

HOME and ABROAD

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AFRICA.

(Rev. H. Freund.)

The first convert to Christian that we can definitely point to from among the teeming black-skinned and brown-skinned multitudes of Africa is the treasurer of the queen of Ethiopia. He had come to Jerusalem — a tremendously long journey — “to worship,” as we are told in Acts. Evidently, even in far-away Ethiopia the true God of the Jews had become known and won converts. And this Ethiopian found far more than he had expected. He found the fulfilment of the promises of the Old Testament. In Jerusalem he had not found faith in the Saviour. In the wilderness on the return journey Philip found him, brought him to Christ, and baptized him.

Nearly nineteen hundred years later another dark-skinned son of Africa went on a long journey, not to Jerusalem, but to America. He came from Nigeria, on the opposite side of Africa from Ethiopia. He also had come to the knowledge of the true God, for missionaries had been preaching in his land. But they had strange methods. They would preach and then “leave the rest to the Holy Ghost.” There was no thorough indoctrination. Some of the missionaries baptized children, others refused. There were some schools, but the training of native teachers and preachers and education in general did not receive the attention they should have received. Congregations were formed, but members continued to murder any twins that were born, and most men continued to marry as many wives as they cared to have, or could afford, or were compelled by their heathen system to take.

In spite of the discouragement of their missionary the natives had managed to establish a high school. Later they decided to have one of their young men trained as a native pastor. Again it became evident that the missionary was not in favour. The intention at first was to send him to a seminary in Africa. Then England was selected. But finally it was decided to send him to America. After eighteen months of difficulties Jonathan Udo Ekong sailed for America, as mentioned above, arriving there on June 19, 1928.

In the interval more friction had arisen between the native congregations and their missionary. Finally most of them broke away and formed a separate body. So when Jonathan arrived in America he was not only expected to study and qualify to become a native pastor, but he also carried the plea of his people to any Church which he could interest to come and take charge of this infant native Church.

It was intended that he should enter Howard University, but it was found that he did not have the necessary qualifications. So he first attended a high school. During that time he tried to interest several denominations in the work among his people, but the answer was always, “Impossible!” Then he read in a paper published for American Negroes that our sister

Church in America, the American Synodical Conference, was looking for an opportunity to begin mission work in Africa. He made the acquaintance of the pastor of one of its Negro congregations, and found what he had not actually come to seek, namely, that purity of doctrine is expected by the Lord of His followers. Then he wanted to enter one of our Lutheran seminaries. It took him some time to convince the officials of his earnestness and of the genuineness of his plea for his people. But he had been writing to his people, and they also wrote touching appeals.

Thus it came about that he was accepted as a student, and above all that a commission of three men led by Dr. H. Nau went to Africa to investigate. Their report was very favourable. While we were engaged in our language studies in New Guinea and otherwise preparing to take over the field that was to become ours, Dr. Nau and his wife were sent to Nigeria to establish our American sister Church's mission in Africa. This was in 1936. A year later two more missionaries and their wives and a nurse arrived. Dr. Nau stayed with them for six months longer till they had become acquainted with the needs and methods of the field. Since the teachers and some of the other native leaders could understand English, they could begin work almost at once with the aid of interpreters. After six months Dr. Nau was able to return to his professorship in an American seminary.

Dr. Nau had found sixteen congregations when he came to Nigeria. When he left there were thirty-two. He started in the midst of one clan. The work had spread to six clans before he left. He had produced a catechism and a Bible history, besides many mimeographed lesson helps for the teachers and sermon material for the preachers. And with all this he had emphasized sound doctrine and taken a firm stand against twin murder and polygamy. May God richly bless the work into which He guided our American brethren.

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THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

1. The Holy Spirit never guides contrary to God's Word (Psalm 119: 9-11).
 2. The Spirit of God guides through an enlightened conscience, enlightened by His Word (1 Tim. 1: 5, 19).
 3. The Spirit guides through discretion and sound judgment (Prov. 3: 21).
 4. The Spirit guides through what some call “a concern.” The child of God cannot always say how he knows, but he knows (Acts 23: 11).
 5. The God who gives conviction by the Spirit gives confirmation by circumstances. As we go forward in the will of God He makes a way for us (Rev. 3: 8).
- When these five methods of guidance are combined, it gives us wonderful assurance. But God has varied ways of guiding His children. We must not limit Him.—George Goodman.