

5-1-1938

The Voyage of the Saxons

P. E. Kretzmann

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [History of Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kretzmann, P. E. (1938) "The Voyage of the Saxons," *Concordia Theological Monthly*: Vol. 9 , Article 33.
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol9/iss1/33>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

auch nachher nur spärlich vertreten sind“, aber sie kommen doch vor; und andere Gelehrte, wie Sachau, Ungnad, Cotelcy, verweisen namentlich auf die in neuerer Zeit aufgefundenen aramäischen Papyri von Elephantine mit ihren griechischen Wörtern.²⁶⁾ Und wenn man sagt, daß erst der griechische Historiker Polybius im zweiten Jahrhundert vor Christo die *συμφορία* erwähne und daß der erst in der Makkabäerzeit lebende syrische Tyrann Antiochus Epiphanes damit aufgetreten sei und getanzet habe, so beweist das nicht, daß dieser erst dieses Instrument erfunden habe. Schon der bekannte englische Ausgraber Layard soll in seinem Werk *Discoveries among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* — das Buch ist mir nicht zugänglich — mitgeteilt haben, daß auf den Monumenten des Sancherib sich das Bild eines *ψαλτήριον* finde.

Wir haben gerade diesen Punkt, weil es ein interessantes Moment ist, herausgegriffen als Beweis, daß die Argumente der modernen Kritik gegen die Echtheit des Buches Daniel sich wohl widerlegen lassen.

L. Fürbringer

The Voyage of the Saxons

In view of the fact that the approaching centennial celebration of the Saxon immigration will require a more than casual acquaintance with the chief incidents connected with this memorable historical event, we shall certainly all profit by a rehearsal and a re-study of the more significant features of this unique undertaking on the part of these Lutheran colonists. Such a study is especially necessary in view of the fact that many of the old histories are no longer generally available or accessible and that some of the printed accounts, such as that by Hochstetter, do not give much detailed information as to individual features of the immigration. It is the intention of this article therefore, as well as that of a few others which will follow at intervals, to offer to our readers such information as may enable them to form a clearer picture of the events connected with the coming of the Saxons, so that the information may properly be utilized in various teaching situations.

The preliminary history of the momentous historical event, the first instance of such an emigration on account of religion, may be summarized briefly. Pastor Stephan, having for a number of years declared that he was merely waiting for some sign from the Lord indicating that the time for the leave-taking had come, stated early in 1838, not only to the members of his congregation, but also to others who had been informed of a possible emigration, that the hour had come. By September 4, 1838, a total of 707 persons had made announcement that they were ready to join the group of

²⁶⁾ Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 4 (1927), 127.

emigrants. Of these, 240 hailed from Dresden and vicinity, 31 from Leipzig, 109 from Frohna, where Keyl was pastor, 84 from Lunzenau, near Rochlitz, the parish of Pastor Buerger, 108 from Eichenberg, near Cahla, also from Naumburg and Halle, 48 from Paitzdorf and vicinity, where Gruber was pastor, 16 from Langenchursdorf, the parish of the elder Pastor Walther, 19 from Braunsdorf, where the younger Walther was pastor, and others from other sections of the country. Only 665 actually left Bremen on the chartered vessels. All these emigrants placed their funds in a common treasury, which contained 123,987 thaler in cash. Preachers, school-teachers, officials, resigned their positions, farmers sold their land, lawyers and physicians gave up their practise, artisans and craftsmen laid down their tools; yes, it even happened that married people left their spouses, parents their children, and *vice versa*. A few country girls whose parents had refused their permission for them to leave, so that they could not obtain a passport, left their homes in the disguise of students or of young ladies of leisure, and many of these made the journey to Bremen afoot in order to be able to join the group which rallied under the leadership of Stephan.¹⁾

For some of the emigrants the trip by water began even in Saxony, as we learn from the diary of Johann Friedrich Buenger, the leader of this group, from which we quote the following sentences: "October 20, 1838. At noon, at 12:30, was the important moment when our deliverance began. There were only 44 persons on board, since some, on account of their passports, could not as yet go along. Upon previous request thanksgiving was offered to the Lord Jesus Christ with one accord, but quietly, for the hour of deliverance which had now come, and a prayer was offered up to Him, the Lord of the Church, for His gracious presence, His protection and guidance on the journey, together with the plea that He would deliver also those who were left behind and guide them safely till they might join us. . . . At Priesnitz we found the first boat, which had already left on October 18, but had been detained by a storm. Beneath the deck the following arrangements were made. The entire steerage was divided into three sections, separated by walls of packing-cases. In the section next to the cabin the families received their quarters, in the second the unmarried women, in the third the unmarried men. Just before ten o'clock two additional passengers came.—October 21. Today was Sunday. At ten o'clock we assembled for divine service. In order not to cause disturbance, we did not sing. I read the *Kyrie*, 'All Glory Be to God on High,' etc., and Pastor Stephan

1) Koesterling, *Auswanderung der saechsischen Lutheraner*, 13.

preached a sermon. It was very comforting to us that the Gospel for this day, the 19th Sunday after Trinity, Matt. 9:1, began with the words 'And He entered into a ship and passed over.' After the sermon followed the General Confession, the Lord's Prayer, a short prayer taking into account the present circumstances, and finally the hymn from the old Leipzig hymnal (No. 675): 'In Jesus' name we go our way, His holy angel be our stay, As when, in cruel Pharaoh's land, His people fled the tyrant's hand.' . . . October 22. After the morning devotion I had a catechism lesson with the children on the First Commandment. Toward eleven o'clock we landed at Muehlberg. The customs officers were very kind. They visited both boats but did not ask for our passports, which suited us very well; for there was contraband in our midst, since some did not as yet have their passports. . . . October 23. After the morning devotion a catechization on the Second Commandment. The children were attentive. Because of the approaching Reformation Festival and the nearness of the city of Wittenberg I began to relate the story of the Reformation to the children. . . . In the sixth hour (in the afternoon) we sighted the two main spires of Wittenberg. . . . October 24. Early in the morning catechization on our boat on the Third Commandment, in the afternoon on the other boat on the Second. . . . October 25. Morning devotion. Catechization on the Fourth Commandment. Life of Luther. Arrival at Magdeburg."

Buenger's diary continues recording the chief events from day to day. On October 27 he became ill and felt as though he must die. To Pastor O. H. Walther he wrote on November 2 that he hoped to get at least as far as Bremen. He was then still at Harburg, where he had remained in an inn. But on November 6 he had recovered sufficiently to continue his journey, and on the afternoon of November 7 he arrived in Bremen. Here his joy was turned into consternation when he found that his mother had been taken into custody, the allegation against her being that she had abducted two orphans without the consent of their guardian. In spite of all his efforts in her behalf he could not obtain her release and was therefore obliged to say farewell also to the last of the vessels that were conveying the emigrants across the sea. It was not until December 11 that Buenger's mother was released. This accounts for the fact that Buenger came to New York on the *Constitution*, which left Bremen on December 21, 1838, and reached New York on February 18, 1839. The small group of Lutherans whom Buenger found here, some hundred souls, traveled with him, at Pastor Stephan's suggestion, and joined the colonists in Perry County shortly after Pentecost in the year 1839.²⁾

2) *Lutheraner*, XXXVIII, 68 ff.

Meanwhile the other colonists had carried out their plans. They had chartered four vessels for their exclusive use. On a fifth ship members of their group occupied all but three places. The first ship to leave Bremen was the *Copernicus*, which weighed anchor on November 3 and reached New Orleans on December 31, 1838. Pastor Buerger officiated on this ship. The second vessel was the *Johann Georg*, which also left Bremen on November 3, but did not reach New Orleans until January 5, 1839. Pastors Keyl and the younger Walther officiated on this ship. The third ship was the *Republik*, which left Bremen on November 12 and landed at New Orleans on January 12, 1839. On this boat Pastor Loeber officiated. The fourth vessel was the *Olbers*, which left Bremen on November 18 and reached New Orleans on January 20, 1839. Pastors Stephan and Otto Herman Walther were on this boat. The fifth ship was the *Amalia*, which also left Bremen on November 18, but was lost at sea. We may remark, in passing, that the failure of this ship to reach port caused the deepest grief and sorrow among the emigrants, and Pastor Herman Walther composed a beautiful poem whose first stanza reads:

Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, the ship has not come,
 The ship named *Amalia* is missing!
 When wilt Thou, O Pilot, convey her back home
 From the storms that are howling and hissing?
 Have we, Lord, been favored Thy mercies to share?
 Was their ship too small for Thy kindness and care?
 Lord Jesus, come, quiet our yearning
 And hasten *Amalia's* returning.³⁾

The various events of the ocean voyage were preserved in note-books and diaries, especially by a Mr. G. Guenther, whose accounts were embodied in a small volume, which appeared in Dresden in 1839, entitled *Die Schicksale und Abenteuer der aus Sachsen ausgewanderten Stephanianer*. These accounts are here drawn upon; they refer to the voyage of the *Olbers*.

On November 18, at ten o'clock in the morning, the *Olbers* set sail with a most favorable wind, and the assurance created by this fact provided ample opportunity for reflections. The ship sailed so rapidly that within forty hours it had passed through the Strait of Calais (Dover), an unusual performance, as Captain Henry Exter informed the company.

But seasickness soon made its appearance and created great havoc. On November 20 death claimed its first victim of the voyage, for the little son of Dr. M—ch (Marbach), only three years old, was stricken with heart-failure. Because of the official standing of the father, and since the circumstances were otherwise un-

3) Graebner, Theo., *Our Pilgrim Fathers*, 13.

usual, the captain made an exception with respect to the customary mode of burial at sea. The ship's carpenter prepared a little coffin, and in this the body of the beloved child was solemnly delivered to the waves. Upon this occasion Pastor Stephan delivered a touching address. And indeed, the experience must have been a most heartrending one to the bereaved parents as they gazed after the body of their beloved son whose little form was thus entrusted to the foaming sea — they were not even privileged to give adequate expression to their grief at some green mound in the churchyard. The *Olbers* sailed on as night was falling, and through the gathering darkness the cradle-song of the emigrants was wafted across the sea:

Now rest, my child, and slumber,
 No cares thy bed encumber
 As falls the shel't'ring night;
 Our ship its way is going,
 Our Pilot's light is glowing,
 Our Jesus, with His mercy bright.

On November 21 contrary winds arose, which soon developed into a violent storm. The ship was then in the Bay of Biscay, and the passengers for the first time had the fearsome spectacle of a storm at sea. However, the danger passed by without an accident to the ship or the passengers. The weather grew more moderate, and the sea calmed down. On Sunday, November 25, the captain called attention to the frequent currents from the west, which kept the sea in constant motion and prevented the conducting of divine services for the entire group. On Tuesday, November 27, the storm again began to rage; all hatches were closed, and no one was permitted on deck. When the storm reached its height, on November 28, two sailors were torn from the wheel, and one of them was severely wounded. But then the storm gradually abated.

The voyage, even at this time, was not without its humorous interludes. Owing to a casual remark on the part of a good woman from Dresden concerning the delectableness of potato dumplings the entire group in the steerage was seized with a desire for this Old World delicacy, and the cry arose from all sides, "We want potato dumplings!" As a result the entire company, including the men, who were promptly equipped with aprons, went to work paring and grating potatoes, which were then, with the proper amount of other ingredients, formed into dumplings and cooked in an immense kettle. In spite of a few difficulties which were encountered in the festival of cooking, the first batch of dumplings was finished at two o'clock and the second at four, and the chronicler records that the feast was a huge success, though the dumplings, under the circumstances, were somewhat heavy and fairly hard to digest.

The Voyage of the Saxons

Since the Advent season had now begun, the devotions took cognizance of its significance. The impression of the sacred season was heightened by the circumstances in which the emigrants found themselves, the perils of the sea, the spectacle of death in their own midst, and the uncertainty of the future. With great fervor all joined in the hymn written especially for this occasion, the third stanza of which may be rendered thus:

Come, O Jesus, enter in;
 See, our ship holds wide its portals.
 Come, Thy mercy live within;
 Grant Thy grace to sinful mortals.
 Be our Pilot and our Guide;
 Do Thou never leave our side.

On December 4 a favorable wind was blowing, so that the *Olbers* was able to pass from the Bay of Biscay to the great Atlantic Ocean. Since the sailors had stored the casks with drinking-water in the hold of the ship and the company was now in need of fresh water, all the cases and boxes in the steerage had to be moved, a procedure which caused considerable annoyance to the passengers. On December 5 both the sea and the wind were perfectly calm, and therefore it was possible to have an Advent service, which was conducted by Pastor Walther. In the evening there was a service with prayer and singing, and this became a regular custom. On these occasions the Saxons used either the hymn-books from Chemnitz and Breslau or the *Songs of the Exiles*, which had been composed for their particular needs. Pastor Walther used his poetical talent, as occasion required, in writing suitable poems and hymns for the emigrants. Since the number of hymnals did not suffice for the entire group, the minister would read the verses to the congregation as they were to be sung. If the weather was at all favorable, the services were conducted on the upper deck, a place which was certainly suitable for such solemn acts, as there was nothing in sight to distract the attention of the assembly. On December 9 Pastor Stephan delivered the sermon, which, as usual, made a very deep impression on his hearers. The weather on this Sunday was unusually beautiful, the atmosphere being as balmy as on a summer-day. Provision was made for the instruction of the children, and classes were conducted regularly by one or the other of the ministerial candidates.

On the afternoon of December 13 the ship encountered a severe thunder-shower, although the forenoon had been calm. But the wind became favorable, and the *Olbers* was able to cover approximately fifty English miles in four hours. On Sunday, December 16, Pastor Walther conducted services on the open deck. But hardly had he begun his sermon on the theme "Why Have We Emigrated?"

when a sudden squall of wind and rain interrupted the address, and every one hurried to the shelter of the steerage. The sermon was concluded in connection with the evening devotions. Later in the evening Pastor Stephan addressed the emigrants. On December 18 the weather was beautiful, so that all the steerage passengers were able to be on deck.

On Wednesday, December 19, the two-year-old son of the miller Zeibig died of teething trouble, and the body of the child was committed to the ocean the same evening, Pastor Walther conducting the services.

At this time some difficulties were encountered because there was such a great diversity in the manner of conducting individual devotions. Apparently every family had its own book of worship, and there was little uniformity. Therefore it was decided that hereafter there would be a common devotional service every morning at eight o'clock, all steerage passengers taking part in a body. This arrangement also prevented the offense given or taken when individuals who had finished their own devotions were engaged in some other occupation.

On Sunday, December 23, the constant rocking of the ship made it impossible to conduct services in the morning, which were therefore postponed to the evening. On this day the passengers saw the first specimens of flying-fish, which use their forward fins to soar or flutter above the waves when they are pursued by predatory fishes or mammals. A school of porpoises was also sighted, which followed the vessel for some time. All this brought a welcome diversion into the monotony of the voyage.

On Christmas Day the weather was very warm and pleasant, and many of the emigrants drew comparisons between these conditions and those in their old home, where the frost was painting pictures on the windows, while a sultry summer heat was prevailing on the *Olbers*. The festival sermon was delivered by Pastor Stephan, and the assembly sang a hymn written for the occasion, which was sung with fervor not unmingled with a certain sadness or melancholy, as a trace of homesickness insisted on making itself felt. Two stanzas from this hymn may be rendered as follows:

So we rejoice this Christmas Day
As o'er the sea we take our way,
Where angels from the sky above
Make known to us the Savior's love.

Lord Jesus, sweet and holy Child,
Oh, enter with Thy mercy mild.
This vessel, with Thy presence blest,
A manger be for Thee to rest.

Second Christmas Day proved unlucky for one of the passengers, a certain Mr. Klemm. In passing from the dining-room

to the cabin, he stepped over a bench and in doing so fell down an open hatchway into the hold of the ship. A medical examination showed that he had broken two ribs and sustained other injuries, which necessitated the attention of the company's physician, Dr. Schnabel. Pastor Walther made special reference to the unfortunate incident in the evening devotion.

On Sunday, December 30, some unpleasantness was again caused by the fact that the sailors were obliged to get more water out of the hold of the ship. Some of the passengers seemed to be considerably agitated over the fact that this work had to be done on a Sunday. On the following day, New Year's Eve, Pastor Walther took occasion, in connection with the customary devotion, to conduct a meditation on the end of the year, closing his address with words of hope concerning the new year. The expectation of soon having a view of the "promised land" was a strong factor in strengthening the hearts of the emigrants at that time.

