

Bringing the Written Word to the World



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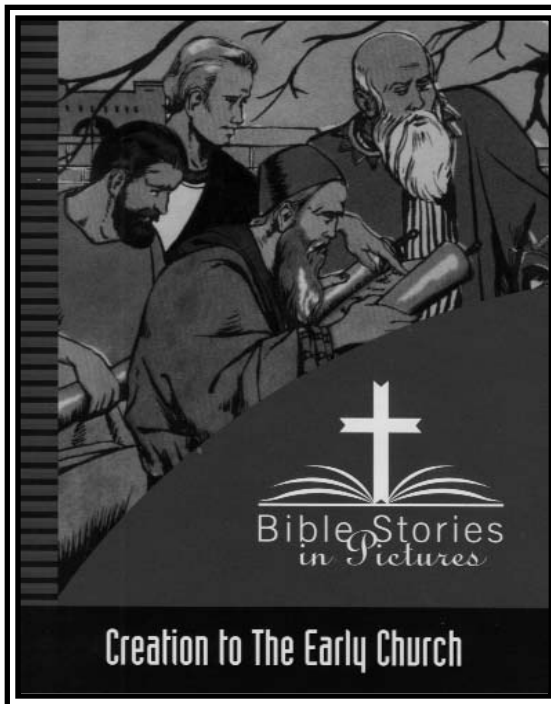
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This issue is dedicated to Bible Stories in Pictures, a series of colorful Bible history lessons that were enjoyed by thousands of Lutheran Christians in the United States. While telling us about his father, Dr. William Beck, and his life's work, Reu Beck explains how the lessons came to be produced.

Dr. Beck had hoped that the lessons might be gathered into a book and published for another generation to use. Forty years later that wish became a reality when 92 lessons were published as a series of booklets and then as a single volume under the leadership of Rev. Harold Essmann of Multi-Language Publications and Mr. Gerald Kastens of WELS Youth Discipleship. More recently, mission fields have been working to produce the same material in eight other languages. The second large article in this issue recaps the revival of Bible Stories in Pictures.



Newsletter on the Web!

You can now go to our website and view this quarterly newsletter and keep updated on new happenings in Multi-Language Publications!



www.multilanguagepublications.com

The Life and Work of Dr. William F. Beck

By Reu Beck

More commonly referred to as "Bible Beck" among his pastoral colleagues, Dr. William F. Beck was born August 28, 1904 to Pastor Paul and Mary Beck in Little Falls, Minnesota. His early education was in a Christian day school taught by his father. In 1919 he went to Concordia College in St. Paul, Minnesota, skipping the freshman high school year. Then he went on to Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, graduating in 1927. While there, he was active in both the seminary band and students' chorus. He could play the piano, pipe organ, accordion, mandolin, violin, and trombone.

In 1927 and 1928 he served at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in St. Louis, and from 1928 to 1930 he took courses at the University of Minnesota (St. Paul area) in sciences, philosophy, and psychology.

Clayton

In 1930 Pastor Beck accepted a call to two country congregations near Clayton, Illinois. While there, he also started mission work in the Clayton area and later at nearby Camp Point.

During the early years in the Clayton area, from 1931 to 1933, he also earned 21 semester hours at the University of Iowa, which was 150 miles from his home. It was also at this time that he returned to his Hebrew and Greek studies.

While attending the University of Iowa, he met Euphemia MacLeod who had earned B.S. and M.A. degrees in Literature and Composition from Minnesota University. He had first met her while she was sitting on a Bible, which caused him to remark, "What a firm foundation!" From there the mutual interest grew until it culminated in marriage in 1933.

On November 15, 1934, twins arrived by cesarean operation. Pastor Beck named the boy "Reu" and the girl "Rea," explaining that in Hebrew "Re" meant "friend" and that the "u" was a masculine letter in most languages while "a" was a feminine letter. Two years later Euphemia gave birth to another girl and she was named "Joy."

As they grew, Pastor Beck organized them into a singing trio with Joy singing soprano, Rea alto, and Reu base. He and Mrs. Beck also wrote and composed "Little Stranger," a Christmas carol in four verses, which is still Reu's favorite as it does an excellent job of laying out the entire gospel with a catchy tune. The three children would go Christmas-caroling down the streets of Clayton with their father accompanying them with his accordion.

While serving in the Clayton area, Pastor Beck

published the Birth of Christ, a dramatization of the Christmas text, and Bible Truths, an inductive catechetical course in which each question was followed by Bible passages from which the student could draw out the biblical answer. He also discovered that even his Sunday school teachers were having a difficult time understanding the King James Bible. This awareness that a simpler text was needed, if his people -young and old alike- were to grow in their knowledge and love of Scripture, caused him to retranslate the Bible, first in the Sunday school lessons and then throughout the Scripture.

However, the demands of four preaching stations made the needed time to work on his translation a troubling problem. He strongly felt the need to study all the manuscript evidence for each textual difficulty in translating the Hebrew and Greek passages into the most accurate and clearest English possible. Working within the confines of rural congregations made access to these manuscripts an obstacle which was difficult to overcome.

In 1943 he accepted a position in the synodical Office of Publicity and Missionary Education in St. Louis, since it would give him the best opportunity to pursue his goals in Bible translation as well as the opportunity to write and edit various evangelism materials.

St. Louis

Pastor Beck had already been active in the Lutheran Academy for Scholarship by the time he moved to St. Louis. He was one of the 13 charter members when it was officially organized in March of 1942. He served as Acting Secretary for their publication, The Lutheran Scholar, into the mid 1940s. He was also elected in 1958 as a special "Fellow" by this group for his contributions to Lutheran scholarship and service to people. His primary emphasis that he pursued in this organization was that the Academy should do more in the area of biblical research.

The October 1947 issue of The Lutheran Scholar states the following concerning his work on "Bible Stories in Pictures":

The first issues of his "Bible Stories in Pictures" were sent out to more than 10,000 subscribers. This venture is noteworthy because of its artistic design and the painstaking scholarship, which is an attitude of thoroughness in the handling of facts and theories. Intended primarily for children, "Bible Stories in Pictures" can be unqualifiedly recommended even to men and women doing work on the graduate level.

The planning for "Bible Stories in Pictures" started with a number of meetings in 1946. Pastor Beck wrote:

"In those meetings it was decided not to compete with any system of Sunday school lessons, or to fit any special purposes, because such procedures would limit the purpose and the circulation of the material. The purpose we adopted was to bring the Bible as simply and as



The Life and Work of Dr. William F. Beck - continued from page 2

richly as possible, as cursory family reading (without educational techniques), to people of all ages within and outside of the Church."

This goal was overwhelmingly achieved and had an immediate enthusiastic response. However, there was also some criticism - not enough action, too much of the story put into one picture, too much violence pictured, too many short stories in one lesson folder, stories don't coincide with the lesson taught, etc. The Bible stories were sent out each month so that they could be distributed to the children each Sunday. Some of the stories were short (as they are in the Bible) and sometimes combined for one Sunday's pamphlet since he had no wish to amplify the text.

The production of "Bible Stories in Pictures" was costly. An attempt was made in 1956 to minimize the color and thus reduce the expenses, but this only cheapened the quality of the already established work. Therefore, after completing 1,132 pages containing 4,500 scenes, the decision was reached in 1957 to table any future production until some time in the future. As time and Dr. Beck passed on, and as new people became involved at Concordia Publishing House, these future plans did not materialize. Upon request the entire work with remaining copies was handed over to the Beck family with full rights to use it as they saw fit.

Also, beginning in 1946, Pastor Beck worked in various editorial and editing capacities at Concordia Publishing House. Besides many miscellaneous articles, some of the more notable pamphlets he produced were "Go and Tell," "We Bring Christ," "The Crowds Around Calvary" (co-written with Paul G. Hanson), "He Died and Rose for Me," "A Dialog about the Jehovah Witnesses' Bible, 'The New World Translation'," and "With Jesus in His Suffering" (40 devotions for Lent). In addition to the above, he also published Junior Hi!, a subscription magazine for teenagers.

In 1956 he received his Th.D. in New Testament Greek. His thesis, "The Meaning of Dikaioo," elaborated on the biblical usage of the term "righteousness."

In 1957 he took over Dr. Arndt's courses in the graduate department at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, which included teaching the life of Christ, life of Paul, messianic prophesies, other Hebrew and Greek exegetical courses, and textual criticism of the New Testament. For this latter course he developed a textbook on New Testament manuscripts.

Pastor Beck had also spent six weeks on Hollywood sets as a clergy advisor in the production of biblical films. Cecil B. DeMille personally lent him the pre-Canaanite text of the ten commandments which Cecil B. DeMille had used in his own filming of "The Ten Commandments." Because Moses had never been in the

land of Canaan, Pastor Beck rejected using this in producing a CPH film on Moses. Instead he chose a text that anyone who reads Hebrew could more easily read in the production of two films on Moses for the Audiovisual Aids Service of CPH. At the same time he tried to talk DeMille into producing a "Life of Christ" in which he would volunteer his services. But the offer was declined because DeMille had produced "King of Kings" many years earlier.

Probably the two most monumental completed achievements that Dr. Beck will be remembered for are The Christ of the Gospels (a harmony of the four Gospel writers, published in 1959) and The New Testament in the Language of Today, published in 1963. Sadly, he never lived to see his translation of the Old Testament published and united with his New Testament. But he

kept his nose to the grindstone to the very end, having his notes, books, and manuscripts around him in the hospital as he attempted to polish his translation of the Old Testament for the third time, never being quite satisfied. It's interesting that he died at the age of 62 as did the only other Lutheran to translate the entire Bible, Martin Luther himself.

On a personal note, there are some things I will always remember and appreciate. The most important of these was when I asked whether the Hebrew word "yom" (day) could not also refer to a long period of time. Rather than answer me directly, he took me through every place in the Old Testament where the word was used and then asked me what I concluded. The answer was obvious.

The second incident was when he burst into the kitchen one morning and excitedly exclaimed, "I have reached the stage where I can read Hebrew as fast as I can read English." Having struggled with Hebrew myself, that seemed almost impossible. Later I came to the conclusion that could only happen to someone who lived in the Hebrew as much as he lived in the English.

The third situation involves a time when he had roomers who rented our upstairs rooms. One of them, a novelist himself, referred to Dr. Beck as a religious fanatic. I was somewhat shocked, but since this person was not a Christian himself, I could understand the sharp difference between them. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that in a worldly sense he was right. Dr. Beck never took vacations. I would often wake up during the night to note that his light was on in the study where he was working. Yes, the Lord needs such "religious fanatics" to accomplish His purposes for our benefit. Thank You for such a rich heritage!



Bible Stories in Pictures Revived

While older Lutherans still remember the colorful Bible stories distributed until the late 1950's, the lessons were lost to the next generation. Bible societies and other Christian agencies have since produced similar publications using more modern forms of art, but confessional Lutherans have not found anything that presented the gospel so clearly and remained so faithful to the Scriptures as Dr. Beck's Bible Stories in Pictures.

Some forty years ago, Dr. Beck hoped that a publishing company might be engaged to gather the more than 100 four-page lessons into a book. What seemed a vain hope then became feasible through modern desk-top publishing technology at the turn of the century. And so the Beck family gave *Multi-Language Publications* and *Parish Services of the WELS* permission to reprint much of Dr. Beck's work first in the series of seven pamphlets and later as a 376 page book. At least 20,000 sets of pamphlets and books were printed in English during the last several years, and it appears that a third edition of the books may be needed.

There is also a need for this material in certain world mission fields. In Siberia, missionary John Sullivan writes that *"there are several Russian Bible cartoon books available, but none of this quality or scope. Russians are very literate, but they also enjoy cartoons. The pictures in this book are very well drawn and will appeal to most Russians. The text is almost exclusively that of the Bible itself, and the Bible stories that are included are well chosen to present the whole counsel of God."* The layout of the Russian edition is underway. And Scandinavian publications coordinator Gunilla Hedkvist comments that the Confessional Lutheran Church in Scandinavia wants this book in Swedish, *"because it is next to impossible to find reliable 'Children's Bibles.' The Swedish Bibles for children tell the stories, but as a rule they leave out the message."* The proofs of the Swedish edition are now being corrected prior to printing this spring.

Modern technology made it possible to erase the English text from the graphical background, restore the erased portion of the background, and insert foreign languages. To date 16,000 copies were published in Spanish and Albanian. God-willing,

some 21,000 more copies will also be printed in Russian, Swedish, Portuguese, Telugu, Hindi and Indonesian.

In order to use Bible Stories in Pictures in a classroom setting for children and adults, the publications coordinator for Brazil, Beth Flunker, is also developing an English and Portuguese lesson booklet. Missionary Lynn Wiedmann reports that our mission field in India plans to use the book a Bible history text for children and adults in Sunday school and as a pre-requisite text for pre-seminary admission. The books could also be used by part-time female evangelists in their



Prepress work on the Albanian version of Bible Stories in Pictures

house-to-house visiting.

While Dr. Beck's selection and presentation of the stories continues through all the foreign language editions, our mission fields have chosen to adapt existing Bible translations in their languages rather than attempt to translate the English text. The Swedish church is using as its main text The Swedish People's Bible, which was produced by various Bible-believing Christian churches in Sweden. The main translators of the Bible are all from the Confessional Lutheran Church in Scandinavia. When sentences from the translation were too long Gunilla Hedkvist shortened them, and she replaced some words that seemed somewhat archaic. Mrs. Hedkvist writes: *"I think our children will still get a feeling of 'Bible language' when they read our Bible Stories in Pictures. The language doesn't sound like a comic-book language, but the language is still clear."*

The publications work in our various world fields reveals that many men and women with unique abilities and experiences are participating in many important ways to bring the written word to the world. While one college student identified the exact locations in the Bible from which Dr. Beck had drawn virtually his entire narrative, the Lord is graciously enabling dozens of people all around the world the opportunity to help teach the gospel by translating, editing, designing and proof-reading Bible Stories in Pictures into other languages.



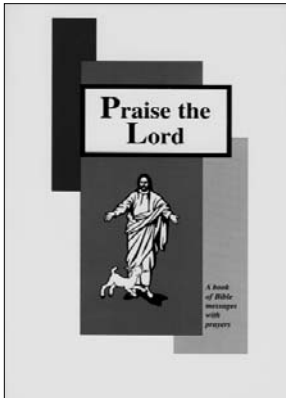
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New Publications!


Various world mission fields have indicated a need for devotional material either to be read in simplified English or to be made available in that same level of English for translation.

Rev. Harold Essmann adapted about 125 devotions from *Meditations*, the quarterly publication by Northwestern Publishing House. The new release is entitled, **Praise the Lord**.

More than 3,000 copies will be given to world mission and multi-cultural fields in the United States and the balance will be made available through the Multi-Language Publications Catalog.



The product number is 38-7392 and it can be purchased at \$2.00 each or \$17.50 for 10 copies.

 The popular booklet **The Promise** has just been printed in German. The product number is 38-7398 and it can be purchased for 65 cents each or \$50.00 per 100 copies.

What the Bible and Lutherans Teach



is now available in these new languages:


Dutch - 38-7399

Russian - 38-7400

Hmong - 38-7401

German - 38-7402

Copies may be purchased at 65 cents each or 100 copies for \$50.00.

 Work continues on the full-color **Bible History Illustrations** by Glen Myers. 82 are now available on CD-Rom: 38-7391. There is no charge for world mission and multi-cultural fields in fellowship with the WELS.



Bible Stories in Pictures

More than 40 years ago, Dr. William Beck asked the editor of Christian News to visit several major publishers in New York to find one willing to publish his entire series on Bible Stories in Pictures in one or two volumes.

Now, after 50 years, Dr. Beck's dream has finally come true! Bible Stories in Pictures is finally available in one, convenient and modestly priced volume.

An exciting new way to share the story of God's love with others!

Single volume books are available for **\$6.50** each in these languages:

Albanian - 38-7378

English - 38-7321

Spanish - 38-7374

A seven-booklet series can also be purchased for **\$6.75**. Titles include:

The Beginning to Abraham 38-7284

Moses 38-7285

In the Promised Land 38-7286

Jesus is Born 38-7287

Jesus is the Son of God 38-7288

Jesus Dies and Lives 38-7289

The Early Church - Peter and Paul 38-7290

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Bible Stories in Pictures Used in the Amazon

Missionary Terry Schultz of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod is using the Spanish edition of **Bible Stories in Pictures** to teach leaders of two tribes in the Amazon. Missionary Schultz writes that "it has been a fabulous tool for our work with the Amazon natives! As you know, Spanish is their second language, so the illustrations help enormously in telling the story. We are transporting many copies to each of the three native communities that we work with, the two Chayahuita villages and the Shapra village near the Ecuadoran border. Our native leaders tell us that THEY appreciate having **Historias Biblicas Ilustradas** to help them retell the stories once they get back to their villages. The Bible stories are new, and the events and scenarios often so far out of their usual Amazon native 'frame of reference,' - (try explaining a stable, manager, sheep, angels, wise men from the East, camels,... to people who have never seen any these things), and you start to appreciate how much easier the **Historias Biblicas Ilustradas** makes our work! Please convey my heartfelt thanks and appreciation for all who helped make the book available for our use in the Amazon mission field."

The following excerpt from Missionary Schultz' Jungle Journal describes the discussion of pages 23 through 34.

By the power and grace of God, our Amazon Bilingual Bible Institute continues to function exactly as we had envisioned it! Last month, native leaders from the Shapra tribe of Nuevo Limon Cocha (Basha's group), plus Chayahuita natives from our congregations in Paranari and Nueva Barranquita came to study with us in Tarapoto. What a blessing! What a thrill! And as always, it was quite an education for both the natives, Vicar Ronal and me!

The Shapras were the first to come for a week-long session. The group included the chief (or "Apu") Basha, his son Sikembo and his wife Veronica, (surprising, a woman of the rival Condoshi tribe), Assistant Apu Manihuari, his wife Ntsana, 10-year-old daughter Irma, and 6-month-old Jorge Shinike Casimoro, who would be baptized!! They arrived after a grueling 10-day trip that took them down long, winding jungle rivers then over narrow, rugged mountain roads.

We continue to utilize an illustrated Bible story book for our classes with these natives. Once again, Ronal and I had the unique privilege of witnessing the reaction of these natives to hearing Bible stories for the very first time! We are always fascinated at how these stories are understood when filtered through the minds of people who spend their lives living in isolated jungle communities. This session, we were teaching the stories involving Noah and his family. This presented several unique challenges:

The natives certainly understood God's wrath over a world completely given over to sin and wickedness. They understood his just decision to destroy all mankind except the believing family of Noah. The natives broke into huge smiles as they heard that God would also save a set of each of the animals to replenish the earth. Then, we got to the illustration of the animals marching two by two into the ark.

"What kind of animals are these? Are those jaguars?" "No, they're tigers." "Are those tapirs?" "No, they're hippos." "Bonitos caballos! (Beautiful horses) Did Noah paint them?" "No, they're called zebras, they come that way." "Did God paint them?" After every last animal had been discussed, and the artist's ability seriously questioned, ("what happened to their

necks?" "They're called giraffes, They're suppose to look like that"), we were finally able to move on.

The next pictures showed the torrential downpour of rain, with people and animals perishing. "Didn't anyone climb onto the roof of the ark?" "I think it was raining way to hard. Besides, you would have needed food to survive." "Why didn't anyone climb on the roof with a bag of food?" I could tell we were in for a very long Bible class!

Soon it was break time. Several ladies of the Tarapoto congregation brought out big trays of sandwiches and pitchers of fruit punch. A moment later, one of the students yelled out in complