unify the two seminaries of the IELB in São Leopoldo. In its twenty years of existence it formed 172 candidates for the pastorate.¹⁰⁰

In 2000 the Seminario Teológico “Reforma Luterana” (Theological Seminary “Lutheran Reformation”) was started in Nicaragua, coordinated by Concordia

⁹⁸ Centro Internacional de Treinamento Missionário (International Missionary Training Center, Instituto Concórdia de São Paulo)

⁹⁹ “Simpósios de Missão no Centro Internacional de Treinamento Missionário – destaque: A Missão de Deus diante do novo Milênio e Simpósio de Missão Urbana. Cursos intensivos oferecidos nos meses de Fevereiro e Julho em São Paulo. Boletim do CITM – tri-língüe (Português, Espanhol e Inglês). Intercâmbio de alunos – Geraldo Hands – Venezuela, Mário Condo – Bolívia, Ared Rodrigues – Guatemala – estudaram em São Paulo. Miguel – Brasil – estudou no Seminário Concórdia da Argentina. Professores lecionaram em diversos países: exemplos – Dr. David Coles, Prof. Cláudio Flor, [!] Programa de Educação Teológica por Extensão de São Paulo está preparando os obreiros da Igreja de Angola, África. Revistas teológicas com publicações em português e espanhol – Vox Concordiana, El Tintero, Dinamis, Revista Teológica.” [Erní Walter Seibert], *Informe sobre a Educação Teológica na América Latina* (unpublished manuscript, [2002]), PDF file, 2. Seibert expands on the influence of the Centro Internacional de Treinamento Missionário (CITM) on the region: “O CITM, ao ser fundado, propunha que este deveria ser um trabalho conjunto das Igrejas latino-americanas e que tivesse sua localização na Escola Superior de Teologia do Instituto Concórdia de São Paulo (EST-ICSP). Não era um trabalho da EST-ICSP para as Igrejas, mas um trabalho conjunto, onde todos tinham poder de mando. Além disso, o CITM pretendia reunir num lugar a informação do trabalho missionário realizado pelas Igrejas ligadas ao Concílio Luterano Internacional na América Latina. Com este conhecimento acumulado deveria ser mais fácil o planejamento do trabalho e o desenvolvimento missionário em bases de conhecimento mais eficazes.” Seibert, “Educação Teológica Missionária Luterana na América Latina,” <https://erniseibert.wordpress.com/2009/05/17/educacao-teologica-missionaria-luterana-na-america-latina/>.

¹⁰⁰ A total of 185 bachelors in theology, of which not all were pastors. Paulo Buss, email message to author, April 26, 2023. This number of graduates added to that of São Leopoldo (1,204) gives a total of 1,376 formed for the pastorate in Brazil!

Lutheran Theological Seminary (CLTS) of St. Catharines, Ontario, under the direction of Roger Humann, as a mission of Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC).

The methodology of this seminary consisted of visiting professors from the LCC and, occasionally, CLTS for two intensive weeks.¹⁰¹ The formation was for both deaconesses and the pastoral office. The initial classes were the same, apart from a few more courses for deaconesses and others for pastors. According to David Saar, a Spanish-speaking pastor from Canada always is one of the teachers, and the other is a pastor who only speaks English and depends on a translator. Each of the teachers teaches half the students in the morning and then repeats it for the other half of the students in the afternoon. In the beginning the classes were taught in different parts of the country. When the mission center was built in Chinandega, classes were held there, and students stayed there during seminary class hours.¹⁰²

This seminary has served the churches of Nicaragua,¹⁰³ Costa Rica, Honduras, and Panama. “The first class of 13 pastors, two deacons and 17 deaconesses graduated in 2002.”¹⁰⁴ According to Saar there have been at least five graduations of seminarians in the last twenty years, resulting in about fifteen pastors in Nicaragua, one in Costa Rica, and one in Honduras.¹⁰⁵

Two factors stand out from this work in Nicaragua: the exponential growth of the church and the participation of deaconesses in study programs (70% more than the number of pastors).¹⁰⁶ David Sommers notes,

There are many unique qualities of the nascent Lutheran Church in Nicaragua, organized as the Iglesia Luterana—Sínodo de Nicaragua (ILSN) on 11 January 2008, the result of mission work begun in 1997. Its rapid growth, the degree of local control and planning, the expansion of congregations (from none to

¹⁰¹ The seminary classes in Nicaragua have been funded in large part by the Schwan Foundation. David Saar, email message to author, March 2, 2023.

¹⁰² David Saar, email message to author, March 2, 2023.

¹⁰³ “By January 2008, the mission had matured into an independent Lutheran church body, officially forming the Iglesia Luterana Sínodo de Nicaragua (ILSN).” “Nicaragua Missions: Background,” Lutheran Church—Canada, accessed February 23, 2023, <https://www.lutheranchurchcanada.ca/missions/international/nicaragua/>.

¹⁰⁴ “Nicaragua Missions: Background,” Lutheran Church—Canada, <https://www.lutheranchurchcanada.ca/missions/international/nicaragua/>.

¹⁰⁵ David Saar, email message to author, March 2, 2023.

¹⁰⁶ “As of 2009, 23 pastors had been ordained and commissioned and 41 deaconesses commissioned, all graduates of the program sponsored by the Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC). The 2009 graduating class included three Nicaraguan pastors and eight deaconesses. From the outset, as the mission began training church workers through the LCC, the sponsoring agent of the mission, the number of female church workers trained was greater than that of males.” David Somers, “The Lutheran Deaconesses of Nicaragua: ‘Every Appropriate Means,’” *Logia* (Epiphany 2010): 33. “The pastors in Nicaragua are few compared to the number of their congregations. There are currently 13 pastors and 23 congregations.” Leonardo Neitzel, *The Canadian Lutheran*, August 14, 2012, <https://www.canadianlutheran.ca/the-harvest-is-plentiful-but-the-workers-are-few-theological-education-in-nicaragua/>.

twenty-three in eight years), missions and social work, the number of locally trained church workers, the quick establishment of a seminary, its youthfulness—all are remarkable on the scene of world Lutheranism, especially in the mission context. Of the many features of the ILSN, the one to be considered here is the story of its female diaconate, understood in the sense of the nineteenth-century movement often associated with Wilhelm Löhe.¹⁰⁷

Due to the political situation in Nicaragua, in recent years, the Lutheran Church—Canada has not been able to enter and continue work in theological education.¹⁰⁸

The Nicaraguan model has been the intensive format (two weeks, twice a year). This model poses challenges in theological education, as does the use of foreign teachers and classes with simultaneous translation.¹⁰⁹ Professor David Saar, who was one of the first and permanent teachers, expresses these challenges: “The level of education is NOT the same as that of a seminary in North America, and one of the challenges has been that half of the teachers have needed to use a translator to teach.”¹¹⁰

The Instituto “Juan de Frías” (Venezuela) had a residence model from 2004 to 2008. There was an intensive period of one year, followed by a year of vicarage, then a third year concluded the program with other courses. Its director was Ricardo Granados. This is how Theodore Krey explains what happened: “Three years ago, LCMS World Mission missionary to Venezuela, Ted Krey, established a one-year accelerated Theological Education program in Maracay, Venezuela. The goals were simple: to train enough pastors to serve the existing 19 congregations and nine mission stations, to make the program self-sufficient, and to have trained enough pastors to open new mission fields. At that time, there were only seven ordained pastors serving in Venezuela, leaving many churches without the opportunity to regularly receive the sacraments or pastoral care.”¹¹¹

The intensive program consisted of twenty-two or twenty-three different courses in theology and practice, taught in eighteen months (two semesters before

¹⁰⁷ Somers, “Lutheran Deaconesses of Nicaragua,” 33.

¹⁰⁸ The idea was to start again in August 2023. Marvin Donaire, email message to author, April 2023.

¹⁰⁹ Although this is the model of the Luther Academy (<https://lutheracademy.com/conferences/>), they do not have the same objectives. The seminary is for pastoral formation, and the Luther Academy is for continuing education. Moreover, only rarely has the Luther Academy used teachers from abroad with simultaneous translation.

¹¹⁰ “El nivel de educación NO es el mismo que el de un seminario en Norteamérica y uno de los desafíos ha sido que la mitad de los profesores necesitaban usar un traductor para enseñar.” David Saar, email message to author, March 2, 2023.

¹¹¹ Theodore Krey, “Venezuela training missionaries: Seminary project reaches a crucial turning point,” *Puertas: Open Doors in Latin America and the Caribbean* 1, no. 1 (Panama City: LCMS World Mission LAC Regional Office, 2008): 2.

vicarage and one after vicarage). From seven ordained pastors in 2004,¹¹² there were nineteen by 2008, with several more training for the ministry.¹¹³ Several of these students were welcomed to complete their studies in Argentina between 2011 and 2016.

With the departure of Missionary Krey to the Dominican Republic, the institute returned to the model of TEE until 2016, when Eliezer Mendoza (who was trained in this program and completed his studies at the seminary in Argentina and who is its current director) initiated a pastoral program that has served as a preseminary for candidates to the Centro de Misericordia y Seminario Concordia “El Reformador” (CMSCR), Dominican Republic.

There has been another seminary in the region, the Lutheran seminary in Haiti. In 1978, the LCMS began missionary work in Haiti.¹¹⁴ “In Leogane, Haiti, the Concordia Theological Seminary of Haiti was dedicated on Saturday, 14 January 2012.”¹¹⁵ Due to the social situation of the country, the seminary is not currently functioning, and in the 2022–2023 academic year, CMSCR had two students from Haiti.

VII. Theological Education by Extension (TEE)

It is officially recognized that the system of Theological Education by Extension (TEE) was born in Guatemala at the beginning of the 1960s in the Presbyterian church. But there are several educators using this model who affirm something different.¹¹⁶ Among them is Douglas Rutt: “Actually, the Lutherans in Guatemala had already implemented a TEE program of sorts by the late fifties, when Missouri Synod missionary Robert Hoeferkamp and Edgar Keller¹¹⁷ developed a self-study manual for catechists.”¹¹⁸

¹¹² Krey, “Venezuela training missionaries,” 2. The practice was that after the first five or six courses of studies, they were already qualified as pastors or for pastoral acts.

¹¹³ Krey, “Venezuela training missionaries,” 2. Although, in these intensive courses, they had several teachers, mostly Pastor Krey, so this model more closely resembles the first “master-apprentice” model.

¹¹⁴ According to the International Lutheran Council, the Église Évangélique Luthérienne d’Haïti (ELCH) has 10,000 members in eighty-eight congregations. “Haiti,” International Lutheran Council, accessed July 15, 2025, <https://ilcouncil.org/members/north-america/haiti/>. There is no documentation available on the history and development of the seminary.

¹¹⁵ Albert B. Colver III, “Dedication of Concordia Theological Seminary of Haiti in Leogane,” *The ABC3s of Miscellany* (blog), January 15, 2012, <https://abc3miscellany.blogspot.com/2012/01/dedication-of-concordia-theological.html>.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Rudy Blank, “Theological Education by Extension,” *Lutheran Mission Matters* 28, no. 2 (November 2020): 274–290; Kempff, “A Journey from Antigua,” 274–290.

¹¹⁷ Edgar Ernest Julius Keller (1916–1975).

¹¹⁸ Douglas L. Rutt, “The Challenges of ‘Non-Seminary’ Training,” in Moisés, *Preparing Lutheran Pastors for Today*, 313. “Later, DIMICAR (Distrito Misional del Caribe—Caribbean Mission District) was formed to organize and coordinate LCMS mission expansion in the area. One of the projects, created by Robert Gussick, was to train leadership for the new mission sites. The home base of this program was the city of Antigua, Guatemala—operating out of the Centro Luterano of

TEE means the local formation of one or more candidates by means of written courses (a manual), carried out in a self-taught manner, often with the help of their pastor (who is sometimes their mentor), both in reading and in activities and answers, and, finally, (sometimes) regular meetings with their mentor or someone in charge of theology, during which they reflect and review what they have studied and the scope of what they have learned in their context. The methodology is adapted to each context according to its need and scope.¹¹⁹

The first Bible institute that was formalized under the TEE modality was the Instituto “Juan de Frías” (JdeF).¹²⁰ “In 1970, the ILV [Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela] approved the formalization of the Theological Institute by Extension under the direction and tutelage of the Rev. Rodolfo Blank. . . . ‘JdeF’ was born in the east of the country, where it has served by theologically forming parishioners for more than 30 years.”¹²¹ Already, at the beginning of 1969, the “Lay Formation Program” had been formalized under the direction of Héctor Lazos (one of the first pastors of the Venezuelan Lutheran church). Lazos writes, “More is required than programs of limited, local dimensions; more is required than an ordained ministry and other dependent

Antigua. Two full-time professors, Robert Hoeferkamp, missionary in Guatemala City, and later, Edgar Keller from Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Villa Ballester, Buenos Aires, Argentina, were called to head up this Lutheran version of TEE.” Blank, “Theological Education by Extension,” 284.

¹¹⁹ “A educação teológica por extensão tem centenas, senão milhares de diferentes formas, cada uma delas designadas para responder às necessidades e aos problemas que são levantados por um contexto particular. O que os programas têm em comum é que eles fazem uso de técnicas de educação à distância, isto é, métodos nos quais o professor e os estudantes estão separados por espaço ou tempo, ou ambos.” Daniel Mattson, “A formação de agentes missionários: Educação Teológica por Extensão,” in Siebert, *A missão de Deus diante de um novo milénio*, 132.

¹²⁰ Instituto Teológico de Extensión Juan de Fries, “En Cristo capacitar para servir,” 1–2. The name of the Institute is in honor of the first Lutheran martyr in Latin America, Juan de Frías, “quien fue un sacerdote caraqueño del orden agustino acusado, condenado y encarcelado el 12 de junio de 1671 por la Santa Inquisición de la Iglesia Católica por profesar la fe Cristiana Luterana. . . . [S]u martirio fue el 14 de octubre de 1688” (4).

¹²¹ “En 1970, la ILV aprobó la formalización del Instituto Teológico por Extensión bajo la dirección y tutela del Rev. Rodolfo Blank. . . . ‘JdeF’ nació en el oriente del país donde ha servido [a]l propósito de formar teológicamente a los feligreses durante más de 30 años.” Instituto Teológico de Extensión Juan de Fries, “En Cristo capacitar para servir,” 4. Its first director, Rudy Blank, affirms that: “During the years 1970–1980, the ‘Juan de Frías’ program functioned only in eastern part of Venezuela and in the Guyana region in the southeast of the republic. With the closing of the residential program of Seminario Augsburgo in Mexico City, the ‘Juan de Frías’ program was expanded to include the Lutheran congregations in Caracas and in Western Venezuela.” Blank, *Theological Education by Extension*, 284. Blank adds, “Over a span of several years about five hundred members of the Lutheran Church of Venezuela had taken or were taking at least one course in the ‘Juan de Frías’ program. The inclusion of so many church members in the ‘Juan de Frías’ Theological Institute was in conformity with one of the underlying tenets of TEE: namely that Theological Education by Extension is theological education for all of God’s people according to each believer’s spiritual gifts” (284).

or semi-clerical ministries. It is evident that our parish-clergy-centered structure and strategy needs a total reexamination and re-appraisal.”¹²²

The Institute “Juan de Frías” used course manuals from other denominations¹²³ and some of its own.¹²⁴ Among them, the most popular were those of Seminario Anglicano (SEAN, Anglican Seminary). Rudolph Blank explains, “An extremely popular model of TEE in Latin America was developed by Antonio and Terrick Barratt, an Anglican father-son team working in Paraguay, Chile and northern Argentina. This program was called SEAN, which stands for ‘Seminario Anglicano.’. With the adoption of this model by many non-Anglican groups, SEAN came to stand for ‘Seminary for the Nations.’”¹²⁵

This is how the first director of JdeF describes the courses used: “The books and study materials we prepared for the ‘Juan de Frias’ program in Venezuela were all written from the perspective of the church’s mission to all nations. The authors’ writings have tried to focus on the missional themes of Scripture and church history.”¹²⁶

¹²² “Latin America [1969],” no date, document 02207, collection pages 158–164 with separate pagination for the report, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO, 3. Héctor Lazos had to leave the country in 1970. Robert Huebner, “Planning Theological Education in Latin America,” *Capsulas* (June and July 1985): 2. And then Blank took over, named it, and organized the Bible institute.

¹²³ In the 2002 manual of JdeF, out of a total of 141 courses for four levels (Introductory, Basic, Advanced, and Higher Theology), seventy-two courses are Lutheran (51%), while the rest are from other theologies. Instituto Teológico de Extensión Juan de Frias, “En Cristo capacitar para servir.”

¹²⁴ Supposedly “Lutheran.” An example of this is Norbert V. Becker’s Ministry of the Church course, which teaches that ministry belongs to all believers: “La Biblia enfatiza que cada miembro de la iglesia de Cristo es: un ministro.” Norbert V. Becker, *El Ministerio de la Iglesia*, trans. Armenio Piñeros et al. (Bogotá, Colombia: Coextensión, n.d.), 10.

¹²⁵ Blank, *Theological Education by Extension*, 283. Blank says of resources from other denominations, “After fifty years in TEE, I have never had cause to regret the use of these Anglican materials in our extension seminary. In my experience the students who have worked through these SEAN courses have a better grasp of the life of Jesus than those who studied in other TEE or residential programs. In collaboration with the SEAN program in Chile, our Venezuelan TEE program for many years printed, distributed, and sold the SEAN textbooks to many other institutions in Venezuela” (283). However, they also used Lutheran manuals: “At the beginning of our TEE program in Venezuela it was our practice to work with the student through a book such as C. F. W. Walther’s *Law and Gospel* or Roland Bainton’s biography of Luther. Then a semi-programmed workbook was prepared to help the student interact with the author of the book being studied. Thanks to Concordia Publishing House—Editorial Concordia (CPH), a Spanish translation of Walther’s *Law and Gospel* has stayed in print for over fifty years. This, however, has not been the case with many other textbooks” (280).

¹²⁶ Blank, *Theological Education by Extension*, 280. He also writes about the courses, “It should be stressed that these materials were not written for the Academy, but for the thousands of congregational leaders who have never had the opportunity to study in a residential seminary or Bible school. TEE seeks to reach the ninety percent of all Christian leaders who exercise ministerial functions without seminary or Bible school training” (280). It is clear that the first director of the “Juan de Frías” Institute disagreed with the seminary model (cf. Blank, *Theological Education by Extension*), as did other instructors who have overseen TEE in Latin America.

In its more than fifty years, the JdeF institute has trained between thirty-five and forty pastors in total, of which a good number were trained by the residential model from 2004 to 2008.¹²⁷ Since 2020, the institute has established a four-year pastoral-formation program (three years of theological-pastoral formation and one year of vicarage). It also develops basic congregational courses and coordinates the training of pastors (with the Luther Academy). In addition, it is in partnership with the CMSCR for deaconess training and the program for the continuing education of pastors, *Formación Pastoral para Hispanoamérica* (FPH, Pastoral Formation for Latin America).

TEE was promoted especially by the Seminario de Augsburgo, a program that was led by Professor Raymond S. Rosales.¹²⁸ In 1973, the secretary of the regional director of LCMS World Mission stated, “The program has now spread to Uruguay; thirty students are involved there. This brings the total enrollment in Latin America to over 150 served by seven centers.”¹²⁹ The questions that began to be asked in the face of this new model were “Should the graduates eventually become ordained, paid clergymen? Or should they remain as self-supporting evangelists and laymen? . . . There is hesitancy to ordain because this results in two ‘levels’ of clergy.”¹³⁰

When analyzing the TEE model, Rutt states some advantages and disadvantages of TEE. Advantages of a nonformal program include (1) it is carried out in context, (2) it enables the dimension of experience, (3) low cost, (4) theological education is accessible to more students, (5) better selection processes of candidates for ministry, and (6) openness and flexibility. Disadvantages include (1) lack of credibility or recognition by the church, (2) lack of recognition by accrediting associations, (3) poor academic administration, (4) institutional instability and dependence on foreign leadership, (5) the various external activities of the student (the difficulty of

¹²⁷ “A partir de la llegada del pastor misionero Theodore Krey se lo establece en el formato de un seminario en el año 2004 en Maracay con una duración un año de residencia con 25 materias, de manera intensiva, y un año de vicariato teniendo que cumplir otras 5 materias. Se traslado a Caracas el año siguiente teniendo la bendición de la ILV [Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela (Lutheran Church of Venezuela)] y su junta directiva con Ricardo Granado como director del Instituto Juan de Frías. Unos 14 hombres graduaron en los 4 años del programa. El programa duró un año más en 2008 con dos pastores-profesores Venezolanos llamados por el instituto Juan de Frías, el Pastor Eduardo Flores y Pastor Sergio Maita. Unos 14 hombres graduaron del programa. De la cual Eliezer Mendoza siguió sus estudios y ya es director desde 2016.” Theodore Krey, email message to author, 2017.

¹²⁸ Professor of practical theology at Seminario Augsburgo, who from 1971 devoted himself to full-time lay education. Fred J. Pankow, “Report on Field Visit, February 1–March 21, 1971,” 3. Rosales was a Lutheran from IELB (Bolivia).

¹²⁹ Fred Pankow, “Meeting of Latin America Secretaries in New York, October 5, 1973,” World Areas—Report, November 15–17, 1973, document 02593, pages 14–17 of collection, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO, 14.