On Wednesday, January 2, the ship was completely becalmed. The ship's carpenter on this day harpooned a dolphin, a procedure which was followed with great interest by the entire ship's company. On the following day, however, a severe thunder-shower, with heavy rain, swept over the ocean. On January 4 the island of Porto Rico was sighted, but the distance was too great to permit a distinct view of objects. At midnight another violent thunder-storm came up, a most awe-inspiring sight, especially when the billows rose in menacing masses. The storm was followed by a complete calm, and small waves curled about the ship in a delightful murmur, while thousands of stars gleamed in the firmament above and were reflected in the quiet surface of the sea.

On Sunday, January 6, at two o'clock in the morning, the *Olbers* approached the coast of Santo Domingo. On this day another storm interfered with the conducting of religious services. The vessel was so close to land that the passengers could distinguish the individual trees. The emigrants were delighted with the privilege, so long denied them, of seeing land, and since contrary winds compelled the captain to resort to tacking for three days, all passengers availed themselves of the opportunity to enjoy the sight of land. On the afternoon of January 10 a more favorable wind filled the sails of the *Olbers*; Santo Domingo fell away behind, and the island of Cuba rose before the eyes of the passengers. As the vessel sailed close to the beautiful island, every one could enjoy to the full the marvelous landscape with its fertile plantations and romantic mountain ranges.

A most distressing incident occurred on January 11, when it was found necessary to discipline a lad of about nine years who

had stolen several watches from passengers and had then, by his own confession, destroyed them and thrown them into the water.

On Sunday, January 13, a storm again prevented the conducting of the full morning service, so that only the Gospel of the day was read. But in the evening the *Olbers* entered the Gulf of Mexico, and progress became steady and rapid. At this time the emigrants began to make definite plans regarding their new home. A preliminary organization was also effected, and Pastor Stephan was, on January 15, elected bishop of the congregation.

Early on Friday morning, January 18, the *Olbers* approached the mouth of the Mississippi. But the progress of the ship had been so rapid that it was necessary to turn back into deeper water in order to avoid danger; for there was as yet no pilot on board. At last, at nine o'clock in the morning, the pilot arrived. He quickly leaped into a small boat, manned by Negro oarsmen, and was rowed over to the *Olbers*. The pilot was a tall, gaunt man, with a characteristic, deeply lined face. He at once took command and soon directed the vessel on the right course, while his colored servants, after a good deal of attention paid to him on the part of the passengers, rowed back to the pilot boat. About noon the steamboat *Tiger of New Orleans* came down the river to meet the *Olbers*, and a five-inch tow-rope was attached to the sailboat in order to take it up the river. But suddenly the rope parted, and the *Olbers* ran aground on a mud bar. All attempts to move the boat failed, and in addition a thunder-shower was followed by a heavy fog, which greatly interfered with the work.

The *Olbers* was compelled to remain on the mud bar until Saturday afternoon. The cargo, which consisted of 40,000 bricks, had to be shifted from one end of the ship to the other, a task which was undertaken with the help of the steerage-passengers. With the help of a second steamer, the *Hudson*, the vessel was finally set afloat, and the eighty-mile trip to New Orleans could be resumed.

On Sunday afternoon, January 20, at four o'clock, the harbor of New Orleans lay before the eyes of the immigrants, and at five o'clock the *Olbers* docked. But orders had been given that no one was to leave the ship that evening, and so the immigrants had to be satisfied with a distant view of the city and its people. The people of the city, on their part, felt no restraint about trying to visit the *Olbers*, and it was necessary to place men at both hatchways to keep the inquisitive intruders from entering the cabins.

On the next day, when permission was given to the passengers to land, they promptly availed themselves of the opportunity to walk on solid ground once more and to enjoy the sights of the city. Their impression of the great commercial city was not wholly

favorable, and most of them were particularly repulsed by the evils connected with slavery, which were in evidence on all sides and seemed to have a demoralizing influence on social conditions in general. The extant records do not indicate how many of the Saxons who had reached New Orleans on December 31, 1838, and January 5 and 12, 1839, remained in that city to wait for the *Olbers* and the *Amalia*; but one may assume that the majority of the immigrants stayed in the South for the present, although a remark made by Guenther (p. 31) seems to show that some members of the group reached St. Louis early in February.

Several incidents during the stay in New Orleans were noted by the chronicler. On January 23 another passenger was added to the list in the person of a baby daughter born to the shoemaker Niemann of Dresden. A somewhat provoking interlude was furnished by a man who impersonated a customs collector and pocketed ten dollars in addition to a fine meal which he was served. After the real customs officer had inspected the property of the immigrants, arrangements were made to transfer all the paraphernalia from the *Olbers* to a river steamer. This work was begun on January 26, at nine o'clock in the morning, but could not be finished on that day, so that it became necessary to complete the transshipment by wagon on the following Monday. After the transfer had been completed, there was another delay because Dr. Schnabel, who had functioned as physician to the company and intended to remain in New Orleans, insisted on receiving payment for his services. Only on Thursday, January 31, was it possible for the steamer *Selma* to begin its trip to St. Louis.

The journey up the Mississippi was uneventful until the boat reached the mud bar at the mouth of the Ohio, where it ran aground. Since the river was at low stage, there seemed to be no chance for the *Selma* to be set afloat in a short time. So the passengers went on shore and made short excursions into the surrounding woods. There was also a beautiful farm near by, whose proprietor showed the immigrants much consideration, especially by giving them one of his Negro men as guide. At that time Carolina paroquets were still abundant in that neighborhood, and of these many were shot, for they made a most delectable meal. But beyond the farmland was a marshy country, which was said to be frequented by various wild animals, and for this reason the company preferred to return to the boat. The immigrants were also much interested in the manner in which the farms were cleared, namely, by burning off the woods, and they were given an opportunity to assist in some work of this kind.

After several days a few of the leaders, Dr. Marbach and Candidates Kluegel and Froehlich, took passage on a small steamer, the *Brazil*, in order to go to St. Louis and complete arrangements

for the arrival of the entire company. On February 14 the trip of the *Selma* could be resumed; but after five miles it ran aground with such force as to throw one of the ship's firemen down a hatch and the nine-year-old son of one of the passengers, by the name of Barthel, into the river. Fortunately one of the sailors immediately jumped in after the boy and rescued him. The captain now boarded one of the small steamers which plied the river in order to charter some small steamers at St. Louis for the purpose of setting the *Selma* afloat again. In the absence of the captain the crew of the boat, under the direction of the mates, determined to move the steamer over the mud bar. This they managed to do by using the full capacity of the boilers and then shifting the weight of some heavy chains and of the passengers from side to side, so that the vessel was set into a rocking motion and finally managed to crawl over the bad place.

Guenther here remarks: "The journey now continued without hindrance. Everybody was happy over the impending arrival in St. Louis, where the three ships which had preceded them had already arrived. The *Selma* reached this goal on February 19."

Thus ended the voyage of the Saxons. They were in the land of religious liberty.

P. E. KRETZMANN

The Inspiration Question

On November 1, 1937, Lutheran pastors of Washington, D. C., discussed the doctrine of Inspiration on the basis of two essays on "The Inspiration Question," one presented by Dr. H. W. Snyder of the U. L. C. and the other by Rev. Th. P. Fricke of the A. L. C. Dr. G. E. Lenski of Washington was asked "to forward copies of these essays to the theological journals of different bodies for publication." The *Journal of the American Lutheran Conference* received them and published them in the March issue of this year together with introductory remarks by Dr. G. E. Lenski and an "Epilog" by the editor, Dr. J. A. Dell, of the Columbus seminary.

Dr. G. E. Lenski remarks: "The idea underlying this dual presentation was to bring into light any fundamental differences that might serve as barriers and hindrances and sources of controversy in Lutheran church-life. Such differences, though expected, failed to put in their appearance. Unlike our official committees, which have gone forth from their meetings with many headshakings and grumblings, the members of the Washington ministerial group ended their deliberations with the kindest of feelings toward one another and with the earnest conviction that, whereas disunity may exist among Lutherans, it does not exist in the heart of our great Church so far as the Bible itself is con-