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THE LIFE AND CAREER OF GUSTAV SEYFFARTH

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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June 1952

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an effort to gather some of the pertinent facts about the life of Gustav Seyffarth and to present his teachings in the fields of Egyptology, Biblical chronology, and the various other areas in which he worked.

A fair and true presentation is difficult because the sources available are pro-Seyffarth. They were either written by Seyffarth, collected by Seyffarth, or written by believers in Seyffarth. By far the most extensive source material consisted of two large scrapbooks of newspaper and periodical clippings collected by Seyffarth himself and now in the archives of Concordia Historical Institute. These are all from the American period of his life which began in 1856 and extended well into the 1880's. If any pertinent data such as names of periodicals, volume numbers, dates, etc., are missing from the footnotes or are marked with question marks in parentheses, it is because they were missing from the clippings in the scrapbooks.

There is a noticeable lack of information concerning Seyffarth's life in Germany for the period from 1796-1856 because the source material for it was unavailable to the author. Karl Knortz's biography of Seyffarth, however, does contain a number of letters written to his parents while Seyffarth was on his tour of European museums. But this gap in source material, while it may cause a lack of biographical detail, may not too seriously handicap the determining of the

main currents of thought which coursed through Seyffarth's whole literary life. He seems to have been a man who was firmly convinced of certain truths and was continuously writing on them but never developing them after the 1820's. The points he disputed with Champollion were the same in 1880 as in 1823. His theme did not change throughout those years. It may be reasoned that his later teachings, as distilled from his writings of 1856 to 1885, are probably the same as those of the German period of his life.

From the many treatises of his which were read, it seemed that he repeated himself continually, always arriving at a few basic proofs for all types of dispute. The only thing which differs is his point of departure, and this differs directly according to the particular heresy he was trying to refute or to the inscription he was deciphering. His writings may have been multitudinous, but they were also very boring because they all said the same thing.

One work which might have been valuable to an evaluation of Seyffarth was a brochure about him which was written after his death by George Ebers, the famous German Egyptologist. This brochure is Gustav Seyffarth, der erste Professor fuer aegyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde an der Universitaet Leipzig, Sein Leben und der Versuch einer gerechten Wuerdigung Taetigkeit auf dem Gebiete der Aegyptologie.*

*
Dr. Ludwig Fuerbringer, in his Eighty Eventful Years, wrote that he had it among his effects, but a search through his as yet unaccessioned library in Pritzlaff Memorial Library has failed to reveal it. Neither is this brochure in the possession of the Concordia Historical Institute.

Direct quotations from German sources in every case represent the author's translations. The original language of the source may be determined by reference to its title as it appears in the footnotes.

CHAPTER I

HIS LIFE

Gustav Seyffarth was born on July 13, 1796 in the Saxon village of Uebigau near Torgau, where his father was pastor. His parents were strong orthodox Lutherans. At the age of fourteen he was sent to school at St. Afra on one of the scholarships given by the school to the boys of Saxony. Already at this time he was fluent in the Latin and Greek languages. He studied in this very religious atmosphere for five or six years and then attended the University of Leipzig with the intention of studying theology. But his thirst for knowledge was unquenchable and theology was not enough to satisfy him. He wanted to master all the learning of humanity and, therefore, studied energetically in the other faculties of philosophy, philology, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, physics, geology, botany, mineralogy, music, painting and mechanics.¹ These studies were destined to influence his whole later career. After he had received his Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in 1819, he prepared especially for the position of a professor of theology. For four years more he applied himself vigorously, often devoting himself to his work for twelve to fourteen hours each day, a habit he retained for the rest of his life. He specialized

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Karl Knortz, Gustav Seyffarth, eine biographische Skizze, (New York, E. Steiger and Co., 1886), p. 9.

in the field of Oriental languages.

In 1823 he was appointed lecturer at Leipzig. When the promising young philologist, F. A. W. Spohn, died in 1824 at the age of thirty, Seyffarth was appointed to succeed him. Spohn had begun the study of Egyptian writing and literature even before Champollion and had amassed a considerable number of manuscripts and had published many studies on them before his death. Since Seyffarth was the only professor at the university who had studied to any extent in this field, he was entrusted with completing Spohn's unfinished work. Seyffarth's career had been determined.

After he had gone through all of Spohn's material, Seyffarth came to the conclusion that he could not carry out his commission without further study in the museums of Europe. From 1826 to 1828 the university supported him while he toured all the great museums of Europe. However, the support was so small that his parents had to contribute additional funds. Some writers maintain that this lack of support by the university was a reason for the acceptance of the Champollion system of hieroglyphic translation and the rejection of Seyffarth's system of deciphering by continental scholars.²

On this museum tour Seyffarth exhibited again his devotion to his work. There were no holidays for him. He put

²
Heinrich Wuttke, An unnamed essay published in Europa, Chronik der gebildeten Welt, November, 1856, and reprinted in Karl Knortz, Op. cit., p. 93.

in his usual twelve to fourteen hours each day, often in cold and damp museums. This affected his health, and in his letters to his parents the man often cites the fact that he had been forced to spend the day in bed because he had the sniffles or because he could not move his right arm. But, as he phrased it, he would rather be a little uncomfortable than forego the time "conversing with my mummies."³

On this trip Seyffarth discovered a very valuable manuscript in the museum at Turin. It was a papyrus roll in two languages which contained a list of the kings of Egypt, and it was valuable for his chronological studies. However, Seyffarth had much difficulty making the papyrus available for his study because it took him six weeks to put the small fragments together. Each piece was smaller than two by three inches. It is interesting to note that this papyrus offered him one of his first indirect contacts with Champollion, for Champollion had visited the museum two years previously. But already Seyffarth's opinion of Champollion was becoming embittered, for Champollion had examined the box of fragments and had ordered some two-thirds of them consigned to the privy.⁴

It was this tour also which afforded Seyffarth a chance

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Knottz, Op. cit., p. 43.

⁴Gustav Seyffarth, The Literary Life of Gustavus Seyffarth, An Autobiographical Sketch, (New York, E. Steiger & Co., 1886), p. 21.

to make the acquaintance of his famous antagonist. While working in the Vatican Library in July 1826, he saw Champollion for the first time. He met him at a dinner party soon thereafter. His earlier opinion was not changed by the meeting for he found Champollion claiming that he could speak Coptic as well as French.⁵ His feud with Champollion via printer's ink can be dated from this time as Seyffarth soon began to publish dissertations in an effort to show that he, and not Champollion, had first found the true key to the hieroglyphics. Despite this scholastic feud between the two men, at times Seyffarth and Champollion were on good terms personally.⁶ The friendly relationship was not one of long standing, however, for as soon as Seyffarth reached the Louvre in Paris, he found documents which he thought were falsified by Champollion and became bitter.⁷

Seyffarth visited and thoroughly inspected all museums in Germany, Italy, France, England and Holland which contained collections of Egyptian antiquities, and he searched through many private collections of material. When he returned to Leipzig he had a collection of more than ten thousand copies of papyrus fragments.⁸ Most of these he had copied himself,

⁵Knortz, Op. cit., p. 29.

⁶Ibid., p. 31.

⁷Ibid., p. 47.

⁸Karl Knortz, "Ein beruehmter Aegyptolog," Der Deutsche Pionier, Monatschrift fuer Erinnerungen aus dem deutschen Pionier-Leben in den Vereinigten Staaten, V, January 1874, p. 337.

and the rest were copied at his personal expense. His letters home are filled with many observations about life in the areas which he visited and contain frequent references to dinners with people of note, including a dinner with the Duke of Sussex,⁹ brother to the King of England.

Upon his return to Leipzig in 1828 he settled down to almost thirty years of research and lecturing as Professor extraordinarius of Archaeology. Among his pupils during this period were the famed Franz Delitzsch¹⁰ and some of the men who were later influential in the founding and early growth of the Missouri synod.¹¹ He had published his Rudimenta Hieroglyphica in 1826 before his museum tour was completed, and the materials gathered on the tour permitted him to complete his hieroglyphic system and to publish it in the Grammatica Aegyptiaca in 1855.

His immense capacity for work and his interest in the spreading of the Gospel induced him to accept the position of afternoon preacher (Nachmittagsprediger) at the university chapel. It may be that holding this position led to his resignation from the faculty. Seyffarth, in spite of his wide scientific achievements, had the simple faith of a child, as

⁹
Karl Knortz, Gustav Seyffarth, eine biographische Skizze, p. 51.

¹⁰
C. F. Stohlmann, "Polemische Fragen fuer alle Christ-Confessionen" in Der deutschen Kirchenfreund, January, 1856, p. 28.

¹¹
Knortz, Op. cit., p. 13.

Walther described it in the obituary which he wrote after Seyffarth's death.¹² This faith, together with his outspoken attitude, may have made him many enemies at that time because Rationalism was sweeping Germany. Whether he made the enemies by his pulpit defense of Christianity against Rationalism is only a guess, but his biographer states that persecution arose against him because of his beliefs.¹³ He was also an outspoken opponent of Freemasonry and because of this attitude made more enemies. These factors, together with the ridicule which his hieroglyphic system was receiving on the continent, influenced him to resign his professorship in 1854. When his beloved mother died at the age of ninety-four, he felt himself free to leave his native land and seek a new life in North America.

The university wanted his valuable collection of Egyptian articles and studies for its library and offered him a yearly pension of two hundred Thaler if he would allow the collection to remain there. But Seyffarth wanted to retain these results of more than thirty years work and refused the pension. The university granted the pension despite his refusal to part with the collection and continued to pay him two hundred Thaler annually to the day of his death. This pension enabled the Doctor to live somewhat comfortably and independently in the United States.

¹²

Walther, as quoted in Knortz, Op. cit., p. 22.

¹³

Knortz, Op. cit., p. 21.

The date of his departure from Germany is not clearly noted. He left Germany sometime in 1855, and by the fall of 1856 he had been named a professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. It is very clear that he made the acquaintance of Dr. Carl Stohlmann, pastor of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in New York City, who was highly impressed with Seyffarth.¹⁴ Stohlmann did everything he could to make him acquainted and to point out his usefulness as a lecturer to others. Prior to his arrival in St. Louis, Seyffarth delivered several lectures to appreciative New York City audiences. However, as usual, there were those who not impressed by the show of erudition.¹⁵ The reception and evaluation of Seyffarth's speeches and writings is more widely treated in another section of this paper. Some of these lectures were delivered at the invita-

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Stohlmann calls Seyffarth "DER [sic] Archæolog unserer Tage. Ja, DER Hauptmann unter den Alterthumsforschern" in "Neue Verdienste um Archæologie" in Der Lutherische Herold, November 1, 1857.

In the introduction to one of Seyffarth's articles against the Chiliasts Stohlmann shows his complete faith in Seyffarth. "We think the defenders of Millenarianism are not safe in advancing, if they cannot spike the guns of the battery, from which Dr. Seyffarth plays upon them with such tremendous effect. Their advance under such a fire, is that of a retreat.-(Editor of the Lutheran, January 1861." [sic] The Missionary, date and year missing, probably July or August, 1861.

15

"He mixes up the years of different sizes as he would throw cabbage and turnips together and really reached the number of years spoken of by the prophets. I didn't know however, what I should admire more, the wonder of fulfilled prophecy, or the real Christian longsuffering--of the listeners." Review of Seyffarth's lecture of February 27, 1856 as reported in Der Pioneer, New York City (?), March 9, 1856.

tions of the presidents of the University of New York and of Columbia College. After this short stay in New York Seyffarth traveled to St. Louis, and it is possible that he stopped at Capitol University in Columbus, Ohio. It is known that Stohlmann had urged Capitol to hear him. In St. Louis he was enthusiastically received by the public. He was the first German to give scientific lectures in English when he spoke before the Mercantile Library Association on his favorite subject. His series of lectures was better attended each succeeding evening although the number of men increased, and the number of women present decreased. The St. Louis papers were enthusiastic in their evaluations and indicated their hope that there would be another series. Newsmen in St. Louis and New York were impressed with the fact that a German scientist-theologian spoke out in support of the Bible instead of against its authority.^{16, 17} The St. Louis papers did make one mistake in reporting his lectures when they called him the president of Concordia College.¹⁸

After several years of teaching in St. Louis Gustav Seyffarth resigned his position at Concordia Seminary to

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"Die Zweite Vorlesung des Hrn. Professor G. Seyffarth," Saint Louiser Volksblatt, February 27, 1857.

17

"Seyffarth's Chronology, &c., &c.," New York Evangelist, May 29, 1858.

18

"Dr. Seyffarth's First Lecture," St. Louis Leader, November 26, 1856.

return to New York City where the Astor Library offered better facilities for study. St. Louis did not offer enough to interest him at the time, although he was instrumental in the founding of the St. Louis Academy of Science during his short stay.

In New York City he pursued his regular habit of working twelve to fourteen hours every day. He wrote many papers based on the results of his studies in the Astor Library. For several years Seyffarth resided in Dansville, New York, where he and several other men tried to establish a theological seminary. This effort failed financially and because he had invested heavily of his own means in a building, Seyffarth

remained to occupy it.¹⁹ According to his pastor at Immanuel Church, he was interested and active in congregational affairs until the day he died. He was one of the founders of the present Immanuel Lutheran Church in New York City.

It is interesting to note the periodicals in which Seyffarth's writings appeared during his stay in the United States. Although he had connections with the Missouri Synod, Lehre und Wehre and Der Lutheraner contain almost nothing that is written by him, and most of what is written about him either refutes his writings or else seriously doubts their truth. Most of his articles appeared in the Lutheran Herald, Der Lutherische Herald, and other Lutheran periodicals many of which were edited by Stohlmann. What Seyffarth's relation to

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A column in the Dansville Advertiser, October 12, 1871.

the Missouri Synod was at this time is hard to determine from the sources available, but after his death Walther praised him highly as a Christian and called him "one with us in articles of Christian doctrine and faith in heart," even though some articles in Lehre und Wehre made some very caustic remarks about his thinking.²⁰

²⁰H. Baumstark, Dr. Seyffarth und seine Chronologie," Lehre und Wehre, XIV, June 1868, p. 178.

CHAPTER II

HIS RELATIONS WITH THE MISSOURI SYNOD

In 1851 while Reverend Frederick Wyneken was in Europe, he talked with Seyffarth who mentioned the likelihood that he would soon emigrate to the United States.¹ Wyneken thought this possibility unlikely, but in 1856 when the truth of the situation became known, Concordia Seminary immediately sent a call requesting him to serve as professor of "church history, archaeology etc. [sic] disciplines." In the letter accompanying the call George Schieferdecker referred to Seyffarth as the "highly honored countryman and brother in the faith whom some of us knew a long time ago as fatherly friend and teacher."² Seyffarth accepted the call in a letter dated August 21, 1856, and in his reply of September 3 Schieferdecker stated that he wished to thank Seyffarth for offering to serve as professor without pay. But a salary was offered for "as long as the Synod has the means at hand."³

Seyffarth's acceptance was greeted with great joy, for the addition of such a world famous scholar to the faculty

¹ Walther, as quoted in Karl Knortz, Gustav Seyffarth, eine biographische Skizze, (New York, E. Steiger and Co., 1886), p. 22.

² G. Schieferdecker, as quoted in Knortz, Op. cit., p. 16.

³ Ibid.

was a great honor for the Seminary. Early critiques of his writings in Lehre und Wehre regard his writings on chronology as the answer to many unsolved problems and seeming discrepancies in Scripture.⁴ This was soon to change to severe criticism, but the Missouri Synod was engaged in the battle against Humanism and Rationalism at this time, and Seyffarth's works seemed to be just the weapons needed to carry the fight to the enemy.

There is not much more information available on Gustav Seyffarth's activities in St. Louis during this three year period. He is mentioned as living in one of the buildings of the seminary and is even called the "Senior des Collegiums."⁵ Perhaps he thought his prestige and age would cause the synod to elevate him to the presidency of the seminary because an article in the Lutheran Standard for 1856 says "Dr. Seyffarth is on his way to enter upon the presidency of one of our western colleges."⁶ It is possible he confided this possibility or desire to his new friend Stohmann while in New York prior to his departure for St. Louis.

He is mentioned several times in Der Lutheraner as attend-

⁴ "Finally a Christian scholar has succeeded in finding a key to matters which have hitherto been puzzles in Biblical chronology and he has found an unshakable foundation of complete certainty in this field also." A. Hoppe, "Dr. Seyffarth's Berichtungen," Lehre und Wehre, III, p. 303.

⁵ Der Lutheraner, XIV, June 29, 1858, p. 178.

⁶ "Prospectus," Lutheran Standard, June 22, 1856.

ing conferences of the Free Evangelical Lutheran Conference in 1857 and 1858.⁷

But he was kept very busy with his teaching load at the Seminary and had no time left for the pursuit of his favorite studies. He was teaching courses in various fields of theology and in history, mathematics, physics, and general science.⁸ This load and his desire to study in New York led him to resign in the fall of 1859. His resignation was acknowledged by a letter of October 19, 1859.

There was one constructive venture of Synod in which Seyffarth did participate. At the Synodical Convention of 1859 it was resolved to publish some of Luther's works in popular editions designed for the layman. This society was named "Der Amerikanische Lutherverein zur Herausgabe Lutherischer Schriften fuer das Volk." Rev. Theodore J. Brohm was elected editor and Seyffarth publisher and treasurer. In the next issue of Der Lutheraner Seyffarth had an article which stated that it was the purpose of the society to bring the truth of Christianity and the strength of the Lutheran church into the home. He wrote, "How different it would look today in the Lutheran Church if Luther's popular writings had

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Der Lutheraner, XIV, January 12, 1858, p. 81.
Der Lutheraner, XV, September 21, 1858, p. 18.