¹³⁰ Pankow, “Meeting of Latin America Secretaries in New York, October 5, 1973,” 15 (underlining original).

balancing responsibilities between family, work, and ministry),¹³¹ (6) lack of continuous contact (between the student and the pastor or mentor), (7) lack of community training, and (8) feeling the loss of control (loneliness).¹³²

To these disadvantages, the following are added. (1) There is a lack of access to other books or literature (because they have only one manual per course). (2) There is a lack of education in research and apologetics. (3) It is so local that it sometimes does not allow the calling of pastors in the same church or between national churches, and it can also establish differences (a local, regional, and national pastor).¹³³ (4) The only model for pastoral practice is his local pastor alone. (5) One is not trained to plant a church, although they have an emphasis on local mission; or a distance learner who is in a mission setting finds it difficult to think pastorally. (6) The duration of the program is very extensive.¹³⁴ Although many times students are ordained after a few years and continue studying, there is no defined period, so they end up being students for many years. (7) The manuals that are most frequently used

¹³¹ David Ernst states, “It assumes an extraordinary degree of self-discipline on the part of the pastoral candidate, assuming that he will devote himself to daily study for an indefinite period while working to support himself and his family, and assuming leadership responsibilities within a local congregation. The result is a high drop-out rate as students become discouraged by these demands. I should also note that in Venezuela it is, in the first place, quite difficult to find a) a job that b) pays enough to support a family while c) allowing one enough free time for night courses and church activities.” David Ernst, “Baptisms, Confirmations, and Impending Ordination,” *Like Wind in Ripe Grain* (blog), December 10, 2008, <https://venezuelaview.blogspot.com/2008/12/baptisms-confirmations-and-impending.html>.

¹³² Douglas L. Rutt, “The Challenges of ‘Non-Seminary’ Training,” in *Preparing Lutheran Pastors for Today: ILC - Theological Seminaries World Conference*, ed. Paulo Moisés Nerbas (Canoas, RS, Brazil: Editora da ULBRA, 2006), 306–310.

¹³³ The distinctions established in the ILV were between pastoral guide (*guía pastoral*, a layman who can preach), pastoral deacon (*diácono pastoral*, a layman who can administer the word and sacraments, who needs to have theological studies in the first cycle of studies and who is part of the ministerium of the ILV), pastor (whose only difference from the pastoral deacon is that without having a call he can continue on the list of members of the ministry and needs to pass the second cycle of studies), and presbyter (*presbítero*, same as the previous office but needs to pass the third cycle of studies). Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela, *Estatutos Sociales de la Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela* (Caracas: [Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela], 1994), ch. 2, art. 8, paragraphs F–I. These distinctions are not proper to our doctrine: a pastor is a pastor anywhere in the world, although there are different levels in his formation.

¹³⁴ In the Centro Luterano de Estudios Teológicos (CLET) of the Lutheran Church in Guatemala (Iglesia Luterana en Guatemala), the duration of pastoral formation was between ten and fifteen years. [Byron Paz], *Informe Educación Teológica en Guatemala* (unpublished manuscript, 2023), PDF file, 1. Speaking of the Instituto Teológico Juan de Frías, David Ernst states, “The Lutheran Church of Venezuela is struggling to fill its existing pulpits in the face of an urgent need for pastors to plant new churches. Doors are open that probably will not remain so permanently. Yet training pastors solely by TEE has proven extremely time-consuming. The historical average for achieving the training needed for the pastoral ministry by means of Juan de Frías TEE courses is 13 years.” Ernst, “Baptisms, Confirmations, and Impending Ordination,” <https://venezuelaview.blogspot.com/2008/12/baptisms-confirmations-and-impending.html>.

are not of Lutheran origin¹³⁵ (so they are often accompanied by other manuals to correct deficiencies). (8) In general, the programs do not have an emphasis on the means of grace (preaching and sacraments) but on the “practical” life of the believer. Therefore, deficiencies in confessional-Lutheran identity end up being manifested. (9) The program is so personal that it depends on the same person to overcome all these deficiencies mentioned through extra training (like another university program).

All ILC seminaries in the Americas currently have some form of TEE, as an alternative to the residential form (Educación Teológica para Hispanoamérica, Formación Pastoral para Hispanoamérica, Specific Ministry Pastor program, Educação Teológica por Extensão-IELB).¹³⁶ They each have their own philosophy of TEE, use different teaching-learning techniques, mainly use technology, and in many cases, use face-to-face meetings to overcome these difficulties.

The main bases that have sustained the TEE model since its origin (1960s) and its impulses (1980s) are as follow.

(a) Theological Education for the Formation of All the Saints (Laypeople, Leaders, Deaconesses, and Pastors)

The document resulting from the third Latin American Theological Education Conference (CETAL)¹³⁷ in Antigua, Guatemala, (1985) states in its strategies on theological education, “1. We recognize the need for continuing theological education for congregational leaders. . . . 5. It is necessary to recognize and value the different ministries that emerge, promote them, and give them a field of action.”¹³⁸ This was

¹³⁵ In the Programa de Educación Teológica por Extensión (PETE, Program of Theological Education Extension) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina, Anglican materials from SEAN were used, such as “La Vida de Jesús,” based on the Gospel of Matthew.

¹³⁶ Educação Teológica por Extensão (Theological Education by Extension) at Seminário Concórdia (IELB) does not train pastors but “auxiliary leaders to the Pastoral Ministry” in the areas of Christian education, evangelism, and social action. Seminário Concórdia, “Educação Teológica por Extensão,” accessed February 23, 2023, <https://seminarioconcordia.com.br/site/educacao-teologica-por-extensao/>.

¹³⁷ “Dentro das Igrejas Luteranas Confessionais, especialmente impulsionado pelo Departamento de Missão da Igreja Luterana – Sínodo de Missouri, começaram a ser promovidos encontros entre os responsáveis pela Educação Teológica dos vários países da América Latina. Inicialmente os encontros eram chamados Latin American Theological Education Conference (LATEC), nome que foi substituído pela expressão correspondente em espanhol ou português, a medida que crescia a consciência da necessidade de indigenização da teologia desta região – Conferência de Educação Teológica da América Latina (CETAL).” [Erní Walter Seibert], *Informe sobre a Educação Teológica na América Latina* (unpublished manuscript, [2002]), 1.

¹³⁸ “1. Reconhecemos a necessidade de uma educação teológica continuada para os líderes congregacionais. . . . 5. É necessário reconhecer e valorizar os diferentes ministérios que surgem, promovê-los e dar-lhes um campo de ação.” [CETAL], “Cooperação e intercâmbio entre luteranos da América Latina: Acordo de Antigua,” *Mensageiro Luterano* (August 1985): 26–27. At the fourth meeting of CETAL in Caracas, Venezuela, (1987) it is stated, “Deus, por meio do Espírito Santo, deu a todos os membros da igreja diferentes dons para levar a cabo todas as diferentes formas de

reaffirmed in the fourth meeting of CETAL: "According to Ephesians 4:11, 12, it is necessary that all God's people be trained to fulfill the mission of the church. This is the function of theological education: to enable all members of the church to be faithful disciples who carry out the ministry of the church."¹³⁹ These principles (the formation of laypeople to do their ministry, according to their gifts)¹⁴⁰ are a constitutive part of TEE, as Coles states: "The view of theological education by extension is that every Christian, as a universal priest and as a member of the ecclesial team that carries out God's mission (Ephesians 4:12), is a theologian. That is why theological education by extension develops at different levels."¹⁴¹

The formation of the saints in their lives of vocation, as the universal priesthood, is not a wrong idea, but this catechetical formation should be done, primarily, in their congregations by their pastors for their daily vocations. When a theological institution assumes what belongs to the pastors themselves in their offices ("able to teach," 1 Tim 3:2), it takes the place of pastors in their local churches. Proper training for members is appropriate for the auxiliary offices, which is necessary and appropriate when needed, such as church musicians, deaconesses, and Bible-school teachers. Veith states, "[The Reformation] taught that the pastoral office is a *vocation*. . . . But it also taught that laypeople as well have *vocations*, callings of their own that entail holy responsibilities, authorities, and blessings of their own. Not all believers are pastors or church workers. . . . But all believers *are* priests. . . . 'The priesthood of all believers' did not make everyone into church workers; rather, it turned every kind of work into a sacred calling."¹⁴²

The theological difficulty of concepts that were developed brings confusion with the use of words such as "leadership" or "leaders"—concepts that come from sociology or business administration but not from Scripture. All Lutheran Bible-

ministério ao homem integral. Para cumprir a missão da igreja, é necessário que todos os membros identifiquem, desenvolvam e empreguem estes dons dentro dos ministérios da igreja. Ocorrendo isto, a igreja cresce em todos os sentidos da palavra." [CETAL], "Um Documento Importante: Afirmação de Caracas," *Mensageiro Luterano* (June 1987): 30.

¹³⁹ "Segundo Efésios 4:11,12, é necessário que todo o povo de Deus seja capacitado para cumprir a missão da igreja. Esta é a função da educação teológica: a de capacitar a todos os membros da igreja para serem discípulos fiéis que levem a cabo o ministério da igreja." [CETAL], "Um Documento Importante: Afirmação de Caracas," 30.

¹⁴⁰ In the affirmations, the document adds, "4. Que se estimule e se dê oportunidade a todos os membros da igreja para que descubram e desenvolvam seus dons, concedidos pelo Espírito Santo, e para que surjam e sejam capacitados líderes nas congregações." [CETAL], "Um Documento Importante: Afirmação de Caracas," 30.

¹⁴¹ "La óptica de la educación teológica por extensión es que todo cristiano, como sacerdote universal y como integrante del equipo eclesial que lleva adelante la misión de Dios (Efesios 4:12), es un teólogo. Por eso la educación teológica por extensión se desarrolla a distintos niveles." David Coles, "Las instituciones teológicas frente al desafío misional del nuevo milenio," *Revista Teológica* 44, no. 160 (January 1999): 14.

¹⁴² Gene E. Veith Jr., *God at Work: Your Vocation in All of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 18–19.

institute programs in Latin America affirm in their objectives that theological education is for the formation of “leaders.” These concepts are sustained by what is called “Formation in Ministry” (Formación en el Ministerio), where “the focus is on leadership, not ordination, function, profession, legitimization, or any other of the many issues that sometimes cloud our perspectives of theological education. Note that the focus becomes ‘leadership’ and does not emphasize ordination.”¹⁴³ Collver adds, “There is no doubt that ‘leadership’ skills are useful for pastoral ministry, but it should be noted that 1 Timothy 3 does not mention ‘leadership’ as a qualification for pastoral ministry.”¹⁴⁴ Quill states, “Pastoral training is an intense, costly and time-consuming undertaking. There are no shortcuts. When shortcuts are taken in the end it is more costly for the church. Many Protestant denominations and mission organizations have adopted mission models or strategies based on the formation of leaders with minimal theological training. In many cases, emphasis is placed on models of lay leadership versus the traditional approach of building church and mission on the basis of ordained and theologically trained ministers.”¹⁴⁵

The pastoral office is not about functions that everyone or anyone can do, but it is an office instituted by God for the preaching of the gospel and administration of the sacraments. The priesthood of all believers is another doctrine. It is not, as Pietism has wanted to associate and emphasize, that the pastor and the priesthood need to be in tension. Theological education is first and foremost, according to Lutheran doctrine, formation for the pastoral office and deals with ordination. Once there is the right Lutheran approach, then one can work in the auxiliary offices.

