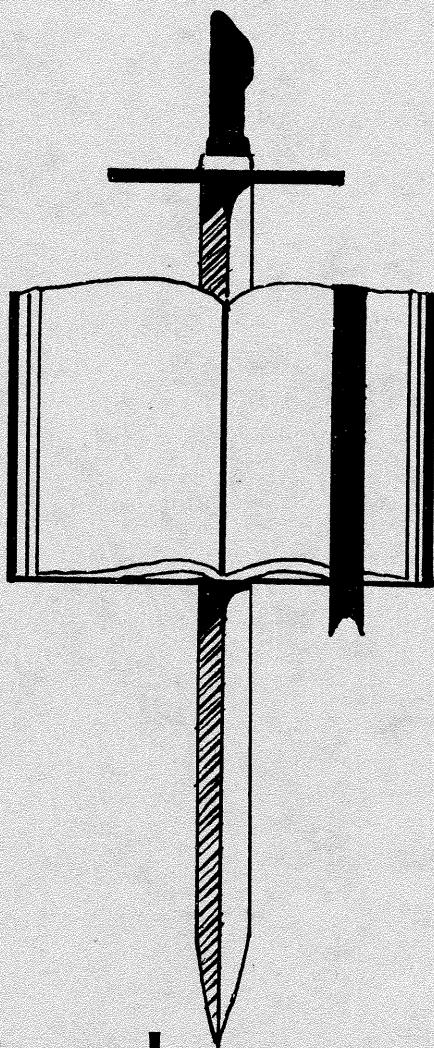


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George Oliver Lillegard

1888-1988

This year marks the centenary of the birth of George Oliver Lillegard and it is only fitting that we dedicate the next two issues of the Quarterly to his memory by printing some lectures on missions which he delivered at Thiensville, Wisconsin, in the fall of 1955. These lectures were later printed in the Quartalschrift: but with the kind permission of the present editor of the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, we are reprinting them here. Also included in this issue is an interesting and informative article on LUTHER'S HYMNS by Pastor Harry Bartels, pastor of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and a timely article by a seminary student on the devastating effects of the Historical-Critical Method of Biblical Interpretation.

George Lillegard was born on April 23, 1888, in Calmar, Iowa. After attending local elementary schools, he enrolled in the Prep Department of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, graduating from there in 1908. Four years later he graduated from Luther College. In 1909 he entered Luther Seminary at St. Paul, Minnesota, and graduated from that institution in 1912. That same year he received a call from the Norwegian Synod to be a missionary in China. He served there until 1915, when he had to return to the States because of his father's illness. When the merger of the several Lutheran church bodies became effective in 1917, he withdrew his membership in the Norwegian Synod and joined the Minority, presently the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

On May 26, 1920, he was married to Bernice Onstad at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Madison, Wisconsin. The Rev. Holden Olsen officiated. This union was blessed with eight children. That same

year, 1920, George received a call from the Missouri Synod to serve as a missionary once again in China. This time he served seven years. In 1928 he accepted a call to Harvard Street Lutheran Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was pastor until 1952 when he accepted a call to be a professor at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. During his pastorate out east he also served as secretary of the Synod for eighteen years. He was forced to resign as professor from the seminary after ten years because of illness. On June 14, 1965, he was called to his eternal rest.

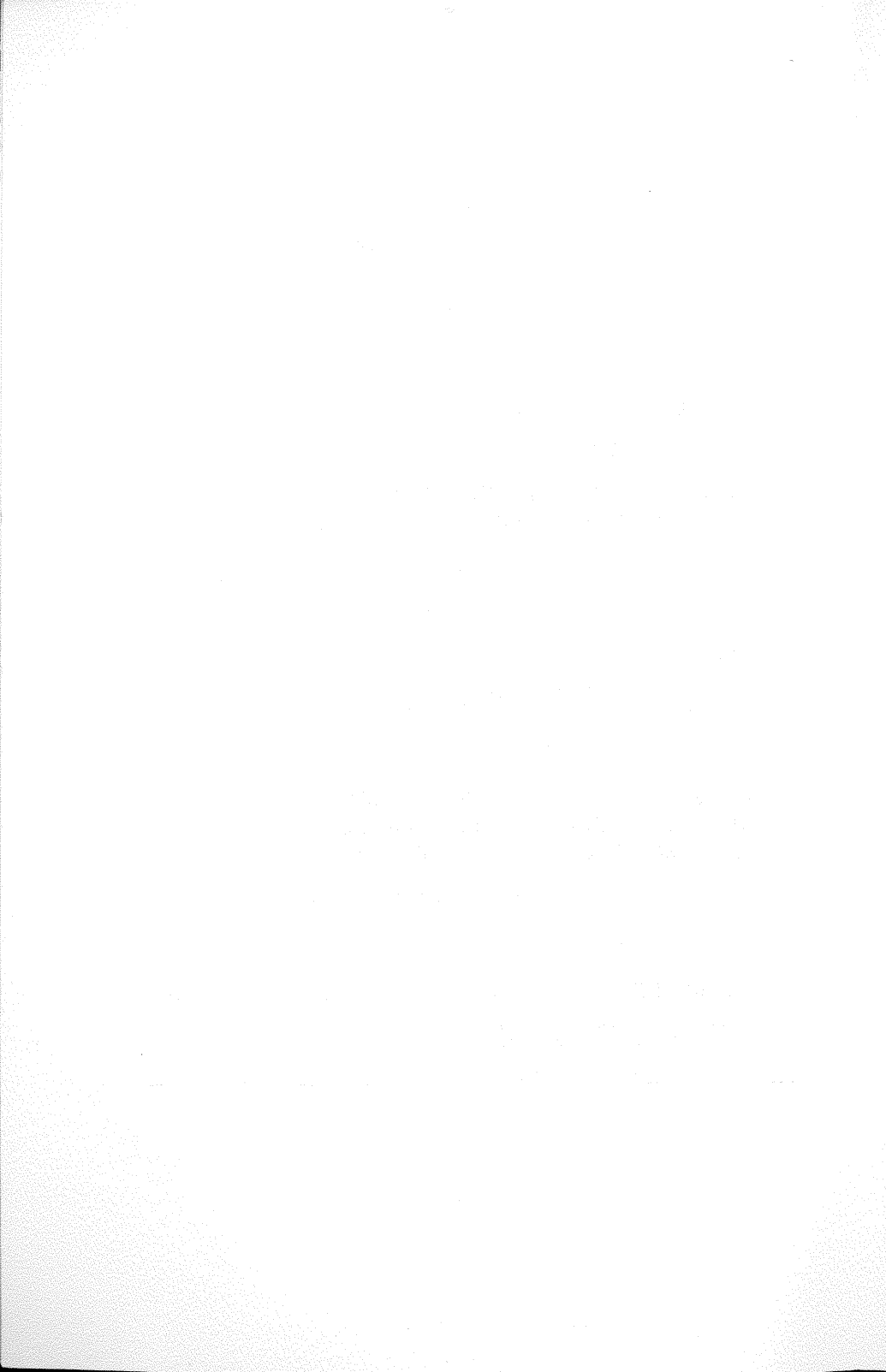
Professor Lillegard was blessed with exceptional gifts. He will be remembered for his numerous writings. He wrote many papers for Conferences and Synod publications. He also wrote several monographs, such as "Modernism" and "The Separation of Church and State." He will be best remembered for his book "From Eden to Egypt," which contains sermons based on Genesis. He also served as editor of the Synod's Norwegian periodical "Kirke Tidende" (Church News) for many years. Professor Lillegard co-edited "Grace for Grace," a history of the Norwegian Synod, and was editor of "Faith of Our Fathers," sequel to the former. These are but a few of his literary activities.

BLESSED BE HIS MEMORY



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# LECTURES ON MISSIONS

by

Geo. O. Lillegard

## I. Missions in the Bible

The Bible is first and last a book of missions. It tells us the story of how God sent His Son into the world to redeem fallen mankind, and of how this Son sent His disciples out into all the world to proclaim the good news of His salvation. "Sent" is the key-word. Jesus says: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18). The prophets were missionaries, sent by God to teach His people the mysteries of the Kingdom, and to witness to all nations that there is only one God, the Lord God of Israel. The apostles were missionaries, sent by Christ to teach all nations and to baptize them in the name of the Triune God. The history of the Church, both in the Old and the New Testament times, is the history of the progress these missionaries made in their divinely appointed task of leading men to the true God and the only Savior. Thus we can say that any discussion of Christian Missions involves in reality the whole field of Church History and even of World History, since the story of the Church is so intimately bound up with the story of the world in general. A pseudo-historian like H. G. Wells may ignore the Church in writing his "Outline of History." But Edward Gibbon, who was no friend of the Church, had to say in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire": "From the council of Nicea to the end of the seventh century,

the peace and unity of the church was invaded by these spiritual wars; and so deeply did they affect the decline and fall of the empire, that the historian has too often been compelled to attend the synods, to explore the creeds, and to enumerate the sects, of this busy period of ecclesiastical annals" (Vol. V., p. 488).

We must, therefore, limit ourselves to certain phases of the work of missions which we can cover to some extent, though it be necessarily in only a sketchy manner. We shall not try to review the fruits of the Gospel in the lives of men and nations, the social changes it has wrought, the influence it has exerted on the course of events in the world, the efforts made in its name to reform a corrupt world and to establish civic righteousness, peace and justice on earth. Kenneth S. Latourette's "A History of Christianity" has attempted to do that, but with questionable success. For he attributes to the influence of Christianity many things which should rather be attributed to false teachings, pagan philosophies, and proud speculative attempts to reach God by human wisdom and science. To the advocates of the "Social Gospel," the Christian Gospel has meaning only according as it bears such visible fruits in society as we have just indicated. But to the true Christian, the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," (Rom. 1:16) whether the fruits of faith become visible in society or not. Only Judgment Day can and will reveal what the true fruits of the Gospel have been. Therefore we are interested chiefly in tracing the extent to which the Gospel has been proclaimed in all the world from the beginning, assured that the fruits were there, whether as "a savour of death unto death," or "a savour of life unto life" (II Cor. 2:16). The Gospel being what it is, Paul had to say: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him

in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world (Rom. 10:13-17).

And this may serve as a general theme for our lectures: "Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." We shall see this truth as it is made manifest: I. In the Bible. II. In the history of the church through the first 18 centuries. III. In the story of the great Mission Century of the Church. We shall also consider briefly: IV. The Religions of the Heathen World; and V. Mission Principles and Methods.

The Gospel is by its very nature something which must be proclaimed by the Lord from whom it comes and by those whom He appoints to bring the Good News to the world of men. It can never become known in any other way. For the Gospel tells us, not something that man shall do, not something which he can spin out of his own God-given faculty of reason or out of mystical communion with the spirit world, but something that God does for the benefit of fallen man, something which He has from eternity in His secret counsels planned to do, and which He had to make known to men, if they were to learn about it at all. As St. Paul says: "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for



had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (I Cor. 2:7ff). This message from God is one which can be stated simply, in a few words, as in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Yet it concerns the "unsearchable riches of Christ," (Eph. 3:8). "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16). It is something whose marvels even the angels desire to look into (I Pet. 1:12).

Still it is despised and ignored by the great majority of those who hear it. However, the fact that the Gospel is rejected by certain individuals or peoples does not mean that it has not been preached effectively among them. Nor is their ignorance of it proof of anything else than that they have failed to make use of the opportunities God has given them to hear and receive it. There are many people living within the sound of church bells and with Bibles ready at hand who are just as ignorant of the Gospel as the most isolated savage in darkest Africa. Our Lord Jesus had to say even of the most zealous members of the Chosen People of His day: "In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt. 13:14f.). Christ has told us to preach the Gospel

to every creature and has sent His Holy Spirit to help us carry out that great commission. But He has not promised that His Gospel will be everywhere received with joy and believed. He tells us only: "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world *for a witness* unto all nations" (Matt. 24:14). On Judgment Day it is the unbelief of men over towards the Gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus -- not their sins nor their pagan idolatry -- which shall condemn them. And their unbelief is without excuse. The history of the Church of God, or of Christian Missions, is thus the record as much of the manner in which men have turned gross hearts, dull ears, and closed eyes to its saving message, as it is of the triumphs and conquering sweep of the Gospel.

We find illustrations of this principle from the beginning of the Bible record to the end. God promised disobedient Adam and Eve that the Seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, the devil tempter who had led them into sin. Yet this promise, accepted in faith by Abel, led Cain to murder his brother. For when God accepted Abel's offering of a lamb, but not Cain's offering of the fruit of the ground, it was because Abel had true faith in God, while Cain with all his formal worship of God rejected His word and promise, as the Epistle to the Hebrews says: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of the gifts" (11:4). Cain was the first Deist. He believed in the existence of God and worshipped Him. But he despised the Gospel concerning the Seed of the woman, whose heel was to be bruised while bruising the head of the serpent; and he would not bring the offering of blood-atonement by slaughtering a lamb, as believing Abel did. He as well as Abel knew about the promise. But even after he was punished for his crime, he and his family lived without the

hope of redemption, without repentance and true faith.

Throughout the approximately 2000 years before the Flood, the Gospel of the promised Redeemer was proclaimed by believing patriarchs. We read that in the days of Seth men began to "call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26). As Luther shows, this must refer to public preaching of the word, not merely to private prayer and worship. The descendants of Seth were not so entirely separate from the descendants of Cain that they could not bring the Gospel to them; for by the time of Enoch they had begun even to intermarry with the godless daughters of men. Of Enoch we are told that he walked with God, and the Epistle to the Hebrews says: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him" (11:5-6). That he walked with God did not mean merely that he led a virtuous life, but that he lived a life of faith, -- faith in the Savior in whom alone he could be counted righteous. Jude 14f shows us also that Enoch testified boldly against the unbelievers of his age: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

Still later, as the world grew increasingly corrupt in spite of the light of the Gospel which they all possessed, Noah was God's great messenger to men. He is called a "preacher of righteousness," one who "found grace in the eyes of the Lord," and who "was a just man and perfect in his generations

and walked with God" (Gen. 6:9). When God spoke to Noah and told him that in 120 years He would destroy the world by a great deluge, because "the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11), the people had become so unbelieving that they scoffed at his warnings as well as at the gospel of a Redeemer who was to come. So Hebrews says of him: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (11:7). In that enlightened, cultured age when there were "giants in the earth," "mighty men of renown," (Gen. 6:4) men expert in the arts of war and of peace, surely there was no single individual who did not know about the promise given to Adam and Eve. Yet they all perished in unbelief. And our Lord Jesus uses the story of Noah's world as an example of what the world shall be like at the end of days: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37ff.). Christ does not emphasize their sins and their wickedness but simply their careless unbelief toward the word of God, both its message of redemption and its warning of doom and eternal destruction to those who reject that message.

After the Flood, Noah and his descendants were given God's blessings and the promise that He would never again destroy the world by a flood on account of the sins of men. And God kept the remembrance of that promise before them by setting the rainbow in the skies as a token of the covenant between Him and the earth. Yet it was not long before rebellion against God's word and neglect

of His promise made themselves evident. We see it in the story of Ham and Canaan and the curse pronounced on them by Noah; in the brief account of Nimrod who was a "mighty hunter before the Lord" (Gen. 10:9), and who according to tradition built the tower of Babel as a rallying point for those who followed him in his worship of idols and in his contempt for the Gospel of the promised Redeemer. When God confounded the language of these proud unbelievers and scattered them abroad upon the face of all the earth, it was intended as a punishment which would work automatically to keep rebels from joining their forces against God and His Church. Wherever these people went, they brought with them the knowledge of God's promises as well as of His judgments on unbelievers, even though they, as Paul says, "held down the truth in unrighteousness," so that in most parts of the world, "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, . . . and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man" (Rom. 1:21ff.). By the time of Abraham, men had in the main forgotten the lesson of the Deluge and of Babel and had become idolators. For even of Abraham's family we read in the book of Joshua: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods" (24:2). So God "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16), and called Abraham out of the midst of his idolatrous family to be both the transmitter of the promised Seed and the great missionary of the Gospel to the world. He was indeed not the only true believer; for we read of others who confessed the true God: Melchizedek and Job and Abimelech, etc. But he was the one who was henceforth to be the standard-bearer of the Gospel and a model of the true faith, so that he could be called "father of all them that believe"



(Rom. 4:11). And be it noted at once that he was such a model, not because of his righteous, virtuous conduct and life; for he sinned in many grievous ways; but because he "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Gal. 3:6). And his faith concerned the promise that in him and his seed should "all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:5). That seed was Christ (Gal. 3:16).

In order that Abraham and his descendants might fulfill their task as missionaries of the Gospel promises to all the nations on the earth, God placed them in the land of Canaan, the geographical centre of the great land-mass of the earth, Eur-Asia and Africa. It was a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8), the most favored part of the Fertile Crescent which extended from Mesopotamia to Egypt. It was the cross-roads of the ancient world, where caravans from the East met the ships of the Great Sea to the west and the traders from Arabia and Egypt to the south. From this centre, Abraham and his descendants would be able to reach all the peoples of the earth. Abraham himself traveled from Ur of the Chaldees through every part of the land of Canaan and to Egypt, setting up wherever he came altars to the Lord. When he read that he at these altars "called upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 12:8, etc.), we must, with Luther, understand that he not only carried on his own private worship of God there, but also preached the Word to everyone whom he could reach--his large retinue of servants as well as the people among whom he dwelt, whether friends or foes. Some 25 tribes or nations are named in his story as having contact with Abraham in one way or another. Through him God testified to them of His power and grace. Some rejected his word; others accepted it. Pharaoh in Egypt drove Abraham out of his country, though he had to admit that it was Abraham's God who "plagued Pharaoh and his house with great

plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife" (Gen. 12:17). Abimelech in the land of the Philistines accepted the Lord's warnings under similar circumstances with true penitence and sought to make friends with Abraham, the friend of God, saying: "God is with thee in all that thou doest: Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned" (Gen. 21:22f.). Similar contrasts in the way Abraham's testimony was received may be found in the King of Sodom and the Amorite chief, Mamre, who was confederate with Abraham (Gen. 14).

Abraham showed that he was a faithful missionary also in the manner in which he interceded for godless Sodom and Gomorrah. His intercession was in vain. So every missionary, however well acquainted he may become with the destructive vices and the foolish superstitions of the heathen, must emulate Abraham and intercede daily for them, if he is to carry out his Gospel mission with patience and hope. Yet he, too, cannot assume that his prayers are bound to be answered by a wholesale conversion of the people.

The story of Isaac and Jacob is the story of Abraham over again. They also erected altars and called upon the name of the Lord wherever they came, testifying to their faith to rulers and people alike. The Abimelech of Isaac's day, like his father before him, confessed that Isaac's God was the true God, and said to him: "We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee: and he said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee . . . thou art now the blessed of the Lord (Jehovah)" (Gen. 26: 28f.). Jacob traveled from Canaan to Mesopotamia and back to Canaan and Egypt and earned the name

Israel, a prince of God; for as a prince he had power with God and with men and prevailed (Gen. 32:28). His dying prophecies bore witness that his faith, too, was centered in the promised seed of the woman which he foretold would come of Judah's line. Joseph testified to his faith to one and all, from condemned criminals to powerful princes and Pharaoh himself. The Israelites in Egypt kept their faith in the God of grace, Jehovah, not only in the life-time of God-fearing Joseph, but also through the dark days of their bondage, as we see from the story of Moses, which the Epistle to the Hebrews summarizes in the words: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them" (Heb. 11:23-28).

In spite of such testimonies to the truth of God, it would seem that all the world, by the time of the Exodus, was sunk in idolatry, except for the Chosen People. And even they were continually compromising with the paganism about them, only a minority keeping faithful to God and His word. The story of Israel through the first centuries is thus a story of alternating apostasy and reformation, subjection to heathen tyrants and deliverance by the power of God from their enemies when they repented. Their gracious God showed His saving power in ways to impress all nations, as when the

Red Sea opened to let the Israelites cross and closed again to destroy the Egyptian hosts; or as when the sun stood still upon Gibeon at Joshua's prayer to enable the Israelites to defeat their enemies; or as when Gideon with a band of 300 men routed the armies of the Midianites. Hebrews again puts the whole story tersely in the words: "By faith they (the Israelites) passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens" (11:29ff.). There was no lack of opportunity for the heathen nations through all the periods of the Exodus and the Judges to learn to know the true God, but there were only a few who were willing to believe in Him and follow Him, such as the people of Gibeon, Ruth of Moab, and others who in one way or another were incorporated into the Chosen People.

In the age of the first kings, David and Solomon brought the fame of the Lord and the knowledge of His word to the limits of the known world. In his second Psalm, David describes the kingdom of God as one to be known among all the heathen in the Lord's words to His Son: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." And in the 72nd Psalm we read of the same kingdom:

"He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth . . . . Yes, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him . . . and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed." Of Solomon we read that "his fame in all nations round about . . . and there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom" (I Kings 4: 31, 34). It was first of all "the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord (I Kings 10:1), that the queen of Sheba came to inquire about. For his wisdom was primarily moral wisdom, the wisdom of God in the righteousness which was His gift to men. (Cf. Prov. 8). And the queen confessed: "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighteth in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice" (I Kings 10:9).

But the Israelites did not always fulfill their mission as God's Chosen People to preserve His truth and spread it abroad through all the world. Even David, a man after God's own heart, sinned so grievously that to this day the name of God is blasphemed because of him. Solomon, in spite of his divinely given wisdom, permitted his many heathen wives to lead him astray. They "turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God" (I Kings 11:4). He even built "an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, . . . and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives (a thousand in number), which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods" (vss. 7-8). Like ruler, like people. The Lord had to punish the whole nation by letting ten tribes break away from the House of David, who thereafter worshiped forbidden idols and followed the Baalim of the heathen about them.



Only by sending the people great prophets to warn and admonish, to entreat and woo them with His promises, did God keep alive the true faith in Him as the God of all the earth, its Creator and Redeemer. The prophets exhorted them, on the one hand, to separate themselves from the heathen idolaters and sought to build up a wall between God-fearing Israelites and pagan unbelievers. On the other hand, they exhorted them to preach the word of God to the nations far and wide and rebuked them for the selfish, proud attitude towards the heathen which so many manifested. Still, even a prophet like Jonah shared this self-righteous spirit: he tried to flee from God when he was told to go to Nineveh and warn its people that in forty days their city would be destroyed. He did not want this pagan enemy of his own people to have any opportunity to repent, so as to escape the punishment the Lord announced to them. He was like so many to this day who do not want to "export their religion," or who have the idea that the religions of the heathen are good enough for them, and that they neither need nor deserve to hear the Gospel of God's mercy in Christ Jesus. But it is not man's place to judge as to where the preaching of God's Law and Gospel will bring its proper fruits. We are to carry out God's commands and leave the fruits of our preaching to Him. Jonah was selfish and wicked enough to be displeased and very angry when God repented of the evil that He had said He would do unto the people of Nineveh. He would rather die himself than see Nineveh saved from the destruction he had prophesied. Yet we have Christ's word for it that "the men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation (the Jews), and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas and behold, a greater than Jonas is here" (Matt. 12:41).

The story of Jonah and Nineveh is repeated over and over again in the history of the church. Those

who have the word fail to appreciate and use it, and have to be driven to bring it to others, sometimes by persecutions or other forcible means. And those who would seem to be hopelessly lost in sin and idolatry are quick to receive it in faith, so that it can be said in every age of church history: "It shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God" (Hos. 1:10). It is thus that "the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered." And finally, the very People of God, His Chosen, to whom belonged "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Rom. 9:4), had to be rejected as a nation, because of their stubborn unbelief; while Gentiles whom they despised became heirs of the righteousness which is by faith.

The writing prophets proclaimed the word of God, not unto the people of Israel and Judah, but to all the nations of the earth, warning the one as well as the other of the judgments that were to come upon unbelievers and promising the eternal mercies of God to all who repented and turned to God in sincere faith. One after the other of the nations of the world is named, even the land of Sinim, identified with China. Thus Isaiah first prophesied the utter confusion of Egypt. But then again he makes the remarkable promise: "In the day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt. . . . And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord . . . and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them . . . In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless,

saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance" (Isa. 19:19ff.).

The glorious promises that the prophets proclaim to such Gentiles, as well as to the Chosen People, when the judgments of God upon them have brought them to repentance, concern not only the distant future, the coming Messianic age, but the whole history of the nations. Isaiah says: "Thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, . . . even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him" (Isa. 56:ff.).

When Isaiah prophesies redemption for Jerusalem he makes it clear that God thereby will make his name known to all nations: "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:9f.). When the Chosen People rebel against their God, the Gospel will be brought instead to others who will hear it: "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me

unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thought" (Isa. 65:1). Isaiah was called to proclaim judgment upon Israel "until . . . the land be utterly desolate," (Isa. 6), except for "a very small remnant" (Isa. 1:9), which the Lord of hosts would save; and at the same time he was to proclaim salvation to all the world, to all whosoever would come and drink; so that Paul could argue that the "fall of them" (Israel) would become "the riches of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:12).

Jeremiah was told by the Lord: "Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations," not merely to apostate Judah (1:5). Ezekiel prophesied against disobedient Israel, but also against the various nations of the world. "They shall know that I am the Lord," comes as a refrain again and again, showing that God did not fail to make His work known to the Gentiles, even those who would not serve Him in willing obedience. And so with all the prophets until Malachi who said: "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts" (1:11).

One result of the Babylonian Captivity was that the remnant which returned to the homeland was more faithful to the Law than the people had been before. There was no more of the idolatry for which the prophets had had to condemn them. Another result was that a majority of the Jewish people were scattered throughout the whole known world. Long before the time of Christ they had established themselves in all the chief cities of the world. On the Day of Pentecost, the Jews who

came together to witness the gift of the Holy Ghost to the disciples were said to be "out of every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). At the Council in Jerusalem, James said: "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day" (Acts 15:21). To show that this was not mere hyperbole, consider the manner in which Jews came even to China in this pre-Christian period. A colony of Jews, consisting of 70 families, made their way along the caravan routes to far Cathay, through the Chinese Empire, to the then-capital of China, Kaifeng in Honan. There they maintained their separate life and religion for centuries. Remnants of them were found when missionaries first reached Honan a century ago; but they had few of their national characteristics left, except some knowledge of the law and the seventh day Sabbath. The last among them who could read Hebrew died a century before that. (This is referred to in histories of China as a prime example of the fact that China always absorbs its conquerors and elements which elsewhere retain their separate identities.)

These "Jews of the Dispersion" in general were more zealous for the faith of their fathers than were the Jews in Palestine. They on the one hand kept themselves rigidly apart from the heathen among whom they dwelt, maintaining their racial and religious identity as no other people in history has ever done; on the other hand they confessed their faith publicly enough to attract many Gentiles to their synagogues or places of prayer. There are no statistics to tell us how many of these Gentiles proselytes there were. We do know that they came from all classes of society, that many of them were prominent in their communities, and that they became the mainstay of the Christian congregations which were gathered by the apostles throughout the whole Diaspora.



In the New Testament we find the same principles which we have traced in the Old Testament. The Gospel is to be preached to all men, though the majority reject it. Christ told his disciples when He sent the twelve out on their first missionary journey: "When ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city" (Matt. 10:12ff.). Those who should have led the people to Christ were blind leaders who stumbled into the ditch with all their blind followers and therefore had to hear the tragic words: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). Therefore the disciples were not to consider it their task to make a true believer out of every man they could reach with the Gospel but rather to proclaim the message of God's salvation to one and all, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear" (Ezek. 2:5). Most of the Chosen People rejected that message. Paul had to write: "The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained unto righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of law" (Rom. 9:30-32). The Jews were so blind and deaf to the Gospel, though they had every facility for understanding it through their knowledge of the law and the prophets, that not even the most zealous labors and convincing demonstrations of the truth of the Gospel could make a dent in their hard self-righteousness and stubborn pride of race and creed.

But the Gentiles, sunk in superstition, vice, and skepticism as they were, understood the Gospel at once and accepted it joyfully in many cases, so that Paul could say of a predominantly Gentile congregation which had been in existence only a few months: "Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything" (I Thess. 1:6ff.). It was not their high morality and their good works for which Paul praised them--they were still in need of admonition against every sin and vice of the heathen,--but their faith, faith in God's message of a free salvation, which changed their whole attitude to both God and men.

Jesus tells us: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14). But He also says: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Outwardly the whole world shall know the Gospel, even as in the days before the Flood. But true faith in the Gospel shall be found only in the very small remnant, the hidden 7000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

To summarize: The Bible teaches that God has not only planned and provided a full salvation for all men, by the redeeming work of the Seed of the woman, but has proclaimed and published abroad the good news of that free salvation to all men at all times. If men are ignorant of the unconditioned Gospel, it is because they in their stubborn rebellion against God close their eyes to its saving truth. No man is eternally condemned for his sins, but only for his unbelief.

And the corollary of that principle is that his unbelief is his own fault.

Hence it is the task of Christian believers and of the Christian Church to preach the Gospel to every creature not in the expectation that all will believe, but remembering that the Gospel of Christ Crucified is ever and everywhere to the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness. When we proclaim the Gospel in its truth and purity, we have fulfilled our divine calling, the fruits of our labors, whether they result only in the hardening of perverse Pharaohs and Jews against God, or in the conversion of whole nations to the Christian cause, we shall leave to God, --who hath "mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will be hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18).

## II. Missions from the First to the Nineteenth Century

St. Paul wrestles frequently with the problem presented by the unbelief of the Jews over towards the Gospel of their promised Redeemer and Savior. But the other side of the coin to him was the great mystery that "God manifest in the flesh" should be "preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world" (I Tim. 3:16). Unbelief in the face of clear knowledge of the truth, faith freely expressed among those who heard the sound of the Gospel for the first time, --this thought runs through the Bible like a red thread. Paul says: "Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them

that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom. 10:19f). His only explanation of the mystery is that the fall of Israel is the riches of the world" (Rom. 11'12). The history of missions and of the church has been a continual repetition of the story of the Bible, --neglect and rejection of the truth by those who possessed it, ready acceptance of it by new peoples who had long walked in darkness and in the land of the shadow of death (Is. 9:2).

We can present only a few highlights of the history of eighteen centuries of missions in our brief review of that long period. But they should suffice to demonstrate the truth of those words of Paul and of our theme: "Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." In the first Christian century, the apostles and their disciples brought the Gospel to every part of the inhabited world. (We have no reason to believe that the Americas were populated to any extent before the Christian era.) On the Day of Pentecost there were Jews "out of every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) who heard and believed the word of the apostles, and who no doubt brought it back with them to their homelands. Christ told His disciples to teach all nations. And that this was literally fulfilled is clear from the records we have of the activities of the apostles. Some discount the traditions which have been handed down to us, but there is no reason why they cannot be accepted as substantially reliable. St. Paul with incomparable zeal preached Christ crucified and risen again, from the deserts of Arabia to the coasts of Spain. St. Peter, hesitant though he at first was about preaching to Gentiles, carried on mission work from Judea to Babylon and the Black Sea region and to Rome. Andrew traveled

not only in Persia and India, but also planted the cross in Scythia (Russia), wherefore he is counted as the patron saint of Russia. The Scots have a tradition that he also brought the Gospel to the northern parts of the British Isles, while unnamed missionaries brought it very early to Roman Britian in the south. Thomas, the doubting one, went to Parthia and India, establishing a church in the latter country which to this day calls itself by his name,--the Thomas Christians. One tradition tells us that he brought the Gospel even to China, the land of Sinim. In any case, it is history that the emperor Ming Di, in the year 60 A.D., influenced by a rumor of Him who was "born King of the Jews,"--as well as by a dream, supported by a saying of Confucius: "In the West there are great sages," --sent ambassadors to the West to look for this new king who might teach them better things than the native religions of China could give them. His ambassadors got as far as India, where they were met by Buddhist priests who persuaded them that Buddha was the great Savior-god for whom they were searching. Thus Buddhism in its Mahavana form,--the most striking caricature of the Christian religion which the heathen world has ever produced, -- was introduced into China by thousands of Buddhist priests and monks from India, eventually becoming the prevailing religion in the whole Far East. It is interesting to speculate what the result would have been for China if the emperor's ambassadors had sought more conscientiously and successfully for "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9).

The apostle Matthew preached, according to various traditions, in Ethiopia, Parthia, and Macedonia as well as in his native Palestine. Nathanael or Bartholomew is said to have preached in Armenia and as far east as India. The apostle Judas

Thaddaeus labored in Arabia, Assyria, and Persia, making Edessa for a time his center. Matthias preached in the region east of the Caspian Sea, Simon Zelotes in Egypt, Cyrene, Libya, and Mauretania (Morocco). The evangelist Philip baptized an Ethiopian eunuch who had high influence in that African, though Semite-ruled, land. John Mark preached in Egypt as well as the areas indicated in the Book of Acts. Thus by the end of the first century A.D. the church of the crucified Nazarene had struck roots in every part of the known world. We have no statistics of this early period, no reliable accounts outside of the Book of Acts of the manner in which the Gospel reached the ears of the millions living on the earth at that time. But we can be sure that God in providential ways, --like that of Phillip's meeting with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8)--saw to it that the Gospel reached all His elect.

During the first three centuries, the Christian Church grew strong and influential in many areas, particularly in the Roman Empire, in spite of persecutions and opposition of every kind. Emperors sought to destroy it as an insidious enemy of the State. Heathen philosophers used the weapons of dialectics and ridicule to undermine every article of the Christian faith. Celsus among them did as thorough a job as any infidel of later ages or modern times has ever been able to do in way of pillorying the Christian faith. But he was thoroughly refuted by Origen, one of the most scholarly, though also erratic, of the early Christian "fathers." Jews like Trypho, whose slanders were answered by Justin Martyr, opposed and persecuted the Church wherever they had the power to do so. Other enemies of the truth in Christ Jesus sought to corrupt it from within the Church,--Gnostics with their bewildering array of philosophic speculations about the Logos and God; Arians with their rationalistic dissertations concerning the nature

of Christ; other heretics who promulgated practically every variety of doctrinal aberrations that has ever afflicted the Church. From the beginning the Christian Church was at war on every front against enemies without and within. Yet it grew and prospered, until it even became good politics for a Roman emperor to declare himself a Christian and to lend the strong arm of a dictatorial government to the protection and dissemination of the Christian teachings.

But this apparently favorable development brought a host of evils with it. The church and its leaders not only used their influence at court to enrich themselves and to increase their own prestige and power in their communities and countries, but also depended on the sword of Caesar, instead of the word of God alone, to carry the Gospel to still heathen areas and lands. The Christian cross became the banner under whose sign Roman rulers went out to conquer their foes --*In hoc signo vinces*. The church as a whole became like the congregation in Laodicea, to whom Christ said: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). Gregory Nazianzen (quoted in Edman, p. 56) had to complain concerning the leading Christians in particular: "We repose in splendor on high and sumptuous cushions, upon the most exquisite covers, which one is almost afraid to touch, and are vexed if we but hear the voice of a moaning pauper; our chamber must breathe the odor of flowers, even rare flowers. --Slaves must stand ready, richly adorned and in order, with waving maidenlike hair, and faces shorn perfectly smooth, more adorned throughout than is good for lascivious eyes; some to hold cups both delicately and firmly with the tips of their fingers, others to fan fresh air upon the

head. --The poor man is content with water; but we fill our goblets with wine, to drunkenness, nay, immeasurably beyond it. --" He continues with an account of the luxury of the Christians which might rather serve as a description of a sybaritic feast. The doctrinal disagreements, of which there were many, were debated in great church councils held under the auspices of the emperors who used their power to persecute anyone who dared to oppose their views. Contemporaries complained "that the roads were clogged with bishops galloping to and fro to attend conferences at imperial behest" (Edman, p. 49). The result was that heretics and orthodox took turns at going into exile or death according as the ruling emperor favored one or the other party in the church.

In spite of these evils, by the end of the 5th century the Christian faith had been spread in one way or another to the outermost reaches of the Roman Empire and had become the ruling religion in it. Missionaries had carried the Gospel also beyond the borders of that Empire, from Persia and India to the East; Abyssinia, Ethiopia and the Sudan to the South; among Goths, Vandals, and Huns to the North; and Franks and Irish to the West and North-west. Many of them were far from orthodox in their preaching, yet they brought the light of the Word with them, so that the people to whom they preached had no excuse for not knowing and believing the Gospel. Thus Ulfilas, though an adherent of Arianism in its milder forms, translated most of the Bible into the Gothic language, which he reduced to writing for the first time. He was, perhaps, the first of the many missionaries who have gone among uncivilized peoples, where literature and the arts were entirely unknown before, and given them the Bible in their own tongue and taught them to read it. "More languages have been reduced to writing by Christian missionaries than by all other agencies put together" (Latourette, p. 100).



Perhaps most remarkable of all was the missionary work carried on by the famous Patrick of southern Britain, who evangelized the greater part of Ireland and founded a church there which for centuries let the light of the true Gospel shine, while older churches were being paganized and secularized under the stifling rule of Catholic popes and kings. He was steeped in the Bible and translated it in whole or in part into the language of the people. Not Rome, but Ireland, was for a long period the center of Biblical learning, the only place where Greek was studied and the Bible cherished.

Time is lacking to review the evangelistic work in other areas of the world within the first five centuries. In the countries counted as Christian there was, indeed, much ignorance among the multitudes, many of whom were brought into the Church by force or pressure of various kinds. The situation, however, was no worse perhaps than it is in State churches today, where everyone belongs to the Church as a baptized and confirmed member, while only 5 or 10% actually attend church and take part in its work. They had the source of all spiritual light at hand in the Bible, which was available in the language of the people in many, though not all lands. Latin was in this period becoming the language of the scholars in Western Europe, even as Greek long remained the Koine of the Mediterranean world.

The next period in mission history, from 500 to 1500 A.D., has been called the Dark Ages, a name given to it primarily by the scholars of the Renaissance, who revived the study of Greek and Roman civilization, in the light of which everything Medieval Europe had known and done seemed mere darkness. The church declined outwardly, indeed, and suffered greater losses of territory than at any other period in history, except perhaps in the last

40 years since World War I. Latourette says: "In the 900 years between the opening of the 7th and the beginning of the 16th century, Islam won from Christianity a larger *proportion* of the latter's adherents and territory than any other rival has ever succeeded in doing. Eighteenth, 19th, and 20th century skepticisms and the fascist, socialist, and communist totalitarian states of the 20th century have not yet cost Christianity nearly so large a *percentage* of its professed followers as did Islam from the 7th through the 15th century" (II 287). Whole countries were torn from the control of Christians also by pagan Norsemen or Vandals and Huns, as well as by the sword and religious zeal of Islam. The Western Church Christianized these pagan invaders gradually, but the Moslems, with their Unitarian faith, proved as impervious to the Gospel as their fellow-Semites, the Jews. The Christian centers, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria, were completely lost to Islam; Constantinople alone held out till the Ottoman Turks overwhelmed it in 1453. The Moslems did not force their new religion upon Christians as they did upon pagans, but in general treated them leniently as followers of the Jesus whom they also looked upon as a great prophet, second only to Mohammed. But the majority of those called Christians joined the Moslems when it no longer served their material interests to be Christians. In other words, the Church lost its dead timber and became a minority group in practically the whole area which for five centuries had been the pre-eminently Christian area of the world in western Asia and northern Africa.

But this did not mean that the light of the Gospel was entirely lost there. There was enough spiritual life left to support Christian mission work in distant lands as well as at home, as we shall see. In the West, the power of the Bishop

at Rome grew mightily through the decline of Rome as a political power and through the Christianizing of the invaders from the north and east. The religion of Rome was carried to new fields sometimes by zealous missionaries like Boniface, the Apostle to Germany, Ansgar, the patron saint of the North, and others. But in general its rule was spread by force of arms. Such Christian princes as Charles Martel and Charlemagne, as they conquered their pagan neighbors, would give them the choice of baptism or slavery and death. Kings rather than missionaries brought the Gospel also to the Scandinavian countries. V. R. Edman says: "It is doubtful if any other land had ever known the systematic compulsory conversion that was Norway's lot" (p. 226). The ancient writing *Heimskingla*, says: "When King Olav (the patron saint of Norway) came to the *thing* (assembly) he bade them take Christianity, as he had done in other places. And since the king had there a very great strength of men, they were afraid of this; and at last the king gave them two choices, either that they should take up Christianity and let themselves be baptized, or otherwise that they should hold battle with him. And when the *bænders* (landholders) saw no hope in fighting with the king, the former choice was taken, so that all the folk were baptized" (Edman, p. 223). The sword was in many cases, however, followed by sincere attempts at instructing the people in the Christian fundamentals, though the light of Rome was, increasingly throughout this period, becoming darkness. As Edman says with regard to Norway: "One would reason that under such circumstances their Christianity would have been a veneer at best to be discarded at the earliest possible moment. On the contrary, as the result of patient teaching by native clergy, taught by English, Irish, and some Germans, the Norwegians became exemplary medieval Christians: --*Christianissimi* in the language of Adam of Bremen" (p. 226). And the Norsemen soon brought their new religion to their possessions in the isles north of

Scotland, in Iceland, Greenland, and even Vinland somewhere on the New England coast of America.

One of the brightest chapters in mission history was written in the early part of this period by the work carried on from Christian Ireland to Britain, when it had been conquered by pagan Angles and Saxons, as well as to Germany and to other areas. The Irish missionaries were not subject to Rome and brought the real Gospel wherever they came, not the mere "churchianity" which Rome inculcated wherever it had power. First, Christian Britain brought the Gospel to Ireland by the zealous work of Patrick; then the evangelized Irish in turn brought the Gospel to England, now become pagan again,--a story which repeats itself continually in church history.

Another bright chapter was the work of the two brothers Constantine (or Cyril) and Methodius among the Slavs in Central Europe (Moravia) in the 9th century. "They proceeded on the sound missionary basis of reducing the Slavonic language to writing and of translating Scripture portions and the liturgy into the language of the people. -- Their linguistic work accomplished more for the Slavic peoples than all the Romanist swords dripping with human blood or the baptism of untaught, illiterate heathen" (Edman, p. 212). These missionaries came from the Eastern Orthodox Church, but in the end gave their allegiance to the Pope of Rome on the condition that their church should be allowed to use the native language in the liturgy, etc. But after their death it was not long before Latin replaced the Slavic tongue as the language also of their church.

It would seem repetitious to chronicle the Christianization of the many countries and peoples into which Europe was divided in the Middle Ages. We have heard enough about the kind of missionary

work which was done to understand why the church degenerated so much as it did by the end of the 15th century. The many nominal Christians brought their pagan beliefs and superstitions with them into the church, with the result that their religion became a syncretistic medley of heathenism and more or less of Christian elements. At the same time, the light of the Word was brought to all parts of Europe, not only in the Latin of the scholars, but also in the language of the people to a large extent, so that it was possible for men at any time and place during that era to come to a saving knowledge of the truth in Christ Jesus. Consider as one example the address of Bishop Otto who was sent by Duke Bolislav of Poland to baptize the Slavic Pomeranians in his domain: "All ye my brethren have been baptized and have all put on Christ; ye have received from Him the forgiveness of all your sins original and actual: ye are clean and holy, having been cleansed and sanctified, not through any deed of ours, but by Him; for He has washed away the sins of the world in His blood. Beware then of all contamination by the worship of idols" (Edman, p. 216). There is the true Gospel of the Savior of the world. Yet when the people did not readily accept his teachings, Otto appealed to the Duke for "military persuasion." This "Duke's Mixture" of free gospel and fierce force in the work of missions, of outward conformity to Christian creeds and inner adherence to pagan beliefs and practices, was typical of Roman Christianity and explains why it became what it was through most of the Middle Ages, --a political and spiritual tyranny.

While Western Christianity under the leadership of Rome was extending its sway over most of Europe, the British Isles and beyond, Eastern Christianity was not as idle as we might think, submerged as it was through most of its domains by the power and faith of Islam. The Orthodox Church with its

headquarters at Constantinople held possession of that capital for centuries after Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria had fallen to the conquering Moslems, and carried on mission work in new areas to the North. In the 9th century the Bulgars and other Balkan peoples adopted the Greek Orthodox religion. By the 10th century the vast territories of the Russian Czars had come under the control of "Orthodox" Christians. The invasion of Mongol tribes in the 13th and 14th centuries, pagan as they were, rather strengthened and deepened the Christian faith in Russia than overwhelmed it. During the Mongol rule, missions carried the Gospel to the far north and east of Russia, even to parts hitherto untouched by civilization. In the 14th century Finnish tribes and Lapps in the far north were brought into the Orthodox fold.

But the most extensive mission work during this period was done by branches of the Church condemned as heretical by the Orthodox Church Councils. The Monophysite churches in the 5th and 6th centuries brought the word to Egypt and Abyssinia or Ethiopia, where the Coptic Church stood with them, and established themselves strongly in Syria and Armenia. Their great missionary, Bishop Jacob the Rugged One, traveled widely, from Nisibis in the East to Egypt, and is said to have consecrated two patriarchs, 89 bishops, and 100,000 priests. The Jacobite Church (so named after him) in Syria, and the Coptic Church in Egypt and Ethiopia, are the only remnants left today of this branch of the church, after the Moslem attacks in the 7th century destroyed its powers.

More needs to be said about the missions of the Nestorian churches. They had their headquarters in Edessa in Mesopotamia, which they made for a time a center of learning worthy to be called the Athens of the East. In Persia under the

Zoroastrian, and later, under the Mohammedan rulers, they suffered persecution at times but still prospered and grew strong, spreading out over all Asia from the Mediterranean to the China Sea and from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea and beyond. Cosmas, a 6th century traveler, reports that the number of churches in this area was almost infinite. Huns, Turks, Tibetans, Indians, and Chinese were brought the Bible by zealous bishops and missionaries. Latourette says: "Christians in the Sassanian (Persian Zoroastrian) and Abassid (Moslem) realms were more active as missionaries than were the Christians from any other land from the 5th to the 16th century in which the civil rulers were non-Christians" (History, II. p. 271). Without the blighting influence of temporal power back of their missionary message, it is easy to appreciate that their work must have had truer fruits spiritually than the work too often had in western Europe under the State-Church and Church-State system of the Roman Catholic Church.

As an example of the work done by the Nestorians, we may take the record of their labors in China which can be traced from the 7th to the 14th centuries. There are incidental references to their work in the writings of Medieval travelers, such as Cosmas the monk, the Friars William of Rubrick and John of Pian de Carpine, and the famous Marco Polo. But the most interesting record is the monument found in Hsi-An-Fu, the Capital of China in the 8th century. It is a large marble tablet, ten feet high and five broad, on which is inscribed in Chinese the story of the first Nestorian missionaries to arrive at that capital. Its date is set at 779 A.D., but its story begins in 636 A.D., with the coming of a priest named Olopen and a small band of missionaries. They were kindly received by the Emperor, Tai Tsung by name, who was one of the most enlightened rulers China ever had. The Emperor

ordered the Holy Scriptures of the Christians translated in the Imperial library. Olopen remained at the court for three years, teaching, preaching, discussing, and translating. The stone contains also an outline of the teachings these Nestorians brought, written in Chinese literary style, but confessing clearly the Triune God and the Messiah who "veiling his true majesty appeared in the world in the likeness of a man. The celestial spirits manifested their joy and a Virgin brought forth the holy child. --The most splendid constellations announced this happy event; the Persians saw the splendor and ran to pay tribute. He fulfilled what was said of old by the 24 holy ones (the O. T. prophets). --He purged humanity from its pollutions; --he directed the bark of mercy towards the palace of light and all creatures endowed with intelligence have been succoured. After having consummated this act of power, he rose at mid-day towards the Truth. Twenty-seven books (the New Testament) have been left. --The baptism by water and by the spirit is a law that purifies the soul and beautifies the exterior--" (Walshe, p. 12b). The tablet goes on to review the history of the Nestorian Church through the 160 years after 636 A.D. It is made clear that Christianity spread through the provinces of China. The temples, we are told, "filled a hundred (all) cities and the families (the people of China) were enriched with admirable happiness" (Walshe p. 15). The church was favored by some emperors, persecuted by others. A church in Peking, said by Chinese writers to have been built in 638 A.D., was still standing 400 years later.

In the 11th century, the Nestorian cause was supported by a famous king or succession of kings called Prester John, whose headquarters were in Central Asia in the land of the Keraites. In the 12th century, Prester John was powerful enough to invade Persia, but in the year 1203 A.D. his Christian kingdom was overthrown. Still, inspite of the



many weaknesses among the Nestorian clergy and the constant pressure of such religions as Buddhism, the Christian truth kept spreading, so that in the 13th century Christians were to be found in the most remote provinces, and churches in all the principal cities of Asia.

After the Nestorians had been working in China for almost 700 years, a Roman Catholic Mission was established alongside of them in Peking by John of Montecorvino, a Franciscan. He was given a friendly reception by the great Mongol conqueror, Kublai Kahn, like that given by the same ruler to the Nestorians. But he complained that the Nestorians slandered and opposed him, and said they had become so powerful in the land that they would not allow a "Christian of any other rite to have ever so small a chapel, or to proclaim any but Nestorian doctrine" (Walshe p. 20). However, he survived the persecutions they directed against him--which actually reacted against the Nestorians,--and could report by 1305 A.D. that he had built two churches, baptized 6,000 people, and translated the whole New Testament and the Psalter into Chinese.

John eventually won many Nestorian Christians over to the Roman fold and in 1308 was made Bishop of Peking and Primate of the Far East by Pope Clement V. He was a far more capable man than any of the Nestorians at the time and gained the favor of the Emperors and his ministers appealed to the Pope to appoint another bishop; and by 1353 it could be said that "the clergy all had their subsistence from the Emperor's table in the most honorable manner" (Walshe, p. 23).

One great blow to the Nestorian cause in China as well as other Asiatic regions was the act of the Nestorian Patriarch in Persia in 1304, who entered the Roman Catholic Communion and sent in his submission to Pope Benedict XI. It seems that many

Nestorians followed his example, so that the Nestorian work in China after this time was practically absorbed by the more aggressive Roman Catholic missions. At the beginning of the 13th century there were 26 Metropolitans in Asia under the Nestorian Patriarch of Bagdad. By the end of the 14th century they were mostly destroyed by the hordes of Tamerlane, the Moslem Mongol chief, who, from Samarkand in central Asia, swept over all Asia from the China Sea to the gates of Europe. The last authentic fact known with regard to Christianity in China is the martyrdom of James of Florence, Roman Catholic bishop of Hangchow in south China, in 1362 A.D. Many other Christians must have been martyred with him, for the church disappeared from the scene thereafter, and its story was almost forgotten. It was close to 200 years before any missionary work was done in far Cathay again.

To characterize this Nestorian mission work of almost eight centuries, we may quote the words of A. Mingana, the "modern historian of a lost civilization": "There are no grounds whatever for denying the incontrovertible fact that the glory of converting the peoples of Central Asia and of the Far East to the gospel of Christ, and the merit of implanting among them the Western civilization, based on the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, belong entirely to the untiring zeal and the marvellous spiritual activities of the Nestorian Church, which is by far the greatest missionary Church that the world has ever produced. Even we, hard critics and unprejudiced inquirers, who are writing centuries after the events, cannot but marvel at the love of God, of man, and of duty, which animated those unassuming disciples of Christ, --who in utter disregard of all discomforts of the body, and in the teeth of the strong opposition and the terrible vengeance of the wizards of Chamanism (in northern Asia) and the *mobeds* of Zoroastrianism,

literally explored all the corners of the Eastern globe in order to sow in them the seed of what they firmly believed to be the true religion of God" (Edman, p. 253).

One may ask why this mission work perished so completely, while Western Christianity took on new life even before the Reformation. Sir Henry Yule says: "It is melancholy history. --How many Christians are there in what were up to the 13th and 14th centuries the metropolitan sees of Tangut, Kashgar, Samarkand, Balkh, Herat, Sjistan, and Marw?" (cf. Edman, p. 263). One explanation may be found in the Mohammedan conquest of this territory, including parts of China on the Northwest. No doubt syncretistic concessions to the native religions, indicated by some of the records left us, the fact that apparently no native clergy was established but all the work was dependent on missionaries from the West, that Christian education both of the priests and of the people was neglected, --these and other factors, plus a brutal persecution which was bloodier in China under the Mongol tyrants than in any other part of the world, may explain why the work which flourished so long eventually came to a disastrous end.

The story of missions in Asia through most of the so-called Dark Ages is prime evidence that the Light of the world shone even at times and in places of which we know little today. Christianity did not become the ruling religion in this region as it did in Europe; but there was nonetheless every opportunity for the people to hear the Gospel of the only Savior in the one area as well as the other. It would be hard to prove that the religion brought to the East by the Nestorians was any more heretical or corrupt than that of Rome. But we do find that the countries where Orthodox Churches had struck roots resisted the Mongol and the Turkish Moslem

attacks better than the eastern Asiatics had done. Thus the Balkan states, with the exception of Albania, (to this day a Mohammedan country) resisted the temptations to join Islam, although they for a long time were under Saracen or Turkish rulers. The only Orthodox Church which remained under Christian rule was Russia.

It remains to trace some of the chief missionary activities of the next three centuries from 1500 to 1800 A.D. We are familiar with the revival of spiritual life in Western Europe at the beginning of the 16th century, the intense interest in the church and religion which was stirred up by the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-reformation. From that time on it was the European churches which not only showed most life internally but also did most to spread the light of the Gospel to those still sitting in darkness. The Roman Catholic Church, with fanatical Jesuits spear-heading its attacks both on dissenting Protestants and on heathen peoples, sent its missionaries along with the adventurers who set out to explore and conquer the New World and open trade routes to the Far East for their Spanish, Portuguese, and French rulers. These Latin powers, which remained Catholic through the stormy Reformation period, were the first to occupy the Americas, from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi Valley, Florida, the southwest and Mexico, as well as the Central and South American coasts. They were in some cases more concerned to bring their Christian faith to the natives than to gain control of their wealth. They planted the cross wherever they came and dotted our land with the names of saints and priests. They did the same in the Far East and in the rich islands of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Catholic missions flourished particularly in the Philippines where practically the whole population was Christianized, except for the Mohammedan Moros of the south. These islands

were brought into the Catholic fold by missionaries from Mexico, which had no commercial or political contacts with the Philippines. The absence of any military control of the islands may explain why they became so entirely Catholic and have remained such to the present day.

One of the outstanding figures in Roman Catholic Mission History is Francis Xavier. Though he was only 46 when he died, he had labored with extraordinary zeal and in ten years had founded churches and schools and baptized over 1,000,000 people in several centers in India, Ceylon, and as far east as Japan. He died in 1552 while attempting to gain entry into that mightiest of all strongholds of civilized paganism, China. He was soon followed by other zealous Jesuits, who were able by their knowledge of the sciences to gain the ear of China's emperors. The greatest name among them is that of Matteo Ricci. He adopted the policy of conforming as much as possible to the reigning Confucianism of the Court, identifying his God with the Confucian Shang Di, accepting the worship of ancestors and of Confucius as a mere civic rite without idolatrous implications, and taking the Chinese worship of Heaven and Earth into the Christian liturgy. Missionaries of other Orders, who arrived later, as well as some Jesuits, opposed this syncretistic program, with the result that a bitter controversy, called the "Rites Controversy," was carried on for over a century. The Popes took the part of the anti-syncretists, but the emperors supported the Jesuit position, naturally enough. Repeated "bulls" by the Popes only brought persecution on his emissaries, so that even a papal legate, the cultured and highborn LeTournon, was imprisoned at the instigation of the Jesuits in a filthy Chinese jail and died there. The controversy engaged the attention of the most learned men of Europe for years, and ended only when the Chinese emperor,

tired of the squabbling of the foreigners, drove them all out and persecuted the native church until out of three or four hundred thousand members only scattered remnants were left in out-of-the way places. These were served by priests who entered the country secretly from the Portuguese-owned port of Macao until after a century had passed, when China was opened to the foreigner again by the so-called Opium War. Thus ended one of the most promising of the Roman Missions in the 16th to the 18th centuries. China was as ever the last to open its doors to the Christian Gospel and the first to close them again.

England, Holland, and other Protestant countries entered the race for control of the rich resources of the New World and the Far East a century later than the Latin powers. They did not have the missionary workers ready at hand that the Catholic Church had in its monks and such Religious Orders as the Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans, and the Paris Missionary Society, --their work again being coordinated by the so-called Propaganda. Some of the Protestant rulers sought to provide for missionary work in the new areas brought under their control. But in the main, Protestant mission work was carried on by individuals, churches, and missionary societies, the last-named becoming eventually the chief agency for Foreign Missions. We can here only point to a few of the missions begun by Protestants in the period between 1500 and 1800 A.D.

Lutheran kings were instrumental in opening missions among the pagan Lapps in the far north of Norway and Sweden; among the natives of Greenland, where Hans Egede pioneered; among the Delaware Indians in the New Sweden colony, where John Campanius translated Luther's Catechism into the Delaware language, the first book to be printed in any

American Indian language; and--most important of all--in southern Indian, --Ziegenbalg, Schultze, and Schwartz, -- are among the most illustrious in all missionary annals. Their work, begun in 1706, has been continued to the present day.

John Eliot, the Apostle to the Indians, carried on a notable work among the Indians in Massachusetts on his own initiative, as did also other English pastors and missionaries in the various colonies. The Anglican Church formed in 1701 the *Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* and through this agency established missions in the American Colonies and other English possessions. The Dutch East India Company sponsored missions in the trading colonies it established in India, Ceylon, the East Indies, Formosa, and Dutch Guinea in South America, in so far acting more wisely than its British counterpart, the British East India Company, did to begin with.

But the most remarkable mission work was that done by the comparatively small group or Church called the Moravian Brethren or the *Herrnhuter*. Organized in 1727 on the estate of Count Zinzendorf, they sent two missionaries in 1732 to the Danish West Indies and two to Greenland. Within twelve years they had missionaries also among the American Indians and Negroes, in South America, in South Africa, and a dozen other countries. They even sought to evangelize the Jews and Gypsies of Europe and the Moslems of Algiers, their motto being to go where the work was hardest and the danger greatest. By the beginning of the 19th century, this small church body had 26 stations in various parts of the world, 161 men and women in their service, and about 20,000 native Christians, several times the number of Christians in their home churches. Their work was a harbinger of the intense interest which would be displayed and the great advances which would be

made in Foreign Missions in the next century, the Century of Missions.

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## LUTHER'S HYMNS

It is in no way by accident that the church has become a singing church. It is not simply that the church in its early days just happened to have some artistic-minded people, people possessing poetical and musical abilities, who put their poetry and music together and offered it to the church, and the church liked it and decided to use what was offered it. Not by any such happenstance did the church become a singing church.

The reason why the church is a singing church is much more substantive than that, and lies on a far higher level. The church is a singing church by God's own plan and design, by His express will and directive. And it is in reverent response to God's will and directive that godly individuals with poetic and musical gifts from God, such as Luther, have pressed them into producing hymns, and that the church has used fit and worthy hymns thus produced. In His Word, God has made known His will and given His directive that the church be a singing church. Thus, the Holy Ghost by the apostle Paul directs the church in the words of Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

These words of Colossians three not only make known God's will and directive to the church that it be a singing church, but also clearly set forth God's purpose in thus directing: The church's singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs is to serve as a powerful and effective medium of teaching

God's Word to the people of the church, of working and imbedding it in their hearts, so that the Word of Christ dwells in them richly. Again, the church's singing is to serve as a powerful and effective medium of admonition to the people of the church, to the end that they stand fast in God's faithful Word, His Word of truth, and that they walk in the truth in genuine Christian faith and piety. Along with these teaching and admonishing aspects, the church's singing is, of course, to serve as a powerful and effective medium for the people of the church of singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord, of coming before Him in supplication and praise and thanksgiving. This is, in fact, the highest and really all-encompassing thrust of all the church's singing. Wherever such singing as Colossians three is speaking of is done, there will be a Spirit-filled people, as is reflected in the parallel to this verse, Ephesians 5:18-20, where Saint Paul writes, "Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things our God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Luther had a clear and profound understanding of the place of singing in the church as set forth in the passages from Paul's epistles of which we have taken note. We see that, for one thing, from the prefaces which he wrote to various hymnals. Thus, for instance, in his preface to the first hymnal to be compiled under his supervision, the Wittenberg Hymnal of 1524, called the Spiritual Hymn Booklet, he writes, "That it is good and God-pleasing to sing hymns is, I think, known to every Christian; for everyone is aware not only of the example of the prophets and kings in the Old Testament who praised God with song and sound, with poetry and psaltery, but also of the common and ancient

custom of the Christian church to sing Psalms. St. Paul himself instituted this in I Corinthians (14:15) and exhorted the Colossians (3:16) to sing spiritual songs and Psalms heartily unto the Lord so that God's Word and Christian teaching might be instilled and implanted in many ways.

"Therefore I, too, in order to make a start and to give an incentive to those who can do better, have with the help of others compiled several hymnals, so that the holy gospel which now by the grace of God has risen anew may be noised and spread abroad." Luther's Works, Vol. 53, pp. 315-316.

Again, in his preface to Georg Rhau's collection of fifty-two motets for the Sundays of the Church year, the collection titled Delightful Symphonies, Luther writes, "Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise....what more effective means than music could you find? The Holy Ghost himself honors her as an instrument for his proper work when in his Holy Scriptures he asserts that through her his gifts were instilled in the prophets; namely, the inclination to all virtues, as can be seen in Elisha (II Kings 3:15). On the other hand, she serves to cast out Satan, the instigator of all sins, as is shown in Saul, the king of Israel (I Sam. 16:23).

"Thus it was not without reason that the fathers and prophets wanted nothing else to be associated as closely with the Word of God as music. Therefore, we have so many hymns and Psalms where message and music join to move the listener's soul....After all, the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music; namely, by proclaiming (the Word of God) through music and by providing sweet melodies with words." Luther's Works, Vol. 53, pp. 323-324.

It was out of such an understanding of the place of singing in the church that Luther went about producing his hymns and urging other competent co-workers to do so as well, and thus assembling a body of hymnody so that the Church of the Reformation could be a singing church.

But why was it necessary for a body of hymnody to be produced and assembled before it could be a singing church? Had there been really no hymnody produced before that in holy Christendom? A brief sweep through the previous centuries will help to understand, and will otherwise illuminate the subject of Luther's hymns as well. The answer to why a body of hymnody needed to be produced and assembled lies partly in the fact that for more than nine centuries, since the time of Gregory the Great, who was pope from 590-604 A.D., there had been only very little singing on the part of the congregation in the Roman Church, but the singing that was done was the Gregorian chanting of priests and choirs. Prior to the time of Gregory, in the church's earlier centuries there had indeed been periods of rich congregational singing, and during that time a good many hymns had been produced in Christendom. This was so in the early Greek church. In the earliest days of the New Testament the congregational singing included the singing of psalms from the Old Testament, as well as canticles from the New Testament. There were at the first no songs in metrical form, such as those which we ordinarily call hymns now. But then early in post-apostolic days such hymns in metrical form began to be produced and widely used in the Greek church. Eusebius informs us that in the third century there was a large number of such sacred songs. However, because of Gnosticism and Arianism the production and use of such Greek hymnody was cut short. These heretical groups used hymns to convey their heresies. Thus the Synod of Laodacia, A.D. 364, ordered that only words directly

from the Scriptures should be sung in the church.

But, interestingly enough, it was in the same time period that hymns for congregational singing came into prominence in the west. Whereas the use of hymnody was cut short in the east because of the heresies mentioned, Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, 340-397 A.D., began to produce and use congregational hymns to combat the heretical songs of the east, as well as the popular songs of the west. Ambrose, who is known as the Father of Latin hymnody, encouraged others to write hymns as well. One of the main themes of his hymns is praise of the Triune God. He is the originator of the closing Trinitarian doxological stanza, which he introduced for the purpose of helping to sing the dogma of the Trinity into the hearts of the people of the church against the anti-Trinitarians. One of the most important hymn writers of that Ambrosian period was Coelius Sedulius, who had a very good grasp of Christian dogma and was able to put it into his hymns.

Ambrosian hymnody continued in the Latin church for about 200 years, until the time of Gregory. By this time a reaction had set in against the Ambrosians style. It had become somewhat corrupted, popularized, with some secularization of the text, etc. To Gregory the Ambrosian style was too bright and lively, not churchly. Gregory founded a school of music called "Cantus Romanus," and revolutionized church music. He started the Gregorian chant, not metered. A lot of basic tunes for the Gregorian were picked up from the Hebrew, which is later reflected somewhat in the music for Luther's hymns. Gregory carried out his musical reform with great earnestness, sending singers throughout Europe to introduce Gregorian. Anything else was not tolerated. This really lasted, for the most part, for more than thirteen centuries in the Roman Church until Vatican II. With the Gregorian reform, hymn

singing by the congregation became a thing of the past. The people were more and more reduced to silence. Consequently and understandably after this for several centuries not much happened as far as hymn writing is concerned either, with a few notable exceptions.

When people are suppressed from singing, they long to do so. During the medieval period a form of hymn called the sequence hymn developed which did give the people occasion to sing on festival days between the Epistle and the Gospel after the officiant chanted the hallelujahs. Because the people yearned to sing much more than they were permitted to in the worship service, they turned to extra-liturgical folk songs, which they were permitted to sing after the service. They also sang them at town events, pilgrimages, etc. Along with the lyrics for such songs, folk music was also developed. These songs were, however, corrupted with much error of popery. For instance, the hymn which is known to us as "God the Father, Be Our Stay," TLH 247, and which is for us an excellent hymn of supplication to the Trinity, in those medieval days contained invocations to Mary, other saints and the angels. There is a version from a hundred years before the Reformation which started, "Sanctus Petrus, won uns bey," ("Saint Peter, Be Our Stay"). Thus there was precious little, scarcely any, doctrinally satisfactory hymnody available for use in the vernacular in the churches when the Reformation began.

It is into such a near vacuum, as it were, as far as congregational singing in the worship service and material for it is concerned that Luther stepped and restored the whole lost art of congregational singing, giving hymnody an important place in public worship once more, and producing and assembling hymns for it. Luther pursued this so assiduously

because he recognized how hymns could proclaim and fix the doctrine of the hearts of the people. What started it off for Luther was the martyrdom of the two young Augustinian monks in Brussels in the Netherlands who were martyred because of their unyielding confession of the Reformation doctrine. Before the first smoke smothered their voices they sang the Latin "Te Deum." This moved Luther to write his first hymn, a hymn about their martyrdom, titled "A New Song Here Shall Be Begun," Luther's Works, Vol. 53, pp. 214-215. Luther patterned this hymn after the German folk ballads, as far as both the lyrics and the music are concerned. This became the first hymn of the Reformation. Incidentally, TLH has a two-stanza hymn drawn from this twelve-stanza hymn by Luther. It is TLH 259, and starts "Flung to the heedless winds, And on the waters cast, The martyrs ashes lie, Shall gathered be at last."

It was probably in August of 1523 when Luther wrote this hymn. With this Luther discovered overnight, as it were, his capacity as a hymnist, and in a short time there was a steady flow of hymns from his pen as he now worked at supplying a body of hymnody for the young Church of the Reformation. The greater portion of his thirty-six hymns were written before a year had past. Some of his co-workers were also now busy writing hymns at his urging. The oldest Lutheran hymnal, known as the Achtliederbuch (meaning humnal of eight) was published very early in 1524, or perhaps already before 1523 was over. It contained four hymns by Luther ("Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice," TLH 387, which was the second hymn he wrote; "O Lord, Look Down From Heaven, Behold," TLH 260; "From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee," TLH 329; and "Although the Fools Say with Their Mouth," Luther's Works, Vol. 53, pp. 230-231); three by Paul Speratus (including that true confessional hymn of the Reformation, as

it has been called, "Salvation Unto Us Has Come," TLH 377); and one by an unnamed author. It was soon published in a number of editions. The first hymnal prepared under Luther's own auspices is the Spiritual Hymn Booklet of 1524, mentioned earlier (p. 44), edited by his friend and musical advisor, Johann Walther, and published in Wittenberg in late summer of 1524. Of the thirty-eight chorales in Walther's collection, twenty-four are Luther's.

Luther's hymns were well accepted from the beginning. They were used and they were loved. The people, so long suppressed, were to their joy now able to sing freely in the liturgical divine service once more; yes, they were able to sing the truths of the Reformation, the truths of God's Word, which they treasured, for Luther's hymns were rich and powerful in God's Word.

While some of the Luther hymns originated with himself and were thus totally new, many of them were not new. This is true of both text and tune. Freely he drew from what had been produced in past centuries in producing his hymns. For instance, his "Savior of the Nations, Come, Virgin's Son, Make Here Thy Home," TLH 95, is a literal translation for the most part from the Latin of Ambrose' great Christmas hymn, "Veni, Redemptor gentium." And the tune for this is from the church of the medieval period with some skillful changes made by Luther in the melodic line, as he sometimes did with older tunes which he used. Similarly, Luther's "Now Praise We Christ, the Holy One, The Blessed Virgin Mary's Son," TLH 104, is a translation of part of a longer poem by Sedulius, written in the first half of the fifth century -- a twenty-three stanza song of praise to Christ, presenting a devout picture of the life of our Lord in verse. The tune for this Luther hymn is the traditional Gregorian plain chant melody which had been associated with



this hymn in England since Anglo-Saxon times. In this way too, by the use of such hymns, the church of the Reformation identified with the ancient church.

Again, in some instances Luther took a hymn stanza that originated and existed in the medieval church and added stanzas of his own. One such instance is his great post-Communion hymn, "O Lord, We Praise Thee," TLH 313, to which he added two stanzas to the original stanza. The tune for this is another taken over from the medieval church. The people were very familiar with this hymn and treasured it, as did Luther himself. Another such example is his great "We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost," TLH 231. In this case Luther added three stanzas to the original stanza. This is one of those hymns which they had sung in church during the sequence period between the Epistle and the Gospel. The tune for "We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost" is apparently a very old folk melody. Luther regarded this old hymn very highly. "In An Order of Mass and Communion he names it as one of the few available hymns that could profitably be sung by the congregation." Luther's Works, Vol. 53, p. 263.

Some of Luther's hymns are patterned after the German vernacular folk hymns called "Leisen" hymns, so-called because they ended with the words "Kyrie eleison," ("Lord, have mercy,"). The two hymns just mentioned are instances of this.

In yet other cases Luther took medieval folk hymns which were corrupted with false papistic doctrines, purged them of their error, and turned them into fine, doctrinally sound hymns. An example of this is the hymn which we know as "God the Father, Be Our Stay," which we mentioned earlier. Taking out all the invocations to saints and angels which had been associated with it, he made of it an

excellent hymn of invocation to the Trinity. Again, he took old models and constructed new hymns after the form of the old, but with content much changed throughout, so different than the original, that they are really for the most part his own hymns. His metrical paraphrase of the Nicene Creed, "We All Believe in One True God," TLH 251, is an example.