8

Karl Knortz, "Ein beruehmter Aegyptolog," Der Deutsche Pionier, Monatschrift fuer Erinnerungen aus dem deutschen Pionier-Leben in den Vereinigten Staaten, V, January 1874, p. 338.

remained in the hands of the Christian people."⁹ The conditions of membership were outlined. The system was very similar to present day book clubs. Profits from the publication of one volume were to be used for the publication of the next volume, and as often as possible subscribers were to receive free volumes. In succeeding issues Seyffarth deplored the fact that only 1667 subscriptions were received for the first volume when there were millions of Lutherans in the United States.¹⁰ In the next issue he seemed happier because the number had risen to 2914, and he announced that the second volume was almost ready. Another announcement in this issue urged members to communicate in the future with A. Heinicke because he (Seyffarth) "will be absent from here for an extended period of time."¹¹

Seyffarth left St. Louis in 1859 when the slavery problem in America was becoming acute. Seyffarth differed on the slavery question with Walther, mainly because he viewed the problem from the practical angle, while Walther was looking at the theoretical part of the problem. The two disputed vigorously for several years in the various periodicals to which they had access. Seyffarth even stressed that he alone

⁹ Gustav Seyffarth, "Der Amerikanische Lutherverein zur Herausgabe Lutherischer Schriften fuer das Volk," Der Lutheraner, XV, May 31, 1859, pp. 161-163.

¹⁰ Ibid., XVI, pp. 38-39.

¹¹ Ibid., XVI, p. 71.

of all the enemies of the Missouri Synod dared to oppose Walther on this problem. Not even Grabau or the Methodists dared to do so.¹²

It is well known that Dr. Walther's sympathies were leaning toward the South during the Civil War. His articles in Lehre und Wehre for the period show him regarding slavery as an institution not condemned in the Bible, and while not directly supported, at least recognized and condoned as an existing reality. He argued the moral law of the Old Testament recognizes slavery to the extent that it makes regulations concerning it and its pursuance in the course of Israelite life. Even in the New Testament Christ tells parables concerning slaves, and Paul, who certainly was not ignorant of the situation, does not condemn it as one of the prevailing evils of the age.

Walther had left Europe because of the widening influence of Humanism and Rationalism and their poisonous effects on Christianity and revealed truth. His whole life was dedicated to refuting this trend. In efforts to abolish slavery in the United States he saw another manifestation of this Humanism; it appeared to be a desirable thing, but in reality, it was man trying to build a better world by human strength alone. It was from this angle that he attacked the Abolitionist movement.¹³ According to him, Abolitionism is "ein Kind des Unglaubens."

¹²

Lehre und Wehre, X, p. 57.

¹³

Ibid., p. 56.

Biblically he showed that slavery was condoned throughout Biblical times from the Exodus to Paul; even the abuses, though great, were not sufficient to make the Bible condemn the institution. "Misuse does not nullify the correct use." (Der Misbrauch hebt den rechten Gebrauch nicht auf), he wrote.¹⁴ His suggestion to fight the existing evil was that Christians should concern themselves with the abuses but still allow the institution. Patience, peace, and charity instead of rebellion, war, and bloodshed, should be applied in order to bring the master as well as the slave into a correct relationship of faith, love and humility.

Walther's main concern was to keep Lutheran doctrine pure, and, in doing this, he felt he must fight against work-righteousness of all kinds. He was concerned with slavery per se (an sich) and not with the abuses. Although his sympathies seem to have been pro-South, in Lehre und Wehre for February 1863 he stated that Christians should be subject to the powers that be and obey their government which wanted to abolish slavery as a political measure.¹⁵ It is interesting to note that Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. Walther was being consistent with Lutheran teaching in obeying the government in a matter which was not directly contrary to Scripture. This should show

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Ibid., IX, p. 38.

15

Ibid., p. 33.

that Walther was not a rebel, nor one to countenance rebellion, nor an advocate of slavery. It indicates, rather, that he was mainly concerned with preserving the doctrine of free salvation from the influences of humanism and work-righteousness.

But Seyffarth, as in other instances, read the words but missed their spirit. He called Walther a Ketzer and arch fiend of the Christian religion, "even though he may call out 'Lord, Lord,' periodically."¹⁶ Seyffarth admitted that certain forms of slavery did exist in the Biblical period, but he went to great lengths to show that American slavery was basically different and infinitely more horrible in that it was based on kidnapping. Therefore, he believed it was an institution which should be done away with as anti-Christian.¹⁷ Anyone who can say that slavery is a divine institution he automatically relegated to the realm of the unchristian, inhuman and heretical.¹⁸ He even carried his misinterpretation of Walther and the Missouri Synod so far as to accuse them of the belief that slavery should be spread throughout the world by methods similar to those used to spread the Gospel.¹⁹

¹⁶Prof. Seyffarth, "Ist die Erhaltung und Verbreitung der gegenwaertigen Negersklaverei eine Suende oder nicht?" Der Lutherische Herold, XIII, December 1, 1863, p. 114, hereafter referred to as "Negersklaverei."

¹⁷G. Seyffarth, "African Slavery," The Lutheran and Missionary, October 1863 (?), hereafter noted as "African Slavery."

¹⁸Prof. Seyffarth, "Negersklaverei," Op.cit., p. 114.

¹⁹

Ibid., p. 113.

Seyffarth's arguments were all predicated on the form of slavery which existed in the United States while Walther was concerned with slavery in the abstract sense. At times Seyffarth's terminology for anyone who dared to say slavery per se is all right was scorching.

Seyffarth's main argument against slavery as it existed in the southern States was that it was based on kidnapping.²⁰ Scripturally that is against Deut. 24:7, which reads, "He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." Seyffarth demonstrated extensively the kidnapping involved in slavery. He made much of the first slaves brought to America by Las Casas in 1505 and the similar nature of slave expeditions after that time. Slaves are not prisoners of war anymore as in Biblical times, he claimed, nor are they servants who voluntarily give themselves up to servitude because of debt; but they are men taken by force and stealth and brought many miles under intolerable conditions to this country. He cited slave ships which carried seven or eight slaves per ton and the fact that British Navy regulations allowed only one man per ton. Slave traders, he stated, still made a profit of several hundred per cent even though they lost half their human cargo in transit. He cited the instance of one trader who drowned more than half his cargo in order to lighten the load during a chase and still turned a handsome profit at the sale of the

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G. Seyffarth, "African slavery," Op. cit.

remainder.

Other Biblical precepts he claimed were violated were that slaves should have equal rights and privileges in the church; southern States, however, prohibited by law even the reading of the Bible for slaves.²¹ Marriages were often forcibly broken up in direct contradiction to the Biblical admonition that man should not sunder what God had joined. Exodus 21:20, commands that killers of slaves should be killed, yet masters of slaves killed with impunity. The matter of masters who harmed their female slaves without being held responsible or being compelled to make restitution he severely censured. Certainly the New Testament teaches that even a servant or slave is to be treated as a brother and fellow redeemed even though his station in life is not so elevated as that of his master. All these arguments, Seyffarth believed, add up to the fact that the Negro slaves were being treated more as animals than as humans, and, therefore, American slavery could not be called the same institution which the Biblical writers discussed.

In an open letter to the members of the Missouri Synod Seyffarth, for the sake of argument, agreed with Dr. Walther that the abuses of slavery were the main concern of Christians and then proceeded to outline thirteen points which should be followed in order to remove these abuses.²² All

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Ibid.

²² Prof. Seyffarth, "Negersklaverei," p. 114.

but the first one deal with definite abuses of the treatment of the slaves and might be called a bill of rights for slaves. For instance murderers of slaves should be punished, violators of Negro women should be held responsible in the same way as among the Whites. In the first point Seyffarth suggested the slaves be freed, and, if desired, sent back to Africa at the government's expense. Seyffarth, too, seems to have been influenced by the Emancipation Proclamation.

While Walther preached to convince the slave holders that holding humans in bondage was sinful and urged them to turn to the Gospel for forgiveness, Seyffarth called the abuses of slavery ordinary crimes and wanted only to see laws passed giving the slaves, as human beings of a different color, equal rights under the existing laws. Seyffarth never met the situation on the same abstract level which Walther did, and, therefore, the two did not effectively refute each other's arguments.

When Lehre and Mehre quoted many excerpts from Luther and Melanchthon in defense of slavery as an institution, Seyffarth countered with the proposition that the slavery of the sixteenth century was in no way comparable with nineteenth century America.²³ Certainly Luther and Melanchthon did not declare kidnapping, forcible separation of husband and wife, and the enforced withholding of ecclesiastical privileges to be divine institutions.

Seyffarth took exception to Walther exegetically too. The Old Testament and New Testament words "ebed" and "deulos" do not mean slaves in the American sense of the word. The Biblical concept is that of a wage earner or one who through debt or war has become a servant, but still one with more rights and privileges than the American slaves had. Seyffarth pointed out that the concept of the Hebrew word sakhir is connected with the German idea Lohn, and, therefore, concluded the slave worked with an agreement concerning time and money in mind. Seyffarth cited Jacob's service to Laban as a form of Biblical slavery, which certainly was not American slavery. He also cited that case of the unjust steward who was a deulos, but who still had enough power to throw his fellow servant into jail. According to him the Old Testament and New Testament slavery was a far better condition than that existing in the southern States. The Old and New Testaments make no distinction between slaves and hired servants (Dienstboten).

The last argument of Seyffarth is the only one which seems to apply to Walther's position and to meet it on the same theoretical basis and would seem to be worthy of much consideration. However, Seyffarth's contention that American Slavery was different in the extent and nature of the abuses should be examined in the light of abuses of other forms of slavery existing in Biblical times such as the galleys and some of the mass deportations of the ancients.

Walther and Seyffarth seem to have been talking about two different things. Surely Walther did not condone the abuses of slavery, and yet Seyffarth condemned him as one who supported rebellion, murder, adultery and other injustices. Walther supported an ideal situation which did not exist, a situation where master loved slave and provided conscientiously for him, and in return slave loved master and worked devotedly for him.

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Seyffarth's suggested solution is interesting. He thought back to the land reforms of Europe and thought it possible to give each slave a small plot of land and his freedom to work for himself. In this way each former slave would be independent and able to lead his own life. Seyffarth, too, was more of an idealist than he realized.

Although Seyffarth disputed vehemently with men of the Missouri Synod on many points, such as his chronology and slavery, he remained in contact with the Lutheran Church and was instrumental in the first meetings of the congregation which today is Immanuel Lutheran Church on Eighty-eighth Street in New York City. The following account is compiled from information in the fiftieth anniversary booklet of the congregation which was published in 1915.

Evidently Seyffarth was living in the northern section of New York City, known as Yorkville, but he attended the Trinity Church at Ninth Street and Avenue B in the southern

section. He had been conscious that the Yorkville section was composed predominantly of German speaking people with a large number of Lutherans among them, but the community boasted no Lutheran church.

By coincidence an opportunity arose to begin Lutheran services in the area. A certain Lutheran pastor, C. J. Renz, from Strattonport (College Point, L. I., New York) came into the city in the first week of the year 1863 to deliver a letter to Seyffarth. He had received the letter in Leipzig, Germany. Seyffarth took the letter and began to show his guest around his house which was richly furnished with archaeological treasures and oddities. Renz marvelled at them and could not understand them and probably became bored with them and sought to turn the conversation to other things.

They talked of the church situation in New York City, and Seyffarth lamented the fact there was no Lutheran church in an area where one should be thriving. Renz saw the need too and offered his services as preacher if Seyffarth would obtain the consent of his own pastor on B. Street. Seyffarth jumped at the chance, and in the same meeting they set the date for the first service as January 25, 1863, at 10 A. M. Seyffarth rented the courthouse at 86th Street and Fourth Avenue, printed leaflets to advertise the service, and rounded up hymnals for the service. Several hundred people attended the first service.

After the service the congregation remained, and Pastor Renz informed them that he had preached at the invitation of

Seyffarth, and that if they wanted more services they should so indicate. Their decision was unanimous to continue the services, and immediately they held their first congregational meeting to decide on particulars. Seyffarth was elected secretary of the meeting and several others. In fact, it seems he was considered the permanent secretary during those first months.

Already at their first meeting on January 25 the group decided to establish a Lutheran Church and school in their area. Minutes of the February first meeting, as recorded by Seyffarth, reveal strife over which hymn book should be used in the congregation, that of the New York ministerium or the newer Missouri Book. The Missouri book was chosen.

On February 11 the founding members gathered to draw up a congregational constitution which Seyffarth, as secretary, wrote.

At the meeting of March 6 it was decided to call a pastor because now a place had been found where the "Bird could build his house, and the swallows could build their nests," (Psalm 84), and likewise they needed a pastor to further the spiritual and outer growth of the congregation. Seyffarth, still as secretary, drew up the call and along with four others signed it on March 15th. The call was sent to Pastor Renz who accepted and preached his first sermon as pastor on May 10, 1863. The congregation and Seyffarth insisted that the sermon be published in five hundred copies and sold for twenty-five cents each to make an addition to the congregational funds. Seyffarth knew from past experience the power of the press.

The congregation grew rapidly in membership and financial strength, but no further direct mention is made of Seyffarth. For that matter, there is no direct mention made of any other individual in the congregation besides the various pastors who served there in succeeding years.

Seyffarth must have been a devoted member of the congregation to the end of his life. His obituary, which appeared in the Lutheraner January 1, 1886, was written by his pastor and stated that Seyffarth seldom was missing from his usual seat in church, and that whenever he did have to miss services for good reasons, he excused himself to the pastor after the next service. He retained an active interest in the expansion of the church. He was buried from the church and his body was laid to rest in the cemetery of the church he had formerly attended, Trinity Congregation.

CHAPTER III

HIS WRITINGS

Seyffarth was a prolific writer in many fields. He even left drawings showing the possibility of constructing an airship and also composed a Rhine song.¹ But most of his writings were on one general theme and were written in one style. He was fluent, often very lucid and interesting, and frequently bitter and sarcastic. His studies in the sciences together with his theological studies gave him a peculiar combination of knowledge which might have been put to good use by a church confessing and defending the oft attacked truths of inspiration, redemption, and sin. Seyffarth lived in the age of Rationalism and wished to defend his Christian faith against the attacks which were undermining and defeating it in the hearts of many people. To this defense he devoted all his energies, efforts and talents, all of which were unusually great. As one writer in Lehre und Wehre says, he studied the driest and most boring subjects which only a few scholars could master, and "He did it solely for the glory of God and in defense of the Word of God and for the salvation of his brethren."²

¹ Karl Knortz, Gustav Seyffarth, eine biographische Skizze, (New York, E. Steiger & Co., 1886), p. 18.

² Lehre und Wehre, III, p. 307.

He wrote many purely technical works on the decipherment of certain inscriptions and on the use of astronomical configurations and computations, but always he returned to his old theme --that the discoveries of science in the nineteenth century confirm rather than confute the teachings of Christ and the Bible. Relatively speaking, he very rarely used the exegetical or dogmatic approaches to a problem. Rather he favored stating a multitude of scientific facts and discoveries and syntheses together with quotations from ancient writings in an effort to prove that what the Scripture says is rationally true and not just a matter of faith. One can readily recognize the problem here. Many things of theology are only matters of faith, and no one expects them to be anything else. To prove them rationally is dangerous and often leads to more ridicule instead of less. But Seyffarth thought he could meet the rationalists on their own ground and defeat them. In his own mind he did so. However, there were those who disagreed with him. Their opinions will be discussed in a later section.

One of his main contributions to the defense of Christianity was his new chronology. However, in many ways he contradicted himself as to the value of this new system. Once he stated it is a matter of secondary importance,³ and another time that is a matter of primary importance, and no one can⁴ be a Christian if he does not believe in the new chronology.

³G. Seyffarth, Die Wahre Zeitrechnung des Alten Testaments, nebst einer Zeittafel zum Neuen Testamente, (H. Niedner, St. Louis, Mo., 1857), p. 25.

⁴Ibid., p. 7.

The basic principles of Seyffarth's new chronology were the following. According to Seyffarth it is definitely established through the Old Testament Prophets that Christ is to come in the six-thousandth year after Creation. This is both Biblical and traditional. According to the Bible there were six days of Creation, and each day is with the Lord as a thousand years, (Ps. 90:4). The ancients have the legend that the world shall last for six ages of a thousand years each and at that time a great event would take place. In Seyffarth's reasoning Daniel took this as his basis for the prediction of the birth of Christ.⁵

Another ancient tradition is that the total age of the world is to be 12,000 years. Habbakuk 3:2, used this to tell the Israelites when the Messiah would come in the words "Receive thy work in the midst of the years." By using this phrasing Habbakuk does not confirm the legend of the twelve thousand years, but he only makes clear to the people when Christ shall come by using terminology familiar to them.⁶

Seyffarth was so completely convinced that Christ's birth must definitely happen in the six-thousandth year of the world that he maintained that if the chronology of the Masoretic text is taken as true, many weak Christians could be led into serious doubt as to whether the Christ was really the Messiah

5

Ibid., p. 31.

6

Ibid., pp. 34, 35.

promised by the Prophets, for the Masoretic text has only four thousand years between Adam and Christ.

Therefore he wrote against Grabau in the introduction to Die Wahre Zeitrechnung severely censuring him for maintaining that the Masoretic text is completely free from error and for rejecting the Septuagint because it is full of errors. Seyffarth admitted that the question is purely academic when strong Christians are involved, but that the situation is dangerous for weak Christians, Jews and unbelievers.⁷ How, he wondered, can Grabau reject the Septuagint when it contains the true chronology which truthfully shows Christ as coming after six thousand years?

Seyffarth spoke strongly for the validity of the chronology of the Septuagint.⁸ It contains errors, he admitted, but in chronology it is correct. Furthermore, he argued, Christ used it and during the three hundred years between its translation in 280 B. C. and the coming of Christ no one criticized its chronology although there were many scholars competent enough to do so.⁹ However, it contained allowance for the lapse of two thousand years more of time between Adam and Christ than does the Masoretic text.

Seyffarth explained that here the discrepancy between the Septuagint and the Masoretic text is not by accident but

⁷
Ibid., p. 25.

⁸
Ibid., p. 68.

⁹
Ibid., p. 63.

by design. The Jews did not want to accept Christ as the Messiah spoken of in the Old Testament, and if they could shorten the time between Adam and Christ in the Old Testament account, they figured the people would be convinced that Christ was not the Messiah because he had come two thousand years before the prophecies said he should. Opportunity for this falsification occurred right after the destruction of Jerusalem.¹⁰ Almost every synagog with a Jewish Bible in it was destroyed and more than two million Jews were killed. That was the time to start over. It is Seyffarth's contention that a Jew by the name of Akibah¹¹ purposely changed the Hebrew text in some fifteen places and shortened the Old Testament time span by two thousand years. Now that the Jews had falsified the Masoretic text, all that remained was to throw doubt on the Septuagint, and this would cause grave doubts of the deity and Messianic character of Christ.

A typical change in the Masoretic text, he cited, is the one in I Kings 6:1, where a slight change in one letter could change the reading from eight hundred eighty years to four hundred forty years.¹² Several such minor errors put together could easily add up to a large enough discrepancy for the purposes of the Jews.

¹⁰
Ibid., p. 57.

¹¹
Ibid., p. 22.

¹²
Ibid., p. 50.

But Seyffarth found a way to prove the validity of the six thousand year chronology of the Septuagint and thus show Christ as the Messiah. Expeditions and excavations in the lands of the ancients turned up many manuscripts with notations of astronomical observations,¹³ i.e. the positions of the planets and constellations in the skies at the time of certain great events.¹⁴ Although the ancients could not figure them accurately, modern astronomy with better instruments and more exact knowledge could figure the location of constellations at any time for thousands of years past or future, and thus date even the creation of the world with definite accuracy.¹⁵

Seyffarth explained this as follows: The ancients speak of four ages of the world (Weltalter)--the first beginning on the day of Creation. They observed that on the spring equinox the sun would cover a certain star, but that approximately one hundred years later on the same equinox the star would be one degree to the east of the sun. Thus, in three

13

"The ancients were in the habit of observing the places of the planets on the cardinal days, and recording them in their temple annals." Prof. Gust. Seyffarth, "Planetary Configurations on Cyprian Antiquities," Transactions of the St. Louis Academy of Science, IV, No. 3.

14

G. Seyffarth, Die Wahre Zeitrechnung, p. 5.

15

"The classic eclipses...are chronologically fixed by mathematical certainties, and the classic authors were, in nearly all instances, eye-witnesses;" from a letter dated New York City, December 20, 1876, by Gustav Seyffarth to Nathaniel Holmes, Corresponding Secretary of the St. Louis Academy of Science, in "Corrections of the Present Theory of the Moon's Motions, according to the Classic Eclipses," Transactions of the St. Louis Academy of Science, May 20, 1877.

thousand years the stars would move thirty degrees through the heavens, that is, one whole sign of the zodiac. Modern instruments show that in reality the sun moves one degree to the east in seventy-two years, or slightly less. Thus, in order for the sun to move thirty-degrees, 2146 years (a little less than 72×30) would be necessary. According to the ancients Uranus ruled the first age, then Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars rules the fourth, in which age we are living. Figuring the position of the heavens today, it can be seen that this age began in 568 A.D. and then figuring back three full periods before that we arrive at the year 5871 B. C. $\left[(3 \times 2146) - 568 \right]$ ¹⁶ the year of the beginning of the first age of the world. This is almost six thousand years before Christ and, thus, in all likelihood, the day of Creation. Therefore, he argued, it follows that if there were, in reality, almost six thousand years between Adam and the man, Christ, Christ stands a good chance of being the Messiah spoken of in the Prophets.

An old Rabbinic commentary on Numbers 24:17, says there was a planetary conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter three years before the birth of Moses.¹⁷ According to Kepler, these conjunctions can repeat themselves every eight hundred years. Computed mathematically, it can be shown that such a conjunction occurred in 1951 B. C. Three years after that should be

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G. Seyffarth, Die Wahre Zeitrechnung, p. 48.

¹⁷

Ibid., p. 54.

1948 B. C. and the birthdate of Moses. Since Moses was eighty years old at the time of the Exodus, 1868 would be the date of the Exodus instead of a date in the fifteenth century B. C. This in turn, would prove that I Kings 6:1, should read eight hundred eighty years since the Exodus, not four hundred forty. Again, in turn, this would allow time for all the judges to rule the periods mentioned in the book of Judges, and yet not have any of them ruling concurrently or overlapping.¹⁸

He wrote many other examples and proofs that six thousand years did elapse between Adam and Christ; thus, both Christ and the Septuagint are what they claim to be.

After all this complicated proof, Seyffarth stated on the last page,

The question of whether Christ came into the world 4000 or 6000 years after Adam is of no great importance, and even if the Old and New Testaments did not contain references to a single item of chronology, they would still remain the true Word of God to the end of the world...From that however, you cannot decide to replace the Hebrew text with the Septuagint and take Luther's Bible away. Both texts agree word for word, except for minor details, both contain the untainted word of God as far as it pertains to our salvation.¹⁹

On these general principles of astronomical chronology Seyffarth built up a whole system whereby he could figure out almost to the day and hour the date of any occurrence in world history. He maintained that Petavius, the seventeenth

¹⁸

Lehre und Wehre, II, p. 114.

¹⁹

G. Seyffarth, Op. cit., p. 69.

century historian who established many basic dates by the use of the Ptolemaic system, was wrong often by one to three years. Petavius' errors came because Ptolemy was not an eyewitness of the eclipses which he recorded, but the eclipses of the ancients are more accurate because they are based on eyewitness

accounts.²⁰ Therefore, Seyffarth concluded his own astronomical tables were more accurate because he based them on the ancient records. According to Seyffarth, the accepted historical chronology is incorrect and should be revised, e.g. Rome was not founded in 753 B. C. but in 752 B. C.

Seyffarth's chief point of contention with the world throughout most of his life, from 1821 until he died in 1885, was that he, not Champollion, had discovered the key to the hieroglyphics; but the world accepted Champollion as the discoverer. The dispute centered around some very fundamental concepts of philology and not just around the actual mechanics of translation. Champollion was a child of his times and believed the evolution of language from simple pictures to the alphabet and a more fluid syllabic construction of words and

sentences.²¹ On the other hand, Seyffarth, as a believing Christian, contended that syllabic writing existed before the Flood, and Noah, as the only survivor from those antediluvian

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Prof. G. Seyffarth, "Corrections of the Present Theory of the Moon's Motions, according to the Classic Eclipses," Transactions of the St. Louis Academy of Science, May 20, 1877.

21

Prof. Gust. Seyffarth, "The Hieroglyphic Tablet of Pompeium [sic] Grammatically Translated and Commented On," Transactions of the St. Louis Academy of Science, IV, p. 278.

days, perpetuated the ancient and original alphabet. He claimed it is folly to think that human beings could exist for 2,424 years before the Flood without being able to express themselves in some form of written alphabet.²² Thus, Seyffarth held that the hieroglyphs are another form in the development of alphabetic and syllabic writing which had already existed before the Egyptians. Proceeding from these two different assumptions, the two men developed differing systems because of their different methods of approach.

Since Seyffarth placed so much emphasis on Hebrew as the original language of man, something must be said about his proof for this contention. As is typical of many of his arguments he started with statements of very ancient writers who knew of pre-existing alphabets. For instance, Pliny speaks of the eternal use of letters (aeternus litterarum usus) and the Vedas and Avesta speak of sacred books which existed before the Flood.²³ Cadmus, who is supposed to have invented the alphabet, he identified as Noah.

Noah's alphabet was a representation of the signs of the zodiac.²⁴ Myths of the Greeks and Chinese tell of the survivor of the Flood as killing the dragon of the heavens and deliver-

²² Gustav Seyffarth, The Literary Life of Gustavus Seyffarth, (New York, E. Steiger & Co., 1886), p. 53.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

ing letters to the human race.

Pliny writes that the Egyptian alphabet consisted of twenty-five letters. This alphabet is supposed to date back to the year 666 after the Deluge. Therefore, Seyffarth maintained, the Noachian alphabet must have consisted of twenty-five letters also. Then in a table, Seyffarth showed the similarity between several letters of the hieroglyphics and letters of the Phoenician (Hebrew) alphabet.²⁵ Another of his strong arguments was the great similarity in alphabets both as to number of letters, order and pronunciation. The number of letters was set at twenty-five by forming two letters for each of the twelve signs of the zodiac and one additional letter. The seven Hebrew vowels were representations of the seven known planets.²⁶ The order of the consonants was determined by a sentence supposedly composed by Noah after he left the ark. This sentence consisted of twelve words of two consonants each, each word representing one sign of the zodiac. The order of the consonants in this sentence was accepted as the order of the letters in the alphabet.²⁷ (See Appendix B for copy of this sentence). These letters and the Hebrew words derived from them are the basis of all languages since that time. In 686 after the Flood when Menes left Chaldea to

²⁵
Ibid., p. 55.