The main problem that arose with TEE was that, under the concept of the formation of the priesthood of believers, it opposed the pastoral office. The document “Comité de Reflexiones—Conclusiones” of the IELA that was approved by its Assembly in 1985 states that the church

has forgotten its full priesthood, while an elite claimed the absolute priesthood; the sum of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Church—indispensable organization, authorized to command the organization in the name of God, the indisputable and infallible structure affirmed on sophisticated doctrinal arrangements that declared it untouchable, to such an extent that the widespread belief came to be that the bishop and the church were synonymous. The phrase, “Where the clergy is, there is the church,” is well known and accepted as normal logic.

For reasons of space it is not possible to explain here the historical, cultural, social, religious, and biblical ingredients that have led, in many cases, even the church that re-emerged with power and dynamism from the

¹⁴³ Collver, “Theological Education and the Global Seminary Initiative,” 15.

¹⁴⁴ Collver, “Theological Education and the Global Seminary Initiative,” 15.

¹⁴⁵ Quill, “Theological Education in International Missions in the Twenty-First Century,” 40.

Reformation of the sixteenth century to a clericalism, properly organized and protected, which frequently, with all sincerity and good intentions, came to believe that “Without a pastor there is no church,” or that “The most important thing for God in the church is the pastors.”

The Holy Spirit endowed the church with various ministries, AMONG which is the gift of the pastorate (see Eph. 4:11-12). These gifts continue to be given to perfect the members of God’s people so that they can serve. And each of them, not only that of the pastorate, needs to be properly prepared, developed, and equipped. On the other hand, there will be very few, if any, people who gather all these gifts in their person, as a special privilege of the Spirit.¹⁴⁶

Of these concepts, it is not surprising that the terms “pastorcentrism,” “clericalism,” or *todólogo*¹⁴⁷ pastors have been coined, attributing them to a model in which there are no other “ministries,” and assuming that the pastor model is against the laity, to the detriment of the universal priesthood of all believers. This whole map of concepts (one tied to the other, like a system, and coming from the Baptist or Reformed tradition but not from Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions) is a mistake.¹⁴⁸ One of the terms used in this confusion of doctrines was “lay pastor,” which is an oxymoron, defining that it is a layman who has pastoral functions but who has not been ordained and, therefore, is not a pastor. The laity have much with which to serve in the church but not in the pastoral office (CA V).

There is also the concept of the pastor as a “trainer of gifts” for the laity to do the pastoral and missionary task in their various “ministries” of service. As CETAL

¹⁴⁶ “ha olvidado su sacerdocio plenario, mientras que una élite se atribuyó el sacerdocio absoluto; la suma de los dones del Espíritu Santo, la Iglesia - Organización imprescindible, autorizada a digitar al organismo en nombre de Dios, la estructura indiscutible e infalible afirmada sobre sofisticados arreglos doctrinales que la autodeclaraban intocable, a tal punto que la creencia generalizada llegó a ser que el obispo y la iglesia eran sinónimos. La frase: ‘Donde está el clero, allí está la iglesia’, es bien conocida, y aceptada como lógica normal.

“No es posible detallar aquí, por razones de espacio, los ingredientes históricos, culturales, sociales, religiosos y bíblicos que han llevado, en no pocos casos, también a la Iglesia que resurgiera con poder y dinamismo de la Reforma del Siglo XVI, a un clericalismo, adecuadamente organizado y protegido, que frecuentemente, con toda sinceridad y buena intención, llegó a creer que: ‘Sin pastor no hay iglesia’, o que ‘Lo más importante para Dios en la iglesia son los pastores’.

“El Espíritu Santo dotó a la Iglesia con diversos ministerios, ENTRE los que se ubica EL DON DEL PASTORADO, ver: Ef. 4:11-12. Estos dones siguen siendo dados para perfeccionar a los miembros del pueblo de Dios, para que puedan servir. Y cada uno de ellos, no sólo el del pastoreo, necesita ser adecuadamente preparado, desarrollado y equipado. Por otra parte, serán muy pocas las personas, si hay alguna, las que reúnan todos esos dones en su persona, como privilegiada especial del Espíritu.” Drachenberg et al., “Documento: Informe: ‘Comité de Reflexiones—Conclusiones,’” 32.

¹⁴⁷ *Todólogo* (do-it-all?) is a pun on *teólogo* (“theologian”).

¹⁴⁸ With this background, it is understood that in the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, the word “Lutheran” for many in the IELA was not well seen and received, but everything related to the Methodist and Baptist traditions was popular. Also, missionary work was not openly identified as “Lutheran” but as “Christian” (like that of Cristo Para Todas Las Naciones, CPTLN [Christ for All Nations], an outreach of Lutheran Hour Ministries).

states in the agreement between the churches in 1987, “6. Let the emphasis in preparing pastors be to train them to train others, emphasizing formation as teachers and equippers of the saints.”¹⁴⁹ And the churches in the 1980s go much further in their agreements: “8. That models and programs such as Church Growth [*Iglecrecimiento*] should be studied and critically evaluated to see how they can serve us in our desire to reach others with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹⁵⁰ In this figure of the pastor as a “trainer of gifts,” and under the concepts of church growth, the pastor is required to be a “leader” with high training and creativity, emphasizing the dynamic forms of ministry, with a strong tint in the “training” (attractive preaching, dynamic encounters, etc.). All this description is not about the doctrine of the pastoral office, nor about Lutheran ecclesiology. This comes from other theologies and denominations that have long influenced our churches and theological education since the 1970s and were strongly promoted in the 1980s.

(b) Contextual Training

The document of the second CETAL in Antigua, Guatemala, (1985) states in its strategies on theological education, “2. Local needs determine the theological formation necessary for each case. The resources available will indicate the method to be applied for theological education.”¹⁵¹ And when referring to sharing resources between institutions, it is stated, “7. In sharing theological education, it will be necessary to get rid of the cultural ballast that would hinder communication with students and deculturate them and prevent their efficient preparation.”¹⁵²

Basically, there are two criticisms of seminary formation. The first refers to taking people out of their context for a few years, because it is thought that they cannot return to it and adapt properly, either because they would be rejected by their context or because they do not want to return to it. Second, it has been argued that traditional theology distances people from their reality, and that a theology that speaks to the context and from the context should be promoted instead. Rutt states, “The training of ministers must take place in context. Models of theological

¹⁴⁹ “6. Que a ênfase na preparação de pastores seja a de capacitar-los para que eles capacitem outros, enfatizando sua formação como mestres e equipadores dos santos.” [CETAL], “Um Documento Importante: Afirmação de Caracas,” 30.

¹⁵⁰ “8. Que modelos e programas como o de Crescimento da Igreja (‘Church Growth’) sejam estudados e avaliados criticamente para se ver de que maneira nos podem servir em nosso desejo de alcançar outros com o Evangelho de Jesus Cristo.” [CETAL], “Um Documento Importante: Afirmação de Caracas,” 30.

¹⁵¹ “2. As necessidades locais determinam a formação teológica necessária para cada caso. Os recursos à disposição indicarão o método a aplicar para a educação teológica.” [CETAL], “Cooperação e intercâmbio entre luteranos da América Latina: Acordo de Antígua,” 26.

¹⁵² “7. Ao compartilhar a educação teológica, será necessário despojar-se do lastro cultural que estorvaria a comunicação com os educandos e os desculturaria e impediria uma eficiente preparação aos mesmos.” [CETAL], “Cooperação e intercâmbio entre luteranos da América Latina: Acordo de Antígua,” 27.

education that include extracting the student from his context should be avoided. On the one hand, in-context training allows the student to maintain his life and work, and perhaps his family. On the other hand, it allows the student the opportunity to use what he has learned cognitively in ministry experiences.”¹⁵³

Coles, too, affirms this: “Academic theological education has come to be discredited because it causes a fragmentation of theology and because it does not address the practical problems facing the churches.”¹⁵⁴ There is a strong criticism of the kind of seminaries that come from a Schleiermacher model (with rigidly separated departments and vastly different methods) and that have lost the orientation of their Lutheran theological roots.

The *first criticism* of the seminaries made by proponents of TEE, that the person who leaves his house cannot return home in the same way, correctly identifies what happens, because this is precisely why students go to study at a seminary, to become candidates for the pastorate. The change of the person is the process of a good education. There are always exceptional cases, from which rules should not be made. But, as we have already explained at the beginning, true theology is practical. It does not alienate anyone from his context nor return him to his context as a foreign body. On the contrary, it returns him to his context with the theological tools and with the need to experience the word of God in the problems of daily life, bringing the gospel of Christ as the good news of salvation. What is determinative in theological education is the word of Christ, not the context of the student.

This criticism is based on the idea that an academic focus implies a selective¹⁵⁵ and elitist¹⁵⁶ system, a system for only a few, in an academic environment with

¹⁵³ “La capacitación de ministros debe tener lugar en contexto. Deben evitarse los modelos de educación teológica [d]e extracción del estudiante de su contexto. Por un lado, capacitación en contexto permite al estudiante mantener su vida y obra, y tal vez a su familia. Por otra parte, permite que el estudiante tenga la oportunidad de emplear lo aprendido cognitivamente en experiencias del ministerio.” Douglas L. Rutt, *La Eclesiología en el Contexto Latinoamericano: Pasado, Presente y Futuro: Desde la Perspectiva Bíblica, Histórica, y Misiológica, Parte III: La Iglesia “Autóctona” y sus Desafíos* (unpublished manuscript, [2011]), PDF file, 13.

¹⁵⁴ “La educación teológica académica ha venido quedando desacreditada por causar una fragmentación de la teología y porque no se ocupa de los problemas prácticos que enfrentan las iglesias.” Coles, “Las instituciones teológicas frente al desafío misional,” 14.

¹⁵⁵ Professor Héctor Hoppe’s criticism of seminaries: “por ser demasiado selectivos (solo algunos, muy pocos privilegiados, pueden dejarlo todo e internarse por cuatro o cinco años).” Héctor Hoppe, “Editorial: Educación Teológica,” *Revista Teológica* 34, no. 137 (1989): 1.

¹⁵⁶ Rudolph Blank argues for TEE as the “best form” in Latin America: “It was Illich’s contention that higher education in Latin America was responsible for creating both elitism in society and clericalism in the institutional church. In his writings Illich called for a revolutionary model of education for Latin America, a model that put education at the service of the people and not of the clergy. In other words, ministry is not to be considered the exclusive function of a clerical elite, but of the people of God. Illich’s ideas have to a great extent influenced the goals of TEE, as well as those of the Basic Ecclesiastical Communities. They agree with Paulo Freire’s dictum that the poor must become the agents of their own liberation” (Blank, “Theological Education by Extension,” 288).

academically minded professors. In the words of Carlos Nagel, this system does not serve anyone: “to have scholars living in a glass bell, removed from the harsh everyday realities. . . . I mean those who have all the answers to questions that no one asks, and because they fly so high, they cannot hear the questions in which the people wallow.”¹⁵⁷ Although what is academic may become something alien to the daily life of the church, this claim is unaware of what the biblical theology rooted in the word of Christ is, which preaches in the streets and squares, which goes where suffering is, to bring the consolation of the gospel.

The second critique, regarding traditional theology versus contextualized theology, follows from the first critique. While there are different contexts that bring new challenges, there are no different Bibles, no different confessions, and no different doctrines for each place. In the second critique there is a marked influence of liberation theology,¹⁵⁸ which brings as a presupposition that the theology of the Western world is not relevant to the problems of Latin America.

It has been affirmed that in Luther’s time the uncertainty of people concerning their salvation was the central contextual concern, and therefore, that the Reformer stipulated his theology focusing on justification by faith. But it has been affirmed that the uncertainties of modern people are different and so the center of theology should be changed according to the needs of the present context. However, to affirm and maintain this is to ignore the Holy Scriptures and to despise the doctrine by which the church stands and falls (*articulus stantis et carentis Ecclesiae*). It is obvious that we need to speak to the context using the vocabulary of the context, but it is necessary to start from the Scriptures and end in them as the theological principle. As David Preus states, “The real purpose of theology is to open the Bible in such a way as to help us use our own words in the light of God’s Word.”¹⁵⁹ The world cannot set the agenda of Scripture. If this is permitted, we will soon become a liberal

He adds, “Only students coming from an upper middle class or upper-class could afford a seminary education. Few coming out of a blue-collar community would make it through to ordination. (In my personal history, my great grandfather, a very pious layman from the Black Forest region in Germany, always wanted to study to be a pastor, but could not afford a university or seminary education.) Financial realities in our own strife- and pandemic-ridden world are also making it impossible for members of the working classes to study for the pastoral ministry in a traditional seminary.” Blank, *Theological Education by Extension*, 288–289.

¹⁵⁷ “No creo que a la iglesia, ni a Dios, ni al mundo, le sirva tener eruditos que vivan en una campana de cristal, alejados de las duras realidades cotidianas. . . . Me refiero a los que tienen todas las respuestas a preguntas que nadie formula, y por volar tan alto, no pueden oír las preguntas en las que el pueblo se revuelca.” Carlos Nagel, “Educación Teológica Superior,” *Revista Teológica* 53, no. 170 (2013): 7–8.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Teología de la liberación: Perspectivas* (Lima: CEP, 1971); trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson as *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973).

¹⁵⁹ “El verdadero propósito de la teología es abrir la Biblia de tal modo que nos ayuden a usar nuestras propias palabras a la luz de la Palabra de Dios.” [David Preus], *La Lógica de la Dogmática* (unpublished manuscript, 2020), PDF file, 1.

church, the world setting the agendas on gender, marriage equality, divorce, birth control, etc., which ends up denying the truths of the word of God.

This leads us to reflect on the place of the social sciences in theological education. They are defined as “auxiliary sciences” to theology or as “servants of theology.” They do not define the *what*, nor the *how*, but rather they help us to understand the context, to be able to serve better. David Scaer, in a 1999 article about the curriculum of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, refers to the influences of the auxiliary disciplines and their central role that they came to occupy in many seminaries:

Just how have we gotten to this situation where the auxiliary disciplines are considered more and more vital for the preparing of a pastor? Farley names Pietism and the Enlightenment as culprits, an assessment that may apply to our situation. Historically Pietism saw theology as a matter of the head and extrinsic to the true religion of the heart, which expresses itself best not in a regular practice of the eucharist but in personal devotions and the private gatherings of Christians. Public worship, especially the eucharist, took on the characteristic of an adiaphoron, at least in comparison to faith. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment amputated theology from the church and placed it in the university or the academy, as this sphere is sometimes called. As long as the seminary is seen only or even chiefly as an academic institution in this Enlightenment sense, then daily chapel services, for example, Matins and Vespers, and a weekly eucharistic worship, are not and cannot be integrated into the seminary life. Pietism detaches theology from faith and Enlightenment Rationalism isolates theology from the church by giving its responsibility to the academic world.¹⁶⁰

(c) Share Resources

The document of the third CETAL in Antigua, Guatemala, (1985)¹⁶¹ affirms in the final section a commitment of cooperation between the churches. They committed to share human resources (“missionary evangelists” (evangelistas misioneros), teachers and lecturers), didactic and missionary materials, media (materials and experiences), collaboration in the publication of theological journals, and exchange in the areas of theological education (residence, extension, and continuous study).

These ideas sound great and have in fact been repeated at all CETAL meetings and, later, at International Lutheran Council regional meetings. The greatest

¹⁶⁰ David P. Scaer, “A Critique of the Fourfold Pattern,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (October 1999): 278–279.

¹⁶¹ Participants included the Lutheran Synod of Mexico (Sínodo Luterano de México), the Council for the Lutheran Churches in Central America and Panama (Consejo de Iglesias Luteranas de Centroamérica y Panamá), the Lutheran Church of Venezuela (Iglesia Luterana de Venezuela), the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil (Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil), the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina (Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de Argentina), and the Board for Mission Services of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

demand, to share and participate together, has been directed from the biblical institutes to the seminaries, that they would be interested, help, share, and participate more in theological education in Latin America, considering their capacity with regard to human and theological resources.

The apostle Paul says, “And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership [έχοινώνησεν] with me in giving and receiving, except you only” (Phil 4:15). The verb *κοινωνέω* is communing in, sharing in, or partaking of something, and in this case has to do with “giving and receiving.” This is a need of the Latin American region, to participate together, because everyone has something to give and everyone has something to receive, especially when it comes to the teaching of God’s word.

VIII. CETAL: Deinstitutionalization of Formal Theological Education

Although CETAL meetings have already been mentioned, they require a separate analysis, because they were milestones in the influencing of educational institutions for the following decades. It began as LATEC (Latin American Theological Education Conference), and then was renamed CETAL (Conferencia de Educación Teológica de América Latina).¹⁶² Each church had to send the president and the principal person involved in theological education, and a report of the theological education of each church was presented, in addition to joint presentations and reflections, ending with the elaboration of an “Acuerdo” (Agreement) among the member churches present.

CETAL brought together the “national Lutheran churches of Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Brazil, Venezuela, Guatemala, El Salvador, Mexico, the United States (Hispanic work), and the missions in Panama, Guatemala, and Puerto Rico.”¹⁶³ Not

¹⁶² LATEC is mentioned starting in the '90s, but, in the reports of the Regional Secretary of the LCMS, it appears that the name was LATEPC (Latin American Theological Education Planning Consultation). Cf. Otto C. Hintze, “Visitation: Brazil/Argentina January 24 – February 4, 1982,” March 9, 1982, Latin America [1982] papers, pages 9–12, with separate pagination (2–5) for the report, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO; Otto C. Hintze, “Visitation Report: Mexico City – Good Shepherd February 4 – 6, 1983,” March 25, 1983, Latin America [1983] papers, pages 27–28, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO. The antecedent of this consultation is the Consultation of Theological Education of Central and North America (Consulta de Educación Teológica de Centroamérica y Norte), held June 14 to 18, 1976, in Bogotá, Colombia. Like LATEC, this first consultation was promoted by LCMS Regional Secretary Otto C. Hintze and Fred Pankow (funded by the LCMS for its 125th anniversary). It was attended by forty-three representatives from churches and TE programs, and Robert Hoeferkamp led this meeting as well as the following LATEC or CETAL meetings. F[red] P[ankow], “Report on Consultation in Colombia [June 14–18, 1976],” August 13, 1976, Section III, Exhibit 32, pages 322–326, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO.

¹⁶³ “iglesias luteranas nacionales de Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Brasil, Venezuela, Guatemala, El Salvador, México, Estados Unidos (obra hispana) y a las misiones en Panamá, Guatemala y Puerto Rico.” Juan José Müller, *Memoria del Presidente*, report, quinta asamblea general ordinaria, Viña del Mar, 28 de Diciembre de 1996 (Valparaíso: IELCHI, 1996), 2.

only did it group the sister churches or missions of the LCMS, which had theological education in their countries, but also other Lutheran churches (predecessors churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) were invited, mainly in the first four meetings. (Seminario Augsburgo formed the pastors of these churches, with professors from those churches, as we have already noted.)

These meetings were promoted by the Mission Department of the LCMS through its missionaries.¹⁶⁴ It was established as a forum for discussion and agreements. Its beginning is explained by Seibert: “At the beginning of this movement in Central America, there were meetings of Missourian [LCMS] missionaries who shared information about the theological education programs they were developing in several countries in that region. It was certainly from these meetings that a first formal attempt at exchange emerged: the conference known as LATEC (Latin American Theological Education Conference).”¹⁶⁵

CETAL meetings included the following:¹⁶⁶

1. Buenos Aires, Argentina (January 28–30, 1982). Theme: The realities in theological education in the south and north were analyzed. On the southern side, there are no records of a presentation, but there are on the northern side, by Robert T. Hoeferkamp: “Iglesia Luterana y Educación Teológica en América Latina del Norte [Lutheran Church and Theological Education in North Latin America].”¹⁶⁷ An arrangement was made for the southern churches to assist with teachers in intensive courses in the north, and for the opening of the southern seminaries to receive students from the north, where each church would bear its own expenses. The churches of the north would continue with their programs of pastoral formation and their students’ theological education would be completed in the seminaries of the south. An exchange of theological resources was also agreed upon.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ [Seibert], *Informe sobre a Educação Teológica na América Latina*, 1.

¹⁶⁵ “Havia, nos primórdios desse movimento na América Central, encontros dos missionários missourianos que compartilhavam informações sobre os programas de educação teológica que estavam desenvolvendo em vários países daquela região. Certamente foi desses encontros que surgiu uma primeira tentativa formal de intercâmbio: a conferência conhecida como LATEC (Latin American Theological Education Conference).” Seibert, “Educação Teológica Missionária Luterana na América Latina,” <https://erniseibert.wordpress.com/2009/05/17/educacao-teologica-missionaria-luterana-na-america-latina/>.

¹⁶⁶ There is insufficient information about some of the meetings and their resulting documents.

¹⁶⁷ Robert Hoeferkamp had also delivered a paper to the first meeting of LATEC in Porto Alegre, Brazil, titled “Lutheran Church and Northern Latino Theological Education: Past and Future.” Rutt, *La Eclesiología en el Contexto Latinoamericano*, 10.

¹⁶⁸ Hintze, “Visitation: Brazil/Argentina January 24 – February 4, 1982.” Hintze affirms that the intent of these meetings was to be an “instrument to unite our partner churches and missions in Latin America in their task of theological education and to provide a forum for the exchange of

2. Mexico City, Mexico (July 5–7, 1983). Theme: Otto C. Hintze was recognized for promoting these meetings, the needs and offerings of each church in theological education were raised, and the need for theological formation for mission was emphasized, in a joint work between the churches. TEE courses began to be shared.¹⁶⁹
3. Antigua, Guatemala (May 27–30, 1985). Theme: “Bases Escriturales de la Educación Teológica” (Scriptural Bases of Theological Education) by Otto C. Hintze; “Principios Misionales de Roland Allen” (Roland Allen’s Missionary Principles)¹⁷⁰ by Rudolph Blank (presented in three parts).¹⁷¹
4. Caracas, Venezuela (March 6–12, 1987). Theme: “La Educación Teológica en el Crecimiento de la Iglesia” (Theological Education in the Growth of the Church). Rudolph Blank and Douglas Johnstone prepared five questions for group discussion, and it was led by Robert T. Hoeferkamp.¹⁷²
5. São Paulo, Brazil (1989). No information available.¹⁷³
6. Mexico City, Mexico (1992). Theme: “Seminarios sin paredes: En busca de modelos adecuados para formar líderes congregacionales” (Seminaries

ideas, resources and mutual planning.” Otto C. Hintze, “Visitation Report: Mexico City – Good Shepherd February 4 – 6, 1983,” 27.

¹⁶⁹ Huebner, “Planning Theological Education in Latin America,” 2.

¹⁷⁰ Blank states, “[T]he great missionary thinker and prophet, Roland Allen, had stressed that congregational leaders be trained locally and not sent off to a seminary in another part of the world.” Blank, *Theological Education by Extension*, 277–278. “Allen insisted that if no priest is available the congregation must commission or ordain a layperson to celebrate the Eucharist. If some version of canon law or ecclesiastical tradition prohibits the regular celebration of the Eucharist, the priesthood of believers must triumph over that tradition or that law. If war, pestilence, or persecution prohibit the celebration of the Sacrament, the priesthood of believers must be prepared and willing to carry on the mission of the Church, some as ordained elders, others as worship leaders, musicians, teachers, evangelists, visitors of the sick, exorcists, or those that feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Many Latin American church leaders who share this view see TEE as a way of preparing all of the members of the Church to use their spiritual gifts for the glory of God and for the good of the neighbor” (285–286).

¹⁷¹ “El propósito era la planificación de la educación teológica en América Latina. Durante las sesiones, Rodolfo Blank de Venezuela, presentó tres conferencias sobre ‘El pensamiento de Roland Allen’.” Edgar Kroeger, “Planificación de la Educación Teológica en América Latina,” *Revista Teológica* 30, no. 120 (1985): 3.

¹⁷² “1) To whom do we reach out in mission? 2) How does our Lutheran understanding of the Gospel affect the way we reach out in mission? 3) The preparation of the whole church for mission; 4) How does the way that candidates are selected and trained for the pastoral office affect the ways in which the church grows or fails to grow? 5) What is our role as theological leaders in the task of promoting missions and facilitating structural change that will result in greater church growth?” Otto C. Hintze, “Visitation Report – Venezuela March 8–21, 1987,” April 20, 1987, Latin America [1987] papers, pages 9–16, with separate pagination for the report, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO, page 2 of the report.

¹⁷³ It is only mentioned at the Caracas meeting of 1987 that it would be held in mid-1989 in Brazil. Cf. “Um Documento Importante,” *Mensageiro Luterano* (June 1987): 29. It is also mentioned by Seibert, who was in São Paulo: Cf. Seibert, *Informe sobre a Educação Teológica na América Latina*, 1.

without walls: In search of suitable models to form congregational leaders) by Daniel Mattson.

7. San Salvador, El Salvador (October 5 and 9, 1994). Theme: 1. “El ministerio de la iglesia desde una perspectiva bíblica y doctrinal” (The ministry of the church from a biblical and doctrinal perspective) by David Brondos of Mexico. 2. “El ministerio en la historia de la iglesia” (The Ministry in Church History) by Rudolph Blank of Venezuela. 3. “El ministerio de la Iglesia a la luz de las Confesiones Luteranas y la Teología Sistemática” (The Ministry of the Church in the Light of the Lutheran Confessions and Systematic Theology) by Erní Seibert of São Paulo, Brazil. 4. “Una síntesis del modelo de ministerio en un contexto latinoamericano, desarrollado en tiempos de crisis y guerra civil” (A synthesis of the ministry model in a Latin American context, developed in times of crisis and civil war) by Medardo Gómez, from El Salvador.¹⁷⁴
8. Santa Rita, Paraguay (1996). Theme: “Modelo de Formación, a través de Seminarios; a través de Institutos Bíblicos, y Formación por Extensión” (Training Model, through Seminaries; through Bible Institutes, and Formation by Extension).¹⁷⁵

Seibert explains the emphasis of these meetings. According to him, CETAL was more favorable especially toward theological education programs that were not formal, as seminaries are, especially since the churches of Central America were small and unable to sustain a seminary in the usual manner. For this reason, it was necessary to put together the programs according to the possibilities of each church and with their own resources (theological and human). These programs that became Bible institutes were promoted by LCMS missionaries.¹⁷⁶

IX. Bible Institutes

As Seibert, who was favorable toward nonformal theological education programs, affirms, a product of these meetings was that several Bible institutes have been created and initiated, taking the CETAL principles as their foundations. These include the following (in chronological order).

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Jorge Groh, “Conferencia de Educación Teológica,” *El Nuevo Luterano* 50 (December 1994): 15; Marcos Astete, “CILAS 94” VIÑA DEL MAR - CHILE, meeting minutes, unpublished PDF, 8 pages ([Viña del Mar, Chile: IELCHI,] 1994), 3.

¹⁷⁵ Astete, “CILAS 94,” 3.

¹⁷⁶ Seibert, “Educação Teológica Missionária Luterana na América Latina,” <https://erniseibert.wordpress.com/2009/05/17/educacao-teologica-missionaria-luterana-na-america-latina/>.

A. Instituto Bíblico Luterano (IBL, Lutheran Bible Institute) (1989)

The Instituto Bíblico Luterano (Lutheran Bible Institute) of the Iglesia Luterana Confesional de Chile (IELCHI, now ILC-Chile) was created to form leaders in various areas (“Evangelism, Sunday School Teachers, Liturgy, Bible Study, and Preaching”),¹⁷⁷ with a different format than TEE but, nevertheless, with the same principles, as stated in its constituent document: “According to Ephesians 4:11–12, it is necessary that all of God’s people be trained to carry out the mission of the church. This is the function of theological education: to enable all members of the church to be faithful disciples who carry out the ministry of the church.”¹⁷⁸ The IBL model was that the pastors were the teachers who taught the courses in person, due to the proximity of the congregations, taking advantage of human resources. The IBL did not seek to supplant pastoral formation in seminaries.¹⁷⁹

TEE was not used in its pedagogical model, since the classes were always face-to-face or intensive, but the concepts of education in context and formation of leaders, such as deacons with pastoral functions, were used.¹⁸⁰ Starting in 2000 the IELCHI, under the direction of this author (Sergio Adrián Fritzler), decided to train its own pastors, and its first and only pastor trained in this way was Alejandro López, along with teachers of Christian formation for schools.¹⁸¹

The IBL was inactive from 2009¹⁸² to 2017, when the diaconal program began under the direction of Cristian Rautenberg, who served until August 2020. During

¹⁷⁷ “Evangelismo, Maestros de Escuela Dominical, Liturgos, Estudio Bíblico y Predicación.” Carlos Schumann, “Conferencia de educación teológica para América Latina: Instituto Bíblico Luterano: Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de la República de Chile” (unpublished manuscript, [1996]), PDF file, 2.

¹⁷⁸ “Según Efesios 4:11–12, es necesario que todo el pueblo de Dios sea capacitado para llevar a cabo la misión de la iglesia. Esta es la función de la Educación Teológica: capacitar a todos los miembros de la iglesia para ser discípulos fieles que lleven a cabo el ministerio de la iglesia.” Iglesia Evangélica Luterana de la República de Chile, “INSTITUTO BÍBLICO LUTERANO: PROYECTO INSTITUCIONAL” (unpublished manuscript, March 2000), PDF file, 1. Cf. [CETAL], “Um Documento Importante: Afirmação de Caracas.”

¹⁷⁹ “Creemos que la formación de pastores es tarea, por lo menos en gran parte, de un seminario que garantice un nivel más alto de enseñanza basado en una mejor preparación de profesores y una completa infraestructura puesta a disposición de tal objetivo.” Schumann, *Conferencia de educación teológica para América Latina*, 3. The foundations for creating the IBL were (1) a nascent church with great challenges and multiple tasks to be accomplished; (2) scarce human resources trained for the work; (3) scarce financial resources; (4) impossibility for members, married or not, with work or family, to travel to a nearby seminary to take a regular course in theology or other training (the seminaries would be in Argentina or Brazil); and (5) conviction of the importance and transcendence of the work of the laity in the church. Sergio Fritzler, *Documento de Historia del IBL [Instituto Bíblico Luterano]*, unpublished PDF, 2 pages (Valparaíso: IBL, 2002).

¹⁸⁰ Two deacons were installed, but after a short time, it was reversed, it was decided to stop with this formation based on the reflection on the reality of the Chilean church and where this model led.

¹⁸¹ López graduated in 2006 and is currently serving in Panama.

¹⁸² “El Rev. Fritzler fue llamado como Director del Seminario Concordia, lo que produjo la desactivación del IBL, aprobando la Asamblea de la ILC que la casa de estudios para programas

this period, the first cycle of studies of the diaconal formation program was completed.¹⁸³ In September 2021, the president of the IELCHI appointed James Tino as director of IBL.¹⁸⁴ Tino served until December 2022. The current director is Omar Kinas.

B. Centro Luterano de Estudios Teológicos [Lutheran Center for Theological Studies, CLET] (1993) of the Lutheran Church of Guatemala (Iglesia Luterana de Guatemala, CONLUT). Theological education starts with:

the establishment in Guatemala, C.A., of the Caribbean Mission District Study Program of the Missouri Synod toward the end of 1959.¹⁸⁵ Its purpose was the preparation of lay workers called evangelists and catechists who were said to be needed in the missions and churches of the Missouri Synod established in Venezuela, Central America, and Mexico.¹⁸⁶

Hoeferkamp adds: “The methodology was to prepare and deliver correspondence courses, as well as conduct intensive one- or two-week meetings locally. The staff in charge of the program consisted of two American professors (the one who writes this was one of them).”¹⁸⁷ The initiator of the program concludes: “It is evident that the program was a precursor to the extension programs and seminaries that emerged in the 70s.”¹⁸⁸

pastorales y diaconales sería el Seminario Concordia de Buenos Aires.” [James Tino], *Propuesta de Cooperación entre El Instituto Bíblico Luterano (ILC Chile) y Seminario “El Reformador”*, unpublished PDF, 5 pages ([Santiago]: Instituto Bíblico Luterano, [2022]), 1.

¹⁸³ [Tino], *Propuesta de Cooperación*, 1.

¹⁸⁴ [Tino], *Propuesta de Cooperación*, 2.

¹⁸⁵ “In 1960, Gussick arranged two large mission conferences in Panama, where the theme of theological education was discussed among missionaries and emerging national church leaders. Also, in April 1960, the mission endeavor was formally organized as the *Distrito misional del Caribe* or DIMICAR (the LCMS Mission District of the Caribbean) in order to function legally in Guatemala and the rest of Central America and the Caribbean. Later in 1965, DIMICAR dissolved and a new organization was formed which was more in tune with the emerging churches in Central America and Panama. It was called *Consejo de Iglesias Luteranas de Centro América y Panamá* or CONCAP (Conference of Lutheran Churches in Central America and Panama). Again, the strategy was to allow for greater ownership to the emerging church bodies in their responsibility with theological education.” Kempff, “A Journey from Antigua,” 294.

¹⁸⁶ “el establecimiento en Guatemala, C.A. del Programa de Estudios del Distrito Misional del Caribe del Sínodo de Missouri hacia fines de 1959. Su propósito fue la preparación de obreros laicos llamados evangelistas y catequistas que, según se decía, eran necesarios en las misiones e iglesias del Sínodo de Missouri establecidas en Venezuela, Centro America y Mexico.” Hoeferkamp, “Iglesia Luterana y Educación Teológica en América Latina del Norte,” 11.

¹⁸⁷ “La metodología fue la de preparar e impartir cursos por correspondencia, además de realizar a nivel local encuentros intensivos de una o dos semanas de duración. El personal encargado del programa constó de dos profesores norteamericanos (el que esto escribe fue uno de ellos).” Hoeferkamp, “Iglesia Luterana y Educación Teológica en América Latina del Norte,” 11–12.

¹⁸⁸ “Es evidente que el programa fue un precursor de los programas y seminarios por extensión que surgieron en los años 70.” Hoeferkamp, “Iglesia Luterana y Educación Teológica en América Latina del Norte,” 12.

Before the opening of the Seminario Luterano Augsburgo (1964), which operated for 17 years, the church of Guatemala formed pastors in Mexico. In 1967 it is mentioned that the director of the theological education program for the laity was Edgar J. Keller: “The Rev. Edgar J. Keller is the director of theological training of laymen, preparing men who wish to serve as catechists and evangelists through correspondence courses and short-term courses that he holds throughout the Caribbean Mission District.”¹⁸⁹ And “From ‘82 until the formation of CLET, the only constant was the visits of Robert Huebner,¹⁹⁰ who offered occasional courses in Guatemala. John Durkovic was in charge of what he called INLUX (Instituto Luterano de Extensión, Lutheran Extension Institute).”¹⁹¹

In 1993 the program was started with the name CLET under the direction of the missionary Douglas Rutt. “A classification is made of those who have pastoral functions in the Church: Ordained, Appointed, and Deacons. . . . CLET is instituted and Rev. Douglas Rutt is appointed as Director and the study programs are established.”¹⁹² Since 1999, missionary Gregory Klotz continued to train leaders and pastors. The program was based on TEE, and since its creation, only in “2004 – On June 27, the First and Only Graduation of CLET Students was held.”¹⁹³ In November 2013, the Latin American regional assembly of the International Lutheran Council approved the idea that pastoral formation be carried out in agreements with the

¹⁸⁹ Leonard E. Stahlke, “A Brief Resume of Lutheran Mission Work in the Central American Area,” January 1967, LES 70, date stamped July 1971, 5 pages, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO, 2. Stahlke goes on: “There are two types of ministerial training in our area. The theological training of catechists and evangelists, which I’ve mentioned above, is directed by the Rev. Edgar Keller, who is very qualified for this type of work, since he was a professor at our Buenos Aires seminary for fourteen years before coming to Guatemala on 1961. The more formal, full seminary training for our interested and qualified young men is being given in Mexico City, where the Augsburg Center for Theological Studies is located.” Stahlke, “A Brief Resume of Lutheran Mission Work in the Central American Area,” 5.

¹⁹⁰ In 1992 he was appointed as Missionary Counselor for Theological Education in Latin America.

¹⁹¹ Douglas Rutt, email message to author, 2017. In the period “1986-1989 – Se capacitan líderes por medio cursos impartidos por los pastores o misioneros en las Parroquias y misiones y Cursos impartidos por profesores invitados y/o Cursos autodidácticos.” Byron Paz, *Educación Teológica en Guatemala*, unpublished PDF, 11 pages (2021 or later), slide 2.

¹⁹² “Se hace una clasificación de quienes tienen funciones pastorales en la Iglesia: ‘Ordenados, Designados y Diáconos. . . . Se instituye CLET y se nombra como Director al Reverendo: Douglas Rutt y se establecen los programas de estudio.’” Paz, *Educación Teológica en Guatemala*, slide 3. Paz adds: “Hay que recordar que los Reverendos: Héctor Canjura y David Rodríguez, habían sido Directores del Programa de Educación Teológica en Guatemala en los años anteriores.” Paz, *Educación Teológica en Guatemala*, slide 3. Douglas Rutt served as director from 1993 to 1999, when “Se integra al Reverendo: Gregory Klotz, como Profesor en CLET en 1999, con la salida del Reverendo: Rutt, se nombra al Reverendo: Klotz, como Director Interino de CLET y al Reverendo: David Rodríguez como Director Adjunto” Paz, *Educación Teológica en Guatemala*, slide 4.

¹⁹³ “2004 – El 27 de junio, se realizó la Primera y Única Graduación de Estudiantes de CLET.” Paz, *Educación Teológica en Guatemala*, slide 6. In 20 years of existence, that is, from 1993 to 2013, CLET formed a total of 8 pastors, of which 6 continue in the pastorate, of the 12 that exist today.

Lutheran seminaries of the region. In 2021 CONLUT established its “ordination route” and pastors will be trained in seminaries in the region. Since 2016 its director is Byron Paz and CLET coordinates theological education with the CMSCR for the formation of pastors and deaconesses, such as the postgraduate programs for pastors and continuing education by the Luther Academy. CLET will start a pre-seminary program, forming laypeople for their vocations and encouraging candidates to be pastors.

C. Instituto Bíblico Adolfo Dilley¹⁹⁴ (IBAD, 1994) [*Adolfo Dilley Bible Institute*] of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Paraguay (Iglesia Evangélica Luterana del Paraguay, IELPA). The IBAD was initiated by Juan Beckmann in 1994 (1994 to 1997) in order to prepare laypeople for service in congregations, with a course on “Elders”¹⁹⁵ who are laypeople prepared to serve in congregations as a pastor’s team. At its beginning the main objectives have been:

To increase the theological knowledge of those who desire this so that as better prepared Christians they may act in their congregations and in their interpersonal relationships to bear witness to their faith and sound biblical doctrine. To form auxiliary ministers (workers and deacons in Christian education and worship activities) to act in their respective congregations supporting pastoral, educational, and missionary work or as missionaries on mission fronts. And it continues to improve the theoretical and practical knowledge of its pastors with emphasis on the area of missions and education.¹⁹⁶

The second director was Alceu Figur (1998–2010) who developed the IBAD by promoting various courses¹⁹⁷ in the congregations, organizing various intensive courses and also representing the institution in international forums (bearing the voice of the Bible institutes and their needs). Other directors succeeded: Laercio Knaak, 2011–2016; Norberto Gerke, 2017–2021. The current director is Eugenio Wentzel, since 2022.

¹⁹⁴ It is the name of the first Lutheran pastor who worked in Paraguay (in 1936).

¹⁹⁵ Juan Beckmann made a translation of Victor A. Constien, *The Caring Elder: A Training Manual for Serving* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986).

¹⁹⁶ “Aumentar el conocimiento teológico de aquellos que así lo desean para que como cristianos mejor preparados puedan actuar en sus congregaciones y en sus relaciones interpersonales dar testimonio de su fe y de la sana doctrina bíblica. Formar ministros auxiliares (obreros/as y diáconos/as en Educación Cristiana y Actividades Culticas) para actuar en sus respectivas congregaciones apoyando al trabajo pastoral, educacional y misional o como misioneros en frentes de misión. Y seguir perfeccionando el conocimiento teórico y práctico de sus Pastores con énfasis en el área de las misiones y de la educación.” Alceu Alton Figur, *INSTITUTO BÍBLICO ADOLFO DILLEY: IBAD*, unpublished PDF, 18 pages [Asunción: IBAD, 2005], 3.

¹⁹⁷ Those of the SEAN and other Lutheran courses, under the TEE modality.

Although the IBAD has not trained pastors,¹⁹⁸ the result of the IBAD was the current Pastor Victor Verruck, who participated in the IBAD courses for years and then trained in the ETH program of Seminario Concordia of Argentina in 2020.

Other institutions and programs, which were initiated but later ceased to function, were: Instituto Concordia (Mexico),¹⁹⁹ SEMBLEX (México),²⁰⁰ INBILUPA

¹⁹⁸ The pastors of the IELPA have been formed in the seminaries of Argentina and especially of Brazil.

¹⁹⁹ It operated from 1947 to 1958. Hoeferkamp, “Iglesia Luterana y Educación Teológica en América Latina del Norte,” 10. It was established by the Mission Board of the Missouri Synod in order to serve the missions established in Mexico. “From 1957 to 1959 the LCMS helped support a program for the preparation of pastors for the *Sínodo Luterano de México*, it was known as *Instituto Concordia de México* and functioned out of the facilities of Santa Cruz Lutheran Church in Monterrey, México. The director and only professor of this program was pastor Fred B. Growcock. During its existence, *Instituto Concordia* prepared some 8 or 9 pastors for the Lutheran Synod of Mexico. In 1957 a student out of *Instituto Concordia* was assigned to serve as vicar in the State of Monagas in Venezuela.” Blank, *Theological Education by Extension*, 290n8. It closed for lack of students to be pastors. The same year in which it closed, a program to form laypeople began because: “In order that the church may be national, under the aspects of self-propagation and self-support, it is necessary, particularly in the rural areas, that there be a trained corps of part-time and full-time catechists and evangelists who will be able, under proper supervision, to evangelize and instruct candidates for membership in the Church. It is not necessary (nor perhaps even desirable) that such workers receive full theological training.”

Robert T. Hoeferkamp, “The Need for a Seminary Program in the Caribbean Area,” Dec. 29, 1961, Seminary Training Program Establishing and Operating papers, date stamped Jan. 4, 1962, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO, 1. But for the large cities and countries of the region, “it is necessary that the servants of the Church be intimately acquainted with modern culture and possess a thorough theological education. To meet this need, a central Caribbean seminary that offers a first-class theological education is the only solution.” Hoeferkamp, “The Need for a Seminary Program in the Caribbean Area,” 1.

²⁰⁰ Seminario Bíblico Luterano por Extensión. It is only mentioned by Kempff (“A Journey from Antigua,” 298), and there is no other reference to this institution. Perhaps it is the same as the Institute and was called by another name.

(Panama),²⁰¹ IBLE (Spain)²⁰² y PTEE²⁰³ (from the seminary of Argentina). At present, as already stated, all seminaries have other programs that are non-residential, but these cannot be classified under the original TEE model²⁰⁴ because they are designed with purposes, modalities, and concepts that differ from those of the 70's and 80's, as well as by the use of current technologies in classes and communication.

D. CETAL not only influenced theological education in the formation of Bible institutes, but also seminaries. As Seibert puts it: "When the School of Theology was created at the Instituto Concórdia in São Paulo, this seminary had a very strong connection with the LATEC movement."²⁰⁵ An article in the magazine *Mensageiro Luterano* ["Lutheran Messenger," quarterly magazine of the IELB] mentions this connection with CETAL and the need to work on these concepts in the seminaries in Brazil:

Along these lines, the Superior School of Theology of São Paulo is already beginning to develop the material for Theological Education by Extension (TEE). The Department of Education also asked the Schools of Theology to recommend in their publications a bibliography to assist pastors in their scheduled

²⁰¹ In 1999 the start of a program of theological education was already planned, as the Regional Director relates: "One of the most pressing needs for the growth of the church in Panama is theological education. There has not been a coherent program for the training of church workers in Panama; however, the principal assignment of Rev. McMiller is in the area of theological education. Rev. McMiller and a representative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Panama have visited Guatemala and Venezuela to gather information, resources, models, etc. A proposal has been developed for carrying out such a program. Unfortunately, there was not sufficient time during this visit to discuss it in-depth." Douglas Rutt, "Field Trip Report: Panama, November 6–10, 1999," Information Item 14, Exhibit 13, pages 149–154 with separate pagination for the report, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, MO, 3. The theological education program in Panama began in April 2000 with 9 students, then followed by 5, under a residential pastoral formation program under the direction of Pastor Daniel McMiller, and 2 pastors were ordained (Patricio Mora y Rubén Ávila in 2003, and Jorge Villamil in 2005). Four times a week they had face-to-face classes, and sometimes they had intensive 20-hour courses with external professors (such as Martin Teigen, Rudolph Blank, and others). He then started the Bible Institute (Instituto Bíblico in Panama, INBILUPA) in 2003 under the direction of Mark Kempff, organizing and teaching classes for deaconesses, and finished his work there in April 2008.

²⁰² Instituto Bíblico Luterano Español (Spain Lutheran Bible Institute), created in 2006 with the arrival of the missionary Gustavo Lavia, and concluded with the departure of the missionary in 2015. He offered courses at the lay level.

²⁰³ Programa de Educación Teológica por Extensión (Theological Education Program by Extension). It had about 1000 students and used the SEAN manuals.

²⁰⁴ Kempff calls them "creative TEE hybrids." Kempff, "A Journey from Antigua," 298.

²⁰⁵ "Quando foi criada a Escola Superior de Teologia no Instituto Concórdia de São Paulo, este Seminário teve uma ligação muito forte ao movimento da LATEC." Seibert, "Educação Teológica Missionária Luterana na América Latina," <https://erniseibert.wordpress.com/2009/05/17/educacao-teologica-missionaria-luterana-na-america-latina/>.

reading that develops the spirit of the “Affirmation of Caracas.” The next consultation will be in Brazil in May 1989.²⁰⁶

It also influenced Seminario Concordia in Argentina.²⁰⁷ At the 1983 IELA Assembly a committee was stipulated to evaluate the pastoral model, which worked for two years and brought its conclusions to the same Assembly (in 1985). Concluding the document, it is stated:

After these reflections, and many others that we cannot share because of the space they would take, we come to the conclusion that we need to orient our ministerial preparation TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF GOD, where the ministries are, and allow them to minister, each one according to the gift he has received, extending and creating the conditions so that he can develop it adequately and constantly.²⁰⁸

In 1986 the course began by extension in the Seminary of Argentina, called “Curso Básico de Teología [Basic Course of Theology],” which was for “lay people of both sexes of the IELA.”²⁰⁹ A basic course followed by one of the specialization courses “to give further preparation in a defined area to the member who wishes to train for better service.”²¹⁰ In the same way, Professor Héctor Hoppe refers to it, a

²⁰⁶ “Nesta linha a Escola Superior de Teologia de São Paulo já está começando a desenvolver o material para Educação Teológica por Extensão (ETE). O Departamento de Ensino também solicitou as Escolas de Teologia que recomendem em suas publicações uma bibliografia para auxiliar os pastores em sua leitura programada que desenvolva o espírito da ‘Afirmación de Caracas’. A próxima consulta será no Brasil, em maio de 1989.” Introduction to [CETAL,] “Um Documento Importante: Afirmação de Caracas,” *Mensaje Luterano* (June 1987): 29–30. Zimmer mentions the “Afirmação de Caracas” (cf. IELB, “Um Documento Importante,” 29–30) when he mentions documents of philosophy in theological education that were on the discussion table in the 80s in the search for new educational models. Zimmer, “A história da educação teológica na IELB,” 35–37.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Jorge Groh, “Un Seminario para la Iglesia: ¿Necesitamos un Seminario?” *El Nuevo Luterano* 49 (December 1993): 13; Flor, “Editorial: El Seminario Concordia necesita su ayuda,” 6.

²⁰⁸ “Después de estas reflexiones, y muchas otras que no podemos compartir por el espacio que insumirían, llegamos a la conclusión que necesitamos orientar nuestra preparación ministerial A TODO EL PUEBLO DE DIOS, donde están los ministerios, y permitirles ministrar a cada uno según el don que ha recibido, tendiendo y creando las condiciones para que pueda desarrollarlo adecuada y constantemente.” Drachenberg et al., “Documento: Informe: ‘Comité de Reflexiones – Conclusiones’,” 34.

²⁰⁹ “laicos de ambos sexos de la IELA.” Seminario Concordia, “Curso por extensión,” *Revista Teológica* 124 (Buenos Aires: Seminario Concordia, 1986), 4.

²¹⁰ “para dar una mayor preparación en un área definida al miembro que desea capacitarse para un mejor servicio.” Seminario Concordia, “Curso por extensión,” 4. This was TEE and distinct from the 1980 “Evening Course” program, which was a training program for “lay workers.” The Extension program was by mail and soon finished the program. But these courses led to the program for pastoral formation: “Curso Especial de Teología por Extensión: Estudio autodidacta, con intercalación de estudio residencial intensivo, de dos o más días de duración, donde ‘residencial’ puede significar o que el profesor se traslada al lugar donde reside el estudiante, o que éste va por unos días al Seminario.” Erico Sexauer, “El Seminario Concordia a partir de 1955,” in *IELA: 90 años de Historia*, ed. Claudio L. Flor (Buenos Aires: Seminario Concordia, 1995), 30.

decade later (1993), in the article “Capacitación de los dones [Training of the gifts]” of the *Revista Teológica*: “2. The gifts of the Spirit are not centralized in a single person. It is not biblically grounded to expect a pastor to fulfill all the roles of a good shepherd, evangelist, teacher, preacher, counselor, and deacon. In each congregation, God distributes the gift of preaching to one person, the gift of counseling to another, and so on with the other spiritual gifts.”²¹¹ And in the following points:

5. Until now, theological education has been centered in a residential seminary. The theological education of all the gifts will require a decentralized organization to allow each of the holders of the *charismata* of God access to training.
- ... 7. Training should be specifically geared to those charismatic gifts in relation to leadership such as: teachers, pastors, evangelists, counselors, preachers, and deacons.²¹²

We should not discredit nor devalue the efforts made in theological education in Latin America in recent decades, because today we have pastors in all the countries of the region who preach Christ crucified. Many of them have been formed in seminaries and many of them by way of TEE. Yet the results are evident that they have been different in terms of the churches:

When the Missouri Synod began doing international mission work, the establishment of a seminary quickly followed so that indigenous pastors could be trained. Arguably, the strongest partners of the Missouri Synod are those who had seminaries grounded in the traditional, residential model, established early on in the work. The weakest partners of the Missouri Synod are those who had no seminary established or alternative models such as TEE, non-residential,

²¹¹ “2. Los dones del Espíritu no están centralizados en una sola persona. No es bíblico exigir que el pastor sea buen pastor, evangelista, maestro, predicador, consejero y diácono. En cada congregación Dios pone el don de la predicación sobre alguno de sus hijos, el de la consejería sobre otro de sus hijos, y así con los demás dones.” Héctor Hoppe, “Capacitación de los dones dados a los creyentes,” *Revista Teológica* 38, no. 144 (1993): 17.

²¹² “5. Hasta el presente la educación teológica estuvo centrada en un seminario residencial. La educación teológica de todos los dones exigirá una organización descentralizada para permitir el acceso de cada uno de los poseedores de los jarísmatas de Dios a la capacitación. ... 7. La capacitación deberá estar orientada específicamente a aquellos dones carismáticos en relación al liderazgo como: maestros, pastores, evangelistas, consejeros, predicadores y diáconos.” Hoppe, “Capacitación de los dones,” 17.

part time, leadership formation, et al., in place of a more traditional seminary model.²¹³

(The second, final part of this article will appear in our April 2026 edition.)

²¹³ Collver, “Theological Education and the Global Seminary Initiative,” 13. Blank has the totally opposite view: “Se ha observado que en muchas oportunidades el establecimiento de un seminario ha sido el factor clave en el estancamiento de una iglesia creciente en el tercer mundo, pues el mantenimiento del seminario le quita a la iglesia nacional la mayor parte de sus recursos económicos y humanos. A la vez, se ha observado que las iglesias que proveen a sus miembros de varios modelos de preparación ministerial han sido más dinámicas y han registrado tasas de crecimiento más altas. Por lo tanto, es muy instructivo analizar los sistemas de preparación ministerial que han desarrollado las iglesias pentecostales autóctonas.” Rodolfo Blank, *Teología y misión en América Latina* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 210–11.