We have seen how Luther used freely for his hymns from what was usable from the church of previous centuries, correcting, improving, and augmenting as needed and desired. In this way the Lutheran Reformation was the conservative Reformation also in respect to its hymnody -- in that it thoughtfully conserved from the church's treasures of the past.

Now we turn our attention to those hymns of his which are fully his own hymns, totally his own production. There were the great theological themes of the Reformation which needed to be driven home to the hearts of the people, which congregational singing could powerfully help in doing if there were hymns to do so. Luther wrote some of his original hymns for this purpose. Note, for instance, his "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice," TLH 387, in which there is a most clear and profound preaching of both Law and Gospel, above all, a most profound, powerful, winsome and joyful preaching of the Gospel in its full beauty. This is one of the most valuable features of Luther's hymnody -- the lucid and powerful setting forth of the Law and the Gospel which pervades his hymns, and the Law always for the sake of the Gospel, i.e., for the salvation of poor, miserable sinners by God's grace for Christ's sake through faith in Him without the deeds of the Law.

Again, there was earnest praying that needed to be done for God's gracious and mighty help and

defense of the Church of the Reformation as it carried out the work of the Reformation under Him. This, too, could be done in a most effectual manner by congregational singing if hymns were supplied to do so. For this Luther wrote such mighty supplicatory hymns as "O Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold," TLH 260, and "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word," TLH 261. Further, he wrote other hymns, not cast in the form of supplication, but in the form of declaration, by which Christ's little flock could confess in heartfelt thankful and praiseful song the help and defense which God indeed was granting it. Here we think of such hymns as his "If God Had Not Been on Our Side," TLH 267, and of that great hymn for which he is best known, the Battle Hymn of the Reformation, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," TLH 262. Moreover, such hymns were also written for the purpose of bestirring the church under the cross to continue with solid determination and confidence in the battle which God Himself had set before it, yes, for the purpose of marshalling the church militant for its godly battle, its battle for the truth of the Gospel, for God's saving Word of truth.

Here let us note that Luther's hymns are truly ecumenical. Strong in polemic, some of them? To be sure! -- and unabashedly and confidently so against the enemies of the Word who would darken and overthrow it. His "A Mighty Fortress" is powerful polemic throughout -- which is why it is called "the Battle Hymn of the Reformation." Think here only of the words of the last stanza: "The Word they still shall let remain Nor any thanks have for it; He's by our side upon the plain With His good gifts and Spirit. And take they our life, Goods, fame, child, and wife, Let these all be gone, They yet have nothing won; The Kingdom ours remaineth." TLH 262:4. And think of his "Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word; Curb those who fain by craft and

sword Would wrest the Kingdom from Thy Son And set at naught all He hath done." TLH 261:1. The Evangelical Lutheran Hymn Book, which was the hymnal most generally in use throughout the Lutheran Church --Missouri Synod before The Lutheran Hymnal of 1941, brings out the polemic of Luther's original even more plainly: "Lord keep us in Thy Word and work, Restrain the murd'rous Pope and Turk, who fain would tear from off Thy throne Christ Jesus, Thy beloved Son." That translation then continues: "Lord Jesus Christ, Thy power make known, For Thou art Lord of lords alone; Shield Thy poor Christendom, that we May evermore sing praise to Thee." ELHB 274:1-2. But while some of his hymns are powerful in such polemic, they are not so from a sectarian spirit. They are polemical in the interest of the true unity of the church, i.e., that the church might truly possess Christ and His pure saving Word, and stand steadfastly united in Him and in His Word alone. For such genuine ecumenicity Luther strove and labored and prayed incessantly, and by way of his hymns provided that the prople of the Church of the Reformation should earnestly do so with him. Here consider, for instance, the third stanza of his hymn "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Words," to which we have just called attention: "O Comforter of priceless worth, Send peace and unity on earth. Support us in our final strife And lead us out of death to life," TLH 261:3. The Evangelical Lutheran Hymn Book, from which I quoted stanzas one and two before, translates this last stanza: "Thou Comforter of priceless worth, Give one mind to Thy flock on earth, Stand by us in our final strife, And lead us out of death to life." ELHB 274:3. Ay, yes! "Thou Comforter of priceless worth, Give one mind to Thy flock on earth..."! That brings out better what Luther is saying here. He, of course, means oneness of mind in the pure and wholesome Word, in believing and confessing the articles of our most holy faith drawn solely from God's Word. That is praying for

true ecumenicity indeed, for true Christian unity, the like of which St. Paul calls Christians to, for instance in I Corinthians 1:10, "Now I beseech you, brethren, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." If some would not be of one mind in the Word, if they refused to bow to the authority of Holy Scripture, as was the case with the papists, the Zwinglians, etc., then, of course, for the Church of the Reformation fellowship with such was precluded. But it was not the Lutherans who were the sectarians. Rather, such groups which departed from the pure doctrine of Scripture were the sectarians. They were the ones who by the errors on which they insisted caused divisions, and this completely contrary to true ecumenicity which is based on unity in the pure Word alone.

For other examples of his hymns by which Luther provided for the Church of the Reformation to pray for true Christian ecumenicity, we note the following: TLH 231:3: "Thou sacred Love, grace on us bestow, Set our hearts with heav'nly fire aglow That with hearts united we love each other, Of one mind, in peace with every brother. Lord, have mercy!" And TLH 313:3: "May God bestow on us His grace and favor To please Him with our behavior And life as brethren here in love and union Nor repent this blest communion! O Lord, have mercy! Let not Thy good Spirit forsake us; Grant that heav'nly minded He make us; Give Thy Church, Lord, to see Days of peace and unity." And we would also call attention to TLH 224:1: "Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord! Be all Thy graces now out poured On each believer's mind and heart; Thy fervant love to them impart. Lord, by the brightness of Thy Light Thou in the faith dost men unite Of every land and every tongue; This to Thy praise, O Lord, our God, be sung. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" This stanza, it should be

noted here, is not one of Luther's original productions, but was from the pre-Reformation period. Luther treasured it, and added two stanzas to it, keeping as well the tune which had been associated with it from pre-Reformation days, and which he also treasured. He commented in his table talks, "The hymn 'Come, Holy Spirit, Lord and God' was composed by the Holy Ghost himself, both words and music." Luther's Works, Vol. 53, p. 265. Such fine, ecumenically minded, prayerful singing Luther wanted the Church of the Reformation to do, and provided for by incorporating this stanza into his hymnody, as well as by the others which we have noted.

The ecumenicity of which Luther's hymns sing is, of course, something totally different from that false ecumenicity so wide-spread in external Christendom today which cares not about the pure Word and how many doctrinal differences there are. With Luther it is, as afore indicated, always unity in the Word, unity in the doctrine of the Gospel and all its articles. Actually, all the hymns of Luther promote and work for this unity, for they powerfully set forth the articles of the faith laid down for us in the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures, the divine doctrine which constitutes the faith for the whole church, in which all Christians should be established by teaching, which his hymns do in an earnest manner.

We have at a number of points touched on the fact that Luther wrote his hymns for the purpose of teaching, so that the pure faith could be sung into the hearts of the people of the church, so that the great theological themes of the Reformation could be driven home to their hearts, and that they might be brought to embrace and stand firmly in the truths of God's pure Word. This feature of his hymns merits being underscored. His hymns are eminently didactic. They are wonderfully full of the church's

dogma. His hymns constitute a veritable compendium of theology for the Christian congregation, similarly as does his Small Catechism. We might think first of those hymns which are appropriately called his "Catechism hymns," his hymns on the chief parts of Christian doctrine as outlined in the Catechism --his "That Man a Godly Life Might Live, God Did These Ten Commandments Give," TLH 287, and another on the Commandments, "Man, Wouldst Thou Live All Blissfully," Luther's Works, Vol. 53, p. 281; his metrical paraphrase of the Nicene Creed, "We All Believe in One True God," TLH 251; his hymn on the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father, Thou in Heaven Above," TLH 458; his hymn on Baptism, "To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord," LW 223; his hymn on the Lord's Supper, "Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior," TLH 311, and to that we would add his post-Communion hymn, "O Lord, We Praise Thee," TLH 313; and if one would have a hymn for the Office of the Keys and Confession, there is his "From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee," TLH 329. But not only these which we have just mentioned, --the rest of his hymns powerfully proclaim the church's doctrine as well. It would be interesting to take various areas of the church's doctrine, such as the dogma of the Trinity, of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, of the incarnation, of the vicarious atonement, etc., etc., and see how his hymns are full of the church's dogma. The scope of this paper does not permit pursuing this here, but a further personal study of this matter is very instructive and profitable.

Some of his hymns contain lucid, masterful expositions of certain sections of Scripture, as, for instance, his hymns on the Commandments and on the Lord's Prayer. His great exegetical ability is evident everywhere in his hymns. And so is his great ability to apply God's Word in the life of the Christian and of the Church. Here comes to mind, for instance, his hymns on various of the

Psalms, such as his hymn on Psalm 12, "O Lord, Look Down From Heaven, Behold," TLH 260; his hymn on Psalm 124, "If God Had Not Been On Our Side," TLH 267; his hymn on Psalm 67, "May God Bestow on Us His Grace," TLH 500, the first missionary hymn of the Reformation Church; his hymn on Psalm 130, "From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee," TLH 329, that profound penitential hymn of confident trust in God because of His grace and mercy in Christ. In these hymns we see how to use the Psalms and make them our very own prayers and apply them in our own personal life and in the church's life which should always also be in our heart. Due to his penetrating application of the Word in his hymns, his hymns touch the deepest needs of men and of the church and supply the answer to those needs from the Gospel of our God.

At the same time that his hymns are didactic, they all have a liturgical purpose as well. These two elements go hand in hand. Luther's orientation was thoroughly liturgical, and so are his hymns thoroughly liturgical. His hymns are intended to be used by the gathered church for the worship of God according to the church's historic liturgy and liturgical system. His hymns range throughout the church's liturgical framework, and thus he uses that whole framework to teach the church's whole doctrine.

A further word now in regard to Luther's poetic style. In characterizing his poetic verse, we would observe the ruggedness which his hymns possess. His lyrics lack the polish which we commonly look for in poetry today. If one takes note he soon sees that frequently the metrical accent and word accent do not correspond. Also, Luther was occasionally satisfied with less than full rhyme. In such cases, as long as there was assonance, that is, similar unconflicting sounds, that was sufficient. Worthy of note here,



beside the fact that such polish did not come to be demanded in poetry until about one hundred years later, there is also the fact that Luther's hymns bear a clear relationship to the German folk songs which were not concerned with poetic refinement, but were concerned with presenting their subjects vividly and dramatically, though without poetic refinement. Indeed, like the German folk songs, Luther's hymns are rugged--and so was the battle of the Reformation which he had to fight. His rugged style fit that well. And what Luther's hymns lack in poetic refinement, if in this case that be considered a lack, is far more than compensated for by the rich and powerful content of his hymns. We must remember too that Luther's purpose was not to create moods and express feelings by way of poetic niceties, as was that of the poets of Romanticism one hundred years later, but to proclaim a message for the heart.

Moreover, his lyrics are sturdy, rich, full of life. There is nothing weak, bland, anemic, insipid, inane here, and they are not full of sick sentimentality and of all manner of subjective doting, as is the case with many so-called hymns, but his hymns are marked with strength and vigor. With power they proclaim. While they are marked with strength, they can also be warm and tender, as, for instance, his "From Heaven Above To Earth I Come." TLH 85.

And what we have just said in the foregoing paragraph about the sturdiness, richness, etc., of his lyrics must also be said about his music. It was the common practice in those days that the poet compose the tune for the song which he had written. And Luther had excellent musical taste and considerable musical skill. Thus it is commonly accepted today that Luther composed at least most of the tunes for the new songs he produced. And he did

a masterful job of it. They are tunes well-fitted to the lyrics, in perfect character with the lyrics, proclaiming clearly in music what the lyrics do in words. His tunes are like a clarion trumpet sounding for battle, as is the tune for "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," TLH 262; or like a mellow trumpet announcing warm and joyful glad tidings, as is the tune for "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come," TLH 85; or like men springing exultantly for joy over the salvation which our mighty God has freely provided in His Son, as is the tune for "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice," TLH 387; or like a Christian calling out from the depth of human need in heartfelt repentance and firm confidence in God who is gracious to us in Christ, as the tune for "From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee," TLH 329; and so we could go on. Thus his tunes resonate intensely what the words of his hymns say. In no way are they like so many lifeless, dull tunes which drag and depress and are really non-melodies. Nor are they like catchy little tunes which are here today and gone tomorrow. They are tunes which wear well, of which one does not tire, and which one comes to treasure the more the better he gets to know them. We would not fail to note that the same is true also of those tunes from the medieval church which are coupled with those hymns of his which were not new, or not totally new -- those too are equally great and enduring tunes.

Here, then, with such words and such fitting music as we have in Luther's hymns, we have a body of hymnody of the highest order. A few of his hymns may not be of as high a quality as his others, but most of his hymns (and that goes for all of those which are accessible to us in the hymnals that are in use among us) are excellent hymns, certainly among the very best and most profitable hymns which we have in our hymnals. If a congregation means to follow the apostolic injunction, "Let the

word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord," Colossians 3:16, and "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in your hearts to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," Ephesians 5: 18-20, here in Luther's hymnody they will find hymns eminently suited, yes, just made for that. Blessed is the congregation that uses them, and does not neglect them. And if they are going to use them, then it is up to us who are or will be pastors in the church (as the case may be), and who are therefore responsible for the hymnody to be used, to select with some planned regularity from these hymns, which are an important part of our Reformation heritage. Let's pursue a rich use of Luther's hymns in our congregations for the sake of the entire congregation, both old and young alike; yes, certainly also for the sake of the young. Here, with such hymns, we can give them something good in the place of the wretched, godless music which is everywhere around. This certainly was also a concern with Luther. Earlier we quoted from his preface to the Spiritual Hymn Booklet of 1524, often called the Walther Choir Book, which contains thirty-seven chorales in polyphonic settings for youth choir, the settings being by Johann Walther. In the preface to this booklet Luther writes: "And these songs were arranged in four parts to give the young -- who should at any rate be trained in music and other fine arts--something to wean them away from the love ballads and carnal songs and to teach them something of value in their place, thus combining the good with the pleasing, which is proper for youth." Luther's Works, Vol. 53, p. 316.

What if one happens to become pastor of a parish where these hymns have been neglected and are therefore not known and appreciated (and unfortunately there are some Lutheran congregations like that)? Then one will want to begin to introduce them systematically, the easier ones first, but then leading them with a planned program also into the more difficult. Perhaps it would be good to set up a three- or four-year program of acquainting them with the Luther hymns and getting them to become familiar with them and to know them. A great deal could be said on this, which, however, is beyond the scope of this paper. Perhaps some will at first, if they have only been accustomed to modern hymns, indicate that they do not care for the Luther hymns which are being introduced to them. But then some words which Bach once spoke can be of some encouragement to us: "If everybody likes something the first time, I am afraid of it," he said. We need to remember that Luther's hymns are the kind of hymns which will come to be appreciated, the more our people become familiar with them. Then they will truly grow on them, or, should we say, into them. And when we lead them to the point where they are truly familiar with them and know them well as we use them in the liturgical setting in the worship service of the church, then we will also find our individual members, as they are driving home from the office, or making the beds, or whatever, in their family lives, humming and singing in their hearts, yes, perhaps singing the words aloud -- "May God bestow on us His grace, With blessings rich provide us. And may the brightness of His face to life eternal guide us. That we His saving health may know, His gracious will and pleasure, And also to the heathen show Christ's riches without measure, And unto God convert them," TLH 500:1, or, "Though great our sins and sore our woes, His grace much more aboundeth. His helping love no limit knows, Our utmost need it soundeth. Our Shepherd

good and true is He, Who will at last His Israel free from all their sin and sorrow." TLH 329:5, etc., etc. When that is accomplished then we have accomplished something of great worth for the tremendous spiritual good of our people for time and for eternity. Thus let us not neglect, but use faithfully, this Reformation heritage of Luther's hymns.

-- The Rev. Harry Bartels, Pastor  
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Music is one of the fairest and most glorious gifts of God, to which Satan is a bitter enemy, for it removes from the heart the weight of sorrow and the fascination of evil thoughts. It is a kind and gentle sort of discipline; it refines the passions and improves the understanding. Those who love music are gentle and honest in their tempers. I always loved music and would not for a great matter be without the little skill I possess in the art. (*Luther*)

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Next to theology I give to music the highest place and honor. (*Luther*)

HOW THE HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD  
OF INTERPRETATION  
VITIATES THE SOLA SCRIPTURA PRINCIPLE

We tend to forget, because we are cloistered here at our Seminary, that Satan is alive and well and working ever so diligently to undermine the message of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We see his work in an especially virulent form when we consider that branch of modern "theology" which is referred to as the Historical-Critical Method of Biblical Interpretation.

Now here is a tool which the Devil can put to good use. The Historical-Critical Method is not as crass or as honest as outright atheism. Neither does adherence to its precepts clearly define Christian from Non-Christian. Instead, this method of criticism is equivocating and sneaky. Under the guise of biblical study, it calls into question the integrity of Scriptures. Under the heading of History, our facts are turned into fables. And when the reason of man is unable to decipher the Will of God, reason itself is made into a God and worshipped. And this is all accomplished in the name of "Modern Christianity." Those Christians who subscribe to this treatment of Scripture are left wondering if, indeed, there is any Scripture in which to believe.

In consideration of the question, "How does the Historical-Critical Method of interpretation vitiate the Sola Scriptura principle," it is proper that we begin with the definition of our terms. We must clearly understand these principle expressions so that the points of contention, the marks of vitiation, are easily recognized. Since truth is preferential to falsehood, I begin with a discussion of Sola Scriptura.

What is meant when we, as confessional Lutherans, speak of Sola Scriptura? Certainly this motto is a banner which many (albeit with imperfect understanding) proudly bear. I might add, that if the full significance of this doctrinal principle was realized, there would be a significant number of proud, rational human beings who would drop it like a hot potato. We start with a concise statement from the Epitome of the Formula of Concord:

"We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the ONLY RULE AND NORM according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged...<sup>1</sup>

We readily discern the important words in this encapsulation. They are, of course, "*the only rule and norm...*" More specifically, we note the word "*only*." With this word, the Confessions point us straight to the Word of God for the establishment of our articles of faith. In addition, the Epitome rules out any other source, any other rule, or any other norm by which we might establish or judge our beliefs concerning God and our salvation.

This is certainly an unconditional statement. Are the confessional authors allowed to make such categorical propositions? We turn, as the authors insist, to God's Word for our answer. It is here, in Scripture, that the basis for the Sola Scriptura principle is found.

First, it must be recognized that the book to which we refer as "God's Word" really is God's Word. Scripture makes this claim for itself. The verses which we know so well bear repeating. 2 Tim. 3:16 says: "All Scripture [is] θεόπνευστος (God Breathed, inspired)..." and 2 Peter 1:21: "For no Prophecy ever came by the will of man, rather, (αλλα, a strong adversative) men from God spoke

because they were moved (literally, carried or borne) by the Holy Spirit." And finally, Hebrews 1:1,2: "In many and various ways, God spoke of old [things] to our fathers through the Prophets. In these last days, he spoke to us through his son..." These statements (and many others) bear a consistent message. Indeed, they are proof positive, for those who are faithful, that this Bible is indeed the Word of God.

Now, many would agree with this statement that, yes, the Bible is the Word of God. But these same people would balk if they understood the implications of this statement. And these implications, which must be asserted if one adheres to a belief in the Divine Word of God, must also be understood to appreciate the detrimental work of the Historical-Critical Method.

Implication No. 1: If the Scriptures are God-Breathed, written by the hand of Almighty God Himself, and if God is indeed perfect, (Deuteronomy 32:4),<sup>2</sup> then it follows that His writings are also perfect and without error. And in fact, we find that this implication is corroborated by Scripture John 17:17: "...Your word is truth," John 10:35<sup>3</sup>: and Matthew 5:18<sup>4</sup> clearly point to the absolute truthfulness of God's Word.

Implication No. 2: If Scripture is perfect and without error, we must adhere to and believe those doctrines which are expressed therein. In the context of this paper, we are most concerned about what Scripture says about itself. How does Scripture describe Scripture?

Implication No. 3: The attributes of God's Word. Scripture describes itself with the following attributes: A) As we have noted above, inerrancy of the Bible, B) the efficacy of the Bible, C) Perspicuity



of the Bible, D) Authority of the Bible, and E) Sufficiency of the Bible.<sup>5</sup> Scriptural texts on which these attributes are based will be supplied later in this paper. It is important here to understand that, within these attributes, the foundation of Sola Scriptura Principle is built. Here, outlined for us, are the reasons why we must regard Scripture as *the only source and norm* by which we receive and judge doctrine. And these attributes are precisely the point at which the Historical-Critical Method undermines the foundation of Sola Scriptura. But first let us look at the Historical-Critical Method of interpretation a little more closely.

We must first admit that, in spite of all the pejorative connotations which are necessarily maintained in connection with our conservative training, there is a proper way to understand the term "historical interpretation." Louis Berkhof says:

"grammatical and historical interpretation, when rightly understood, are synonymous. The special laws of grammar, agreeably to which the sacred writers employed language, were the result of their peculiar circumstances; and history alone throws us back into those circumstances."<sup>6</sup>

We can therefore agree, as conservative Christians, that there is a place for "historical interpretation." But its place is to be kept only within the context of Sola Scriptura. It is to be used specifically and exclusively to gain greater insight into the Revealed word of God.

It is with what David Kuske calls the influence of the "Rationalistic literary criticism in the historical method," that we must take issue. Kuske defines in precise terms the bone of contention.

"We must stress at the outset that the

historical-Critical method uses rationalistic literary criticism not only to 'help' in understanding the meaning of the words of Scripture but also to determine how the Scriptures came into being or what the nature of the Scriptures is."<sup>7</sup>

It is the Magisterial use of reason, the human rationalistic mind, that transforms legitimate historical interpretation into what we derisively refer to as "Historical-Critical." In its most liberal form, this method of interpretation is a worship of man's rational mind and a corresponding dispensation of God's Holy Word.

The history of this method of inquiry shows that this is not a recent phenomena. Neither does it encompass only the interpretation of Scripture. Rather, it is an influential mode of philosophy which has undeniably penetrated western society. Its roots are deep in the Age of Enlightenment and Reason and its current cousin is Secular Humanism. But the impetus of this method is easily recognized in man's desire to glorify himself.

As I have mentioned above, we see the source of this interpretative method in the philosophic community of the Age of Enlightenment. In 1651 Thomas Hobbs suggested that reason should determine reality. With this focus, he concluded that the religion, (a belief in supernatural things) have *reasonable* causes:

"And in these four things, opinion of ghosts, ignorance of second causes, devotion towards what men fear, and taking of things casual for prognostics, consisteth the natural seed of religion;..."<sup>8</sup>

And Baruch Spinoza, a late contemporary of Hobbs, wrote a piece which set the stage for further realistic investigation of Scriptures:

"In his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, B. Spinoza gave to critical studies, which previously had been based on isolated contradictions and stylistic analysis, the methodological principle that the proper guidepost for the study of the OT is 'natural reason, which is the common property of all men, not supernatural enlightenment or external authority.'"9

The groundwork is then laid for J. S. Semler who is considered the "father" of the Historical-Critical Method, even though it is evident that he was not the originator of these ideas. Semler's point was that the books of the Old and New Testaments originated in a historical context, and as such, the material they contained were subject to the historical milieu in which they were immersed. This material was therefore not meant for people at all times and at all places, and not meant to be error free.

However, Historical-Critical scholarship is most often associated with the name of J. Wellhausen who developed, in its complete form, the beast which we label the Historical-Critical Method.<sup>10</sup> Wellhausen is best known for his great summary of the source strata theory, which recognizes at least four different OT authors: J.E.D. and P.

It is not the intention of this paper to review in detail the complete history of this scholarship. Nor will we include a description of the "source strata." It is only necessary to highlight the above discussion so that we may associate the link between the history of the rationalistic method of inquiry into Scriptures and modern-day historical-critical interpretation as exemplified by Bultman, Barth, Fohrer, etc. The connection is seen, not so much in form or method, but in the source of material or the point of reference, and is summarized thus:

Man's rationalistic revelation to himself.

And so we consider the points at which the rationalistic method of Scripture interpretation vitiates the Sola Scriptura Principle. It was earlier suggested that the attributes which Scripture ascribes to itself are the foundation of Sola Scriptura. If these attributes are the foundation of this doctrine, then it is at this foundation that we can best illustrate and understand how a rationalistic treatment of Scripture undermines the true doctrine of Scripture.

We begin with perspicuity or the clarity of Scripture. As Conservative Christians, we believe that, because God revealed to us his will by communicating in human language, then it is God's intention that human beings would be able to understand his message. A. L. Graebner writes:

"The perspicuity of the Bible is that clearness of Holy Writ which renders all the doctrines and precepts laid down in the inspired Word freely accessible to every reader or hearer of average human intelligence and sufficient knowledge of the languages employed, and of a mind not in a manner preoccupied by error as to preclude the apprehension of the truths themselves, however clearly set forth in words of human speech."<sup>11</sup>

This attribute is well substantiated by Scripture, as we see in 2 Peter 1,19: "And we have the more certain prophetic Word, to which you do well to have before [you] as a *λυχνω φαίνουσι εν αυχηρηῶ τόπω* (as a light which shines in an obscure place)..." We see this attribute also expressed in Ephesians 3:3,4<sup>12</sup>, Psalm 119:130<sup>13</sup> and many others. It is obvious that everything we need for our salvation is included in the Word of God and it is communicated in such a way that anybody can understand it.

But we see a sad corruption of this attribute in the modern theological scene. Instead of the treatment of God's Word as divine, clear revelation, there are those who rather consider Scripture as a combination of human and divine revelation which is unclear and consequently subject to human error. The duty of this "modern theologian" is to separate the error from the truth and thus to "clarify," from a subjective point of view, the word of God. Pieper tells us, however,

"According to the teaching of Scripture, however, exactly the opposite relation obtains. Not men illumine Scripture, but Scripture illumines men...(Ps. 119:105)"<sup>14</sup>

What we have is an unneeded clarification of Scripture from man's point of view. But the effect of this "subjective illumination" on the clear doctrine of salvation is like an ice cube under a light bulb; the lighter it gets, the faster the ice cube melts.

A glaring example of this is seen in Bultman's "illuminating" method of "demythologizing" God's Word. His technique need not be explained, except to note that, in connection with the historical criticism, Bultman postulates that the miracles of Jesus were performed in a historical context. He concludes that when they are evaluated by today's standards, a natural explanation becomes evident.

But the effect of Bultman's "illumination" is devastating. If these miracles were nothing but a bag of magician's tricks performed before an ignorant crowd, our concept of Christ as God is meaningless. This "theory" casts doubt upon the whole salvation plan because: 1) it questions the deity of Christ, 2) it casts doubt upon the Resurrection as another trick, 3) it denies the infallibility of Scripture, which clearly labels these happenings as σημεῖον as signs to manifest his glory.<sup>15</sup>

Likewise, the attribute of Efficacy is abused by this rationalistic method. Clearly described by Scripture in Romans 1:16<sup>16</sup> and I Thess. 2:13<sup>17</sup> it is questioned and even ignored by modern theologians who employ higher-critical interpretation. Of course, to those rank rationalists who have no aspiration toward Christianity and consider the Bible as mere fable, efficacy means nothing. We note, however, that there is also a more subtle attack by those who would admit that while God's revelation may be contained in Scripture, *the power of salvation* is most certainly somewhere else. I point to Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher/theologian, who would assert some kind of divine revelation but apart from his own mystical I-Thou theology, excludes any kind of efficacy unto salvation contained in Scripture. Salvation (or communication with God) for Buber is rather found extrabiblically:

"The external Thou cannot be thought or experienced, and the path to God can only be in directedness, dissolution of everything extraneous, and in renewal."<sup>18</sup>

Although Buber's existential attack on Scripture is rather technical and sometimes incomprehensible, it is real and is derived, once again, from man's revelation to himself.

The most coarse and obvious attack made by the Historical-Critical Method is against the authority and the inerrancy of the Bible. Again, these attributes are described by Scripture in Hebrews 1:1<sup>19</sup>, I Cor. 14:37<sup>20</sup>, John 10:35<sup>21</sup>, among others. Here is the logical core of our faith, and it is here that this method is most destructive to our beliefs. We need only to turn to those who hold with the Wellhausen Documentary Hypothesis for their interpretation of the Old Testament, to examine the destruction of Sola Scriptura.

"...demanding that the O.T. be studied according to the same principles that apply to other literature, free from dogma and tradition..."<sup>22</sup>

This statement from Fohrer's Introduction to the Old Testament is typical of the tack taken by these people. That this view is so anti-Christian is not as shocking as the fact that this rationalistic approach is taught in colleges and seminaries which label themselves as Christian schools. This is THE basis for the Historical-Critical Method.

What is the effect on the inherent authority of God's Word? God's role is treated by Fohrer and others not as the central impetus for Scripture but as footnote, an auxiliary force. Fohrer writes:

"Yahwehism (not Yahweh himself) is again and again the decisive force that makes possible an autonomous Israelite Literature."<sup>23</sup>

The point here made is that our God who IS, is for Fohrer, merely an ism, a force or a myth which was responsible for the generation of just another piece of fiction. Authority of God's Word, for these people, is simply not recognized. And it follows that, without Authority, inerrancy is also not recognized. We refer again to David Kuske's article:

"Faith will be able to overleap all the inadequacies of human expression and all the literary, cultural, numerical or geographical disparities, gaps, inconsistencies....and discrepancies. Faith will let these vicissitudes in Scripture, which are common to all human writing, stand side by side with the Holy Spirit's inspiration of all Scripture..."<sup>24</sup>

Finally, let us look at the attribute of sufficiency of Scripture. Again, it is attested to in God's Word; Acts 20:27 tells us that Scripture contains "all the counsel of God." Likewise, 2 Tim. 3:15 tells us that God's Word is sufficient "to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." Here is the core of Sola Scriptura. Only Scripture is needed for salvation, and it is only through God's Word that one is saved, because it is the only place in which God's divine revelation is taught. Pieper says:

"It is self-evident that if the *perfectio*, or *sufficiencia*, of Scripture is surrendered, the Scripture principle is up."<sup>25</sup>

And yet, in the interests of human reason, it is surrendered. The crass editorialism of the historical-critical school precludes sufficiency and instead concludes that the revelation of God has to be found somewhere else:

"[God] is the creation of man's ideological fantasy; he is not the one true Christian God; he is an idol, a substitute God, a counter God. No, man cannot know the one true God."<sup>26</sup>

As with authority, inerrancy and the other attributes, sufficiency has been regarded as an anachronism, and this is exactly the fate of Sola Scriptura in the face of the Historical-Critical Method. And the results of the vitiation of the Sola Scriptura principle are obvious. Our knowledge of salvation is lost, faith is impossible, victory over death is no longer a possibility. We begin to face what Martin Luther calls, "The Monster of Uncertainty."

Thank God that we maintain our "anachronistic" position, that we hold Sola Scriptura in high regard!



## FOOTNOTES

1. Theodore Tappert. The Book of Concord. Trans. Theodore Tappert, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1959, p. 464. The Smalcald Articles, Article 2. No. 15 (Tappert, p. 295) also states that "The Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else..."
2. "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." KJV
3. "...Scripture cannot be broken..."
4. "...For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled." KJV
5. These "attributes" of Scripture are found in many Dogmatics books. I chose: Edward Koehler, A Summary of Christian Doctrine, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1971, p. 10-14. They are expressed in this order rather than the order given by Dr. Koehler, because all of the attributes must logically follow the attribute of inerrancy. If we do not presuppose inerrancy, then the other attributes may or may not exist. Also, the attribute of sufficiency naturally concludes this list.
6. Louis Berkhof, Principles of Biblical Interpretation. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1950, p. 113.

7. David Kuske, "An Analysis of Three Approaches of The Historical-Critical Method of Interpretation," Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Vol. 81, No. 2, Spring, 1984, p. 83. Kuske further explains; "This point is basic because when the historical-critical method uses rationalistic criticism to determine the nature of the Scriptures, it is subjecting divine revelation to human scientific investigation." (pp. 83-84)
8. Thomas Hobbs, Leviathan, Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., Chicago, 1952, p. 80.
9. Georg Fohrer, Introduction to the Old Testament, Trans. David Green, Abingdon Press, New York, 1968, p. 26.
10. Georg Fohrer comments: "Wellhausen created the great summary in which the sources, separated by literary analysis, yield a definite picture of Israelite history, within which the sources themselves are assigned to their proper periods. Since this picture could not be reconciled with the traditional views, Wellhausen was subjected to attacks that have lasted down to the present time..." p. 27.
11. A. L. Graebner, Doctrinal Theology, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo., 1910, p. 11.
12. "How that by revelation he made known unto me  
...Whereby when ye read, ye may understand..."  
KJV
13. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it  
giveth understanding unto the simple." KJV
14. Franz Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo., 1950, p. 320,

The passage to which he refers: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."  
KJV

15. John 2:11
16. "...It is the power of God unto salvation..." KJV
17. "...the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."
18. Werner Manheim, Martin Buber, Twayne Publishers, Inc., New York, 1974, p. 54.
19. "...God...spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." KJV
20. "...let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the Commandments of the Lord." KJV
21. "...Scripture cannot be broken." KJV
22. Fohrer, p. 26.
23. Ibid., p. 36
24. Kuske, p. 103, in reference to Harry Boer's approach to Scripture.
25. Pieper, Vol. 1, p. 319.
26. Hans Kung, Does God Exist? Doubleday and Co., Garden City, New York, 1980, p. 516, in which Hans Kung discusses the Theology of Karl Barth.

-- A Seminary Student

## BOOK REVIEW

Verbal Inspiration, by J. Aal Ottesen Stub,  
Lutheran Publishing House, Decorah, Iowa, 1915.  
This book was published by the request of the  
Madison-Chicago Special Conference of the  
Norwegian Synod.

Though there are many issues which today separate moderate and conservative Lutherans, the overriding point of contention is the way one views the writings of God's Word, the Holy Scriptures. An argument that many liberals like to make is the following: Since we do not have the original autographs of the sacred writers, and since these alone are to be viewed as verbally inspired, how can one maintain such a staunch position on inerrancy in wording when it is obvious that not only do we have copies of copies in terms of manuscripts available to us today, but we even have translations upon translations? For example, listen to the following liberal theologian, Daniel Simundson: "Everyone admits that errors have been made in copying and transmitting the earliest documents of the Bible. ... Those who insist that the Bible is 'inerrant' deal with this apparent inconsistency by claiming inerrancy only for the original 'autograph,' the original copy written by the author. The problem is that we do not have any original copies of any part of Scripture. Why speak of 'inerrancy' then, when the only copies we have (or ever will have) do, in fact, contain errors with which we must deal when we are attempting to find the meaning of Scripture?" (The Lutheran Standard. January 23, 1981)

However, this well-sounding argument is only a smokescreen! The liberals love to confuse people

by speaking of copyist or textural errors in the same breath as speaking about doctrinal and substantive errors. Stub, in this book, has a chapter on this subject in which he reminds us of God's "miraculous preservation of His holy Word." He states emphatically, "We maintain: the preservation of this wonderful book is no less a miracle than its origin. That almighty God, who was able to preserve His Word through the persecutions and vicissitudes of centuries could, most assuredly, have preserved to us the original manuscripts, if he had found it expedient." He then goes on to point out that of the 150,000 variant readings between the manuscripts that are now extant, only 400 have any influence on a sense of a word. And of those 400, only 50 are of any importance. And of those 50, there is not one which affects any doctrine of faith to such a degree that it is not overwhelmingly substantiated by other undisputable passages, or the general doctrine of Holy Scripture. It is interesting to hear one of the "Stub relatives" speak so strongly about verbal inspiration, when we consider that it was H. G. Stub who helped orchestrate the merger in 1917, which is the forerunner of the ELCA--the synod which has the weakest stand on verbal inspiration and which has forsaken the Sola Scriptura principle.

It amazes us how precise the scribes were in transmitting the words of the texts, to the point that they counted out the letters to be exact in representing the original writings. (Again, this fact in itself is a powerful argument for the fact that history attests to the validity of verbal inspiration, due to the intensity of precision devoted to transmission of the texts.) Concerning the matter of faith in the preservation of the words from the Lord, Stub gives this analogy: "The son who treasures a copy of a letter written by his deceased father will not doubt that the words

in the copy are his father's, although some other hand has recorded them, and he will earnestly seek to have his copy as nearly like the original as possible."

In the book the author makes a valuable distinction between the matter of "revelation" and "inspiration." He says: "Revelation generally brought knowledge of what before was unknown; inspiration often caused the recording of what the writer already knew, and sometimes makes use of facts and records already published." ...If inspiration necessarily pre-supposed an act of revelation, how could we account for the slight divergencies in form of what is sometimes recorded?... If, however, we remember that the writers had received the above command (i.e., 'Carry neither purse, nor script, nor shoes') from the mouth of the Savior, and not by revelation, the difficulty at once disappears. The Holy Spirit regarded the words contained in the evangelist's memory sufficient for his purpose, and caused them to be recorded. (The old church named this truth 'Accomodatio Spiritui Sancti,' i.e., the Holy Spirit accomodates himself to the individuals whom he inspired.)"

A question that has come up in the minds of many is: If the men whom God chose to write the Scriptures were "holy" as they recorded what God wanted, then why is it that they could also be found wrong at times in their Christian living? Why did Peter, who wrote at least two letters in Scripture, at the same time have to be rebuked by Paul for his actions with the circumcision group, as stated in Gal. 2? (The liberals also like to use this as ammunition for poking holes in the doctrine of verbal inspiration.) Stub reminds us: "Moses, David, Paul, John were not always and everywhere inspired, for then they would have been infallible. Inspiration ends with the written word, and does not

become an attribute of the writer."

Due to the fact that Stub was of the merger group, and no doubt had a distaste for "the little Norwegian Synod" that would form in 1918, there is a touch of irony in his remark: "The Norwegian Synod has stood as an unwavering champion of this doctrine. The inscription in its old seal, γέγραπται, i.e., 'It is written,' speaks in no uncertain words of its position. ...We admit that we cannot comprehend this miracle. ...No, inspiration is an article of faith. ...Our Lord's favorite sentence, 'It is written,' must of necessity apply to words for only words are written." What would Stub think of the "Big Norwegian Synod" today over against the "Little Norskies" on this matter?

There are many passages in his book that he quotes substantiating verbal inspiration. Standard ones that we often use are John 10:35, I Cor. 2:13, 2 Tim. 3:16, 2 Pet. 1:20-21, and 3:15-17. Permit me to quote Stub's comments on two of these verses: (Regarding 2 Pet. 3:15-16) -- "It is surely evident that with these words the Holy Spirit has stamped as inspired Paul's writings, for his 'writings' (γραφῆς) are recognized as co-equal with 'the other Scriptures,' (τὰς λοιπὰς γραφῆς), i.e., the Old Testament Canon." (Regarding John 10:30-38) -- "He also anticipates the objection that they would be likely to raise, and therefore He stops to meet this before proceeding. He stops, and in a serious pause utters the weighty word: 'And the Scripture cannot be broken,' (v. 35). The word 'broken' (λυθῆναι) means 'destroy,' 'break,' or 'loose.' It seems as though our Savior hears the objections and evasions that would be urged against the old doctrine of verbal inspiration, and therefore calls out into the world: 'Take care, there is not one word of Scripture that can be trifled with. Every word of Holy Writ is of equal importance.'"

The attacks on verbal inspiration of Scripture are, of course, not just recent in origin. In 1935 the statement was made in the July CTM: "In Germany there is at the present time hardly an outstanding university professor who upholds the doctrine of verbal inspiration." That same article carried this note concerning our book under review: "The best and most complete work on verbal inspiration in the English language is the one by Jacob Aal Ottesen Stub of the Norwegians, Verbal Inspiration..." Yet, in his book published in 1915, Stub remarks that "today almost the entire Lutheran Church of America holds to this belief. The Synodical Conference in particular (German and English) and the Norwegian Lutherans are here in accord."

Dr. R. C. H. Lenski emphatically upholds the doctrine of verbal inspiration in his Dogmatic Notes, which formed the basis for his courses in dogmatics at the Columbus Seminary. He states that "verbal inspiration, then, is simply this, that the divine act, moving, enlightening, controlling, and governing the holy writers, extended to the words which they used, so that only those words were chosen which God wanted for the conveyance of the thought. ...If the words are not inspired, then there is a vast element uninspired; for no thought can be expressed in anything but words, and the entire Bible consists of words. ...Moreover, if the thought is said to be inspired and not the words, we can never be certain even as to the thoughts at any point; for it often turns on a single word and comes to us wholly in words."

Is it any wonder that in the liberal Lutheran seminaries today there is little emphasis at all on the original languages of Hebrew and Greek? If the words of Scripture are not considered absolutely vital for a point of doctrine, then exegetical work is viewed only as an unnecessary burden that detracts



from "practical theology." May we not get caught up in this way of thinking, even while we profess that great doctrine of verbal inspiration. How can any of us take a dim view of the heavy emphasis in our conservative seminaries on the matter of exegesis? If we truly maintain verbal inspiration, and believe wholeheartedly that God has preserved His truth to us in the 20th century by means of the words in the extant manuscripts, then the qualifications for our church leaders to have a working knowledge in the Hebrew and Greek is a natural prerequisite.

Finally, how many of us haven't thought at one time or another: "If only the Lutheran Confessions would have had enough foresight to include an article on Scripture in the Augsburg Confession, then, moderates of the higher critical school who prefer the label 'Lutheran' would be made to hang their heads in shame!" But we need to remind ourselves that the absolute authority of the Scriptures was an underlying principle deeply embedded in the hearts and minds of our Lutheran Confessors. This, of course, is brought out in the Preface to the Book of Concord (1580): "We have...purposed to commit ourselves exclusively and only, in accordance with the pure, infallible, and unalterable Word of God."

To my knowledge Stub's book is no longer in print. Is it any wonder that Augsburg or Fortress would never consider re-publishing it? Maybe we should consider it in our own conservative circles. It appears as if the battlefield on the matter of verbal inerrancy is going to be with us for quite some time.

In his closing comments, Stub makes this excellent point: "We maintain that the Bible

becomes dearer, the more we become convinced that it is from God. It is the epistle from the beloved one, and the more we realize that its contents, words as well as thoughts, are from Him who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, and spared him not, the more precious it becomes."

-- The Rev. J. A. Moldstad, Jr.  
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-- This book review was presented to Circuit #9  
Winkel at Victorville, California, on  
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