²⁶
Ibid., p. 56.

²⁷
Ibid., p. 59.

settle in Egypt, he took this language with him. This explains the Hebrew basis for the ancient Coptic language, of which nearly one-third consists of pure and complete Hebrew words. 28

This theory also explains the basis for Seyffarth's key to the translation of hieroglyphics.

These are the principles for translating hieroglyphics according to Seyffarth:

1. The language expressed in Egyptian texts is the sacred dialect, i.e., the ancient Coptic, differing from the modern Coptic as the ancient Greek differs from the modern, and being more nearly related to the primitive language, the Hebrew, than the modern Coptic. This principle excludes that of the Jesuit, Kircher, according to which the hieroglyphic language was ideal; it further excludes that of Champollion, according to which one-half of every inscription signifies ideal conceptions, the other half modern Coptic words; likewise, that of Young, according to whom all the hieroglyphic figures, except those of the proper names, are also symbolic.
2. The leading principle is that each hieroglyphic figure expresses the consonants contained in its name.
3. In many other hieroglyphic groups each figure expresses the first sound of its syllabic power, consequently that with which the name of the hieroglyph begins, as is the case in the Hebrew.
4. The syllabic hieroglyphs, in order to distinguish them from the alphabetic ones, are commonly determined by the figure of a vowel, like the dagesh forte of the Hebrew, or by subsequent figures expressing alphabetically what the preceding one syllabically says.
5. A number of Egyptian images, as the case is in all languages, bore different names; therefore, they expressed both syllables differing in letters from their original names, particularly on later monuments.

6. The alphabetic groups are commonly followed by a determinative for the purpose of fixing their pronunciation and signification, being in consequence of the omitted vowels, sometimes ambiguous, like many Hebrew words.

7. No hieroglyphic figure, particularly no determinative, is to be taken for a symbolic sign, expressing either mimetically, or tropically, or enigmatically, a conception or idea. Even those figures which are most fit for expressing symbolically a word, express in other connections the elements of the spoken language, e.g., the crescent.

8. The names of all the six hundred hieroglyphic figures of the ancient Egyptians, upon which depend both their syllabic and alphabetic pronunciations, were first explained in my Lithographic plates, printed in 1845, and appended to my Grammatica Aegyptiaca. 29

He described further the source of his system by saying:

The way by which I arrived at that system was as follows: I compared at first a great many different copies of the same sacred Egyptian records, word for word, the one with the other, and then tried to decipher, not single groups, as Champollion did, but the whole inscription of Rosetta, and other entire texts. Afterwards, I was so happy as to discover Hermapion's Obelisk and five other bilingual inscriptions; by which I succeeded in determining the true names and syllabic values of nearly all hieroglyphic characters. As regards the different copies of the same Egyptian texts, they put very frequently two or three letters for a syllabic sign, expressing those same letters, e.g., kr for the sparrow-hawk; and thus I discovered a great many syllabic hieroglyphs, and determined their syllabic values. It is absurd to deny that the different copies of the "Tottenbuch" are useful in this respect. 30

29

G. Seyffarth, "A Remarkable Papyrus Scroll, written in the Hieratic Character about 1050 B.C. illustrated by G. Seyffarth," Transactions of the Academy of Science of St. Louis, I., pp. 547-549.

30

Ibid., p. 550.

The basis of Champollion's system of translating hieroglyphics is explained by Seyffarth as follows:

1. The language of the hieroglyphic inscriptions is partly the Coptic, spoken 3,000 years after Menes, and preserved in the Coptic works of the second and following centuries A. C., and taught in our Coptic grammars and dictionaries.
2. One half of every hieroglyphic inscription consists of symbolic figures explicable to everybody's fancy; the other half of mere letters, like all other alphabets.
3. The phonetic hieroglyphs express but one consonant or vowel, viz., that by which the name of the hieroglyphic figure begins, like the Hebrew letters.
4. No hieroglyphic figure expresses a syllable or two or three consonants.
5. Many hieroglyphic figures are to be taken in one place for ideographic i.e., figurative, or tropical, or enigmatic signs; in the other, simply for letters, acrophonetically.
6. All inscriptions contain a mass of abbreviated words.
7. Commonly each group is followed by a determinative, a figure signifying symbolically to what class of things the preceding word or group belonged.
8. Of the six hundred hieroglyphic figures of the ancient Egyptians, the alphabetic value of 252 is determined in Champollion's works; therefore, about four hundred may have belonged to the symbolic dictionary of the ancient Egyptians.

All these rules, constituting Champollion's system are based, not upon the translation of the entire inscription of Rosetta, or other whole texts, but upon a number of royal names and single words, which, being separated from the context, are susceptible, according to Champollion's system, of a hundred different translations, as his Grammar and Dictionary demonstrate. It is a great misfortune for Egyptian Philology that Champollion published his system before trying to translate and explain grammatically whole Egyptian texts. Had he done so, he never would have published such a system, and prevented

the progress of that science. 31

Seyffarth quotes a number of proofs from the opposition's writings to show that his system is the correct one.

In 1829, in a confidential moment, Champollion said to me, "we need another Rosetta stone, to enable us to translate whole Egyptian texts."; although he ought to have said—According to my system, it is impossible to translate whole Egyptian texts. At least, this open confession demonstrates that Champollion himself was somewhat more truth-loving than his advocates. 32

Further, Champollion's successor at Paris, M. de Rouge, says in his explanation of the "Inscription sur le tombeau d'Ames, Paris, 1851:" 'It would have been impossible to translate this inscription according to Champollion's system, in the condition in which he left it;' that is to say, the 'impossibility' was surmounted by the aid of my syllabic principle and alphabet, of which he had a copy in his hand, as we shall see hereafter. 33

Seyffarth's dispute with the Champollionists centered for most part on two points: 1) that Champollion's original system was false and of no use because with it only a very small percentage of words out of any inscription could be translated, and those with no consistency, and no extensive and coherent translation of many longer passages could be made. 2) Seyffarth's system, published later than Champollion's, was better and more useful, as was his dictionary of hieroglyphic expressions. This was incorporated into Champollion's system by his followers

31

Ibid., p. 540.

32

Ibid., p. 542.

33

Ibid., p. 545.

and successors without giving the credit to Seyffarth. Seyffarth called this plagiarism.³⁴

According to Seyffarth, it is basically his system which is used and accepted, although Champollion gets the credit for it. Again, the argument, in the final analysis, is not over which system is correct, but it is over who originally discovered the hieroglyphic key.

Seyffarth says that about 1810 Champollion had an idea that hieroglyphics probably expressed words syllabically, but precedence with the idea does not mean discovery of the system. As an example, he cites the fact that Herodotus already dreamed of a new continent but still credit is given to Columbus for the discovery of America, even though he did it centuries after the idea of a new continent was expressed.³⁵

Now in 1845, Mr. Lepsius received a copy of my printed syllabic alphabet and in 1848 he published his Egyptian Chronology, particularly the names of the Astronomical Decani, syllabically expressed, on five different monuments, which were inexplicable according to Champollion's system. In explaining them, however, Mr. Lepsius applied my 'key' first published in 1826, and confirmed in 1833, 1840, 1843, 1844, 1846, and 1847, according to which each of the six hundred hieroglyphs expresses, in the first place, the consonants contained in its name; moreover, he assigned there to 18 hieroglyphic figures the very same syllabic values which he had found in my printed Alphabet, without mentioning its source. I ask the reader, has Mr. Lepsius, indeed, deserted Champollion's standard, and

34

Ibid., p. 566.

35

Ibid., p. 557.

adopted my 'key' and 'dishonestly stolen' my property, or not? 36

He accused Brugsch and de Rouge of the same thing in the same period and on the same and next page of this article.

Seyffarth's opinion of Champollion is unmistakable in the following excerpt from a letter written to his parents and dated at Paris, March 1, 1828:

Daily I find new inscription which Champollion has falsified or at least made a mistake in copying. Right now I have reference to a mummy inscription with a Greek translation in the library. Everything which does not agree with his system he has left out and all this serves to confirm my system. In this way Champollion has already prepared his downfall himself, because I cannot keep quiet about this. 37

In other ways Seyffarth tried to show that Champollion's system was inconsistent. He compared translations of the Tanis stone by Lepsius and Reinisch, two Champollionists, and showed their great variance. His argument: two men using the same system made differing translations—can the system be valid then? 38

In support of his own system he showed the difference in translation of the same manuscript according to his and Champollion's systems. Seyffarth's system gives a translation of this identical manuscript which formulates a coherent

36

Ibid., p. 561.

37

Karl Knortz, Op. cit., p. 47.

38

Prof. Gust. Seyffarth, "The Hieroglyphic Tablet of Pompeium sic Grammatically Translated and Commented on," p. 285.

statement. Again he gives the reason for Champollion's failure his neglect of the Hebrew roots of words and then gives a whole list of hieroglyphs from a Pompeian tablet which definitely have their roots in Hebrew.

The basic difference in the systems was summed up by Dr. Heinrich Wuttke, evidently a supporter of Seyffarth, in a speech given in Leipzig in 1856. He said,

Champollion maintained one meaning for a complete hieroglyphic figure and Seyffarth throws all this aside and gives to many hieroglyphs the value of two or three or four consonants...Against this Champollion denies the syllabic character of the language; he says about the phonetic hieroglyph, 'each sign is equivalent to either a simple vowel or a simple consonant.'...For the transliteration into letters Seyffarth gives a complete alphabet and the Champollionist school an incomplete alphabet...Champollion opposes Seyffarth in this manner: no hieroglyphic can have a double meaning, nor can two hieroglyphics be taken together for one single expression.

These are the opposing teachings. Whoever gives symbolical meaning to the hieroglyphics and sets aside their alphabetical value is, because he does this, a Champollionist; and whoever says that a hieroglyphic may have several consonants or syllables or whoever holds with no picture-writing, does that as Seyffarth's pupil. Because as Young in 1819 proclaimed the alphabetic value of certain hiero-

Seyffarth gives a table of figures translated by his and Champollion's systems and compares meaning derived by use of the two systems.

Hieroglyph Number	Meaning According to Seyffarth	Meaning According to Champollion
1	the chief	the prince
2	of power	President
16	the regent	of
22	numberless	heh sic.

Ibid., p. 255.

Ibid., p. 269 ff.

glyphics for the first time, so did Seyffarth for the first time in 1826, and no one will deny this, show their composition to be of several consonants... If anyone openly says he is a follower of Champollion and discredits Seyffarth--insofar as he gives the hieroglyphic the value of several consonants--is travelling the road paved by Seyffarth, and lies with his mouth. 41

Another group of Seyffarth's writings consists of those in which he tried scientifically to establish the truth of Scripture or else scientifically to refute the attacks on orthodox Christianity. He used all aspects of science, but if he could in any way possible use astronomy as the substance of his proof, he did so. Thus, he defended the Genesis account of the Creation against the attack that there must have been more than one pair of original human beings because there are different types of humans today. He showed that the various races today are capable of mating with each other and producing fertile offspring, something that is impossible in the evolutionary principle. He also defended the concept of six normal days of creation.⁴² There must have been some who irritated him by contending that Christ could not have descended into hell, for in a lengthy article he proved by astronomy, geology, oceanography, and the shape of the earth that the earth is hollow and therefore, he concluded hell could be in the center of it, enabling Christ to descend

⁴¹ Heinrich Wuttke, as quoted in Karl Knortz, Op. cit., p. 84.

⁴² Lehre und Wehre, II, pp. 66 - 75.

(italics mine) into hell,⁴³ In refuting the Chiliastic position he makes extensive use of that favorite weapon, astronomy, and his favorite discovery, the new Biblical chronology.⁴⁴ This refutation is typical of his writings.

The Chiliastic controversy of the last century hit the Lutheran church too. With the Millerites proclaiming the second coming of Christ for 1868, Lutheran theologians attacked the idea of a definitely known moment for the second coming. Some attacked doctrinally, some exegetically, but Seyffarth attacked with his double-barreled gun of astronomy and chronology.

Seyffarth gave Chiliasm two bases. One, its chronology is based on the falsified chronology of the Masoretic text. Two, it is based on misinterpretation of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom of God.

Seyffarth's peculiar field of study is particularly adapted to the refutation of the first basis. He maintained it is more than coincidence that the age in the history of the world which is most stricken with the disease of Chiliasm is the same age in which the medicine for its cure has been discovered. He named the medicine as ancient astronomy. His theory is that astronomy proved that the Septuagint, and not

⁴³

Gustav Seyffarth, "Kann der Erlöser wirklich nicht hinab zur Hölle Gefahren sein," Der Lutherische Herold, I p. 305.

⁴⁴

G. Seyffarth, Die Wahre Zeitrechnung, p. 101.

the Masoretic text, contains the true Biblical chronology, and it must be true that Akibah falsified the Masoretic record in order to deceive Jews into believing the Messiah was yet to come. With astronomy and the Septuagint, it can be shown that the day of Creation was 5871 B. C. Since, according to the Chiliasts (on the basis of the Masoretic text) Creation was approximately 4,000 B. C., there still remained some two thousand years until the beginning of the seventh millenium after Creation. Their calculations led them to believe the year 6001 would begin in 1868. But Seyffarth's chronology shows that 129 A. D. would be the end of the sixth millennium, and if the seventh millennium was to be marked by the second coming of Christ, he should have come more than 1500 years before the 1868 date. ^{45, 46}

Seyffarth's writings and lectures were variously received. Often his lectures were very flatteringly reviewed in the next day's newspaper, especially in those weeks which he spent in New York City after his arrival in this country. Many expressed bewilderment at his amazing knowledge and comprehension of the difficult subject of Egyptology. They

45

His mathematics work this way: The seventh millennium in which Christ will reign again on earth should start 6000 years after Creation. Since the Creation was in the year 5871 B. C., he subtracted the 5871 from 6,000 and obtained the remainder of 129. Therefore, there would be 129 years left after the birth of Christ (129 A.D.) until the millenium should begin.

46

Prof. G. Seyffarth, Chiliasm and Astronomy, with references to the articles in 'The Lutheran,' March 15th and May 17th, 1861.

They blamed their lack of comprehension on their own ignorance rather than anything else.⁴⁷ But just as often the reviewer used a sharply sarcastic style in his analysis of the lecture.⁴⁸ One newspaper observed that the lecturer is "given to bold hypotheses and jumps to conclusions," but at the same time notices that he "manifests throughout a respect and reverence for the sacred volume which is by no means universal among German scholars."⁴⁹ This was noted earlier in this paper too in connection with his reception in St. Louis. Dr. Wuttke also thinks this is the reason for his rejection as an Egyptologist on the continent of Europe. In his speech in Leipzig he said, "Gustav Seyffarth is a theologian and on top of that, a believing theologian."⁵⁰ In 1871 the controversy over his importance as an Egyptologist still went on in Leipzig, but Dr. George Ebers, the German Egyptologist, sided with Champollion stating that Champollion's system had been newly confirmed by the translation of the Canopian Stone by Lepsius in 1866. This settled the controversy. However, he acknowledged that "Seyffarth's service is a very narrow one." Champollion's system contained a

47

"Prof. Seyffarth's Lectures," Daily Missouri Democrat, November 29, 1856.

48

Der Pionier, New York City (?) March 9, 1856.

49

New York Evangelist, May 29, 1856.

50

Heinrich Wuttke, Op. cit., p. 91.

number of references to syllables without calling them syllables. Seyffarth came later with the name "syllable." This is Seyffarth's contribution, he gave the system a name. The conception of syllables, however, was there before Seyffarth's system.

With Seyffarth's system one can hardly read half a line. He himself could read only because he made his own language, which he called ancient Chaldean. For this reason he also could not make any text analysis. 51

In another report of Ebers' speech, Ebers gave Seyffarth a little more credit.

Even his opponents who hold with Champollion must recognize Seyffarth's contribution in small points and technical matters, e.g., the discovery of the division into syllables. 52

A French encyclopedia, after the usual biographical material, does not commit itself to any great extent but seems to side with its countryman, Champollion.

M. Seyffarth, who has as much erudition as he is active, has exposed himself more than once on account of the boldness of his hypotheses, to the mockery of several of his fellowmen. He defended his opinions, and those of Spohn, against Champollion, in different publications in English, French, Italian and Latin. 53

As has been noted, among Missouri Synod men he was

51

"Literatur und Kunst-Bericht aus Deutschland," Sonntagsblatt der New York Staats Zeitung, August 13 (?), 1871.

52

Ibid.,

53

G. Vaperau, Dictionnaire Universel des Contemporaires, (Librairie Hachette et Cie., Paris, 1870) fourth edition, p. 1667.

heartily welcomed at the beginning. They expected much of him. Early reviews of his Die Wahre Zeitrechnung in Lehre und Wehre were favorable and thanks for a great service to the church were rendered; but many of the critics also admitted their incompetence to judge the results. Later the tone of these reviews changed. People began to accuse him of reckoning with the ignorance of his readers, and to wonder why the great Seyffarth who could not be received as a scholar in Europe had come to the United States. He was accused of using too much astronomy and of trying to prove too much, "Wer zuviel beweis't, beweis't--Nichts." As Seyffarth answered these arguments (not in Lehre und Wehre) his language became more and more bitter, and some think that he regarded the whole thing as a personal insult. The two best answers to Seyffarth were written by Hermann Baumstark

⁵⁴ "Uebersicht neuer Entdeckungen in der biblischen Zeitrechnung," Lehre und Wehre, III, December 1857, p. 361.

⁵⁵ "Die Wahre Zeitrechnung," Lehre und Wehre, III, October 1857, p. 303.

⁵⁶ Lehre und Wehre, XIV, p. 173.

⁵⁷ Ibid., X., pp. 53-55.

⁵⁸ Ibid., XIV., p. 176.

⁵⁹ Ibid..

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 173.

and Lindemann in issues of Lehre und Wehre. Baumstark analyzed the situation as follows when he said that "the whole problem of chronology is an open question" and that Seyffarth was wasting his time. "In an age of predominant unbelief," Baumstark continued, "it is foolish to be concerned with such questions." He added that he himself would ignore the problem after this article and he bemoaned the fact that he, as a beginner in the Lord's vineyard, had to undertake to set such an established scholar right. His final advice to Seyffarth was to "forget the whole thing and get out and enjoy the beautiful spring weather."⁶¹

Lindemann was concerned that Seyffarth's endeavor to prove the darkness at Christ's crucifixion as a natural phenomenon might harm the faith of some Christians.⁶² In the same article he posed a number of problems for Seyffarth. There are many who follow Petavius, but Seyffarth is the only one who differs. Did Seyffarth figure his tables of the eclipses himself? Lindemann found some discrepancies. Apparently Lindemann had his own tables and had thoroughly studied this new system of chronology. Petavius reckoned a little differently and numbered his years in a different manner. Seyffarth differed with Josephus. Finally Lindemann pointed out the holes in Seyffarth's case for the Septuagint

61

Ibid.

62

Ibid., XVIII, pp. 335-336.

chronology as the true chronology.⁶³

There are several characteristics of Seyffarth's writings that have to be surmounted if one is to believe his theses. The first is his acceptance of certain premises as true and then the extensive use of those questionable premises in his proof. If the premises are true, some of his arguments could be convincing. But so often he accepted ancient tradition as proven fact and based his argument on such questionable statements that one is forced to question his conclusions. Secondly, he is very literalistic. If the Bible says Christ was in the grave three days, Seyffarth proved scientifically that Christ spent seventy-two hours in the grave, and then he worried about the faith of those who doubted his proof. As pointed out earlier in this paper, Seyffarth believed Christ's descent into hell could be proved scientifically by showing that the earth is a hollow sphere. In this particular instance Seyffarth devoted three hundred thirty lines to proving that the earth is hollow and five lines to the fact of Christ's descent into hell.⁶⁴ He cited so many facts from so many fields of learning that only an expert in all those fields could dare to argue with him. Yet, all those facts must be true if his conclusions are to be valid. Many of his premises are the opinions of obscure ancient writers.

63

Ibid., pp. 330 - 340.

64

Gustav Seyffarth, "Kann der Erlöser wirklich nicht hinab zur Hölle gefahren sein?" p. 305.

Many times, especially in a dispute, Seyffarth seemed to miss the whole point of the argument and to get lost in a maze of detail pertinent to only one unimportant part of the whole matter under discussion. Lastly, his conclusions and discoveries are too broad, too all inclusive, and too final to be credible. His systems leave no unsolved problems or open questions. This borders too much on the Divine to be accomplished by one human being in one lifetime even if he were extraordinarily gifted, able, energetic, long-lived and single.

CHAPTER IV

GUSTAV SEYFFARTH, THE MAN

Seyffarth lived to a very old age and was active in his work almost to the hour of his death, never losing consciousness although he could not speak during the last ten hours of his life.¹ He was almost completely blind during his last few years, but his activity did not cease.² Even when he was eighty-four, people remarked at his agility.³ Others must have thought he would go on forever, because he was offered a special two thousand dollar (per year) scholarship by the American Philological Society in 1880. However, he realized his physical limitations and refused it.⁴ In the prime of his life, and still at the age of sixty, he must have been a handsome man of ruddy complexion.⁵

¹ Karl Knortz, Gustav Seyffarth, eine biographische Skizze, (New York, E. Steiger and Co., 1886), p. 20.

² "Annual Reports of the Academy of Science," for 1878(?) Reported in a newspaper clipping, but name of paper and other data are missing.

³ "A Sprightly and Interesting Octogenarian," The Delaware Express, (Delhi, New York), August 5, 1880.

⁴ Bulletin of the American Philological Society, November 16, 1880.

⁵ Carl Stohlmann, "Das älteste heilige Buch der Egypter," Der Lutherische Herold, April 15, 1856.

Several parts of this paper have pointed out his devotion to his church and to his Savior. His pastor in New York City and Walther bear special witness to this in their eulogies of him.⁶

He was financially independent because of his Leipzig pension, but he must have had other means too. He lost a thousand dollars on the Dansville Seminary affair.⁷ Throughout his life he gave much of the remuneration for his lectures to funds for indigent students both at Capitol University and Concordia Seminary.⁸ In his will he left one thousand dollars to Concordia Seminary, one thousand dollars to Capitol University, and three thousand dollars to Emanuel Lutheran Church on Eighty-third Street in New York City.⁹

The letters he wrote his parents while he was touring the European museums show his thorough scholarship and he maintained this standard of scholarship throughout his life.¹⁰ In spite of his rejection by scholars he maintained the validity and priority of his hieroglyphic system to the day

⁶ Karl Knortz, Op. cit., p. 21.

⁷ Gustav Seyffarth, The Literary Life of Gustavus Seyffarth, (New York, E. Steiger & Co., 1886), p. 86.

⁸ "Dr. Seyffarth's First Lecture," St. Louis Leader, November 26, 1856.

⁹ Karl Knortz, Op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 38, 43.

of his death.¹¹

His writings show much bitterness, sarcasm, and sharp criticism of those who dared to disagree with him. Lindenmann termed Seyffarth's attitude "loveless."¹² Some writers have referred to his humility, but these may have been ironic statements.¹³ Pastor Stohlmann, however, was convinced that he did not want his achievements broadcast to the glory of anyone but God himself.¹⁴ While Seyffarth was in St. Louis he seemed to have been known for his pleasant and unassuming nature.¹⁵ However, the tone of his autobiography, references in his letters to his parents, and the number of times he listed his degrees after his name, lead one to believe he held a fairly high opinion of himself.¹⁶

¹¹ Prof. G. Seyffarth, "Corrections of the present theory of the Moon's Motions according to the Classic Eclipses," Transactions of the St. Louis Academy of Science, May 20, 1877, p. 21.

¹² Lehre und Wehre, XVIII, p. 340.

¹³ Ibid., III, p. 307.

¹⁴ C. F. E. Stohlmann, "Dr. Seyffarth and His Learned Researches in the Field of Archaeology," Daily Ohio State Journal, May 8, 1856 (?).

¹⁵ Lehre und Wehre, IX, p. 384.

¹⁶ Excerpt from a letter dated Turin, Italy, June 3, 1826 and written to his parents: "Everywhere I am very honorably received. As a remarkable creature they have marvelled at me. They cannot imagine that there could be anyone more intelligent than Champollion."—Karl Knortz, Op. cit., p. 23.

In spite of these characteristics he always made a wonderful first impression. Every one who met him for the first time and wrote his reaction was amazed at the man's ability to learn and his great achievement in so many difficult fields.

It is unfortunate that a man of such great talents and energies should have misunderstood so much and been misunderstood by so many. His combination of learning in theology and science together with his deep Christian faith could have contributed much to an age where theology and science were at such great odds.

APPENDIX A

COMPARATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF THE WRITINGS OF SEYFFARTH AND
CHAMPOLLION PERTAINING TO TRANSLATION OF HIEROGLYPHICS

- 1821 Champollion, De l'écriture Hieratique
(In which he shows that hieroglyphics
are symbolic, according to Seyffarth).
- 1824 Champollion, Precis du Systeme Hieroglyphique
des anciens Egyptiens. (still symbolic)
- 1825 Seyffarth, Rudimenta Hieroglyphica (syllabic
and alphabetic)
- 1836-44 Champollion, Large grammar and dictionary
(according to syllabic theory) published
after his death .
- 1837 Lepsius, (a Champollionist) promulgates true
theory of syllabic signs.
- 1845 Seyffarth, Lithographic Plates
- 1851 Lepsius' system perfected by de Rouge
- 1855 Seyffarth, Grammatica Aegyptiaca

APPENDIX B

HEBREW INSCRIPTION AT TIME OF FORMATION OF THE ALPHABET WHICH DETERMINED THE ORDER OF THE HEBREW ALPHABET

אב	sub	the planetary configuration
ט	god	of the earth
ה	hava	was
ה	ke	this
ה	ech	when
ש	nts (Chata)	ended the
כ	kalah	vastation
ו	main	of the water
ז	soe	Hasten
ז	paka	to extol
פ	kara	the name of
פ	shadar	the Almighty!

Aub is a planetary configuration denoting nativity. Gesenius interprets this word by ventriloquist.

God is simply the earth, as Alergad signifies the diety of the earth, the Egyptian Shmaun.

Hava-ge are genuine Hebrew words.

Ech is the Hebrew, ah, where; the Hebrew l frequently stands

for ch.

Chata, to go astray, is related to the Coptic chet, and the Latin cando.

Kala, destruction.

Maim, the ancient Chaldaic form of the Hebrew main, water.¹

¹ Gustav Seyffarth, The Literary Life of Gustavus Seyffarth, an Autobiographical Sketch, (New York, E. Steiger, & Co., 1886), p. 59.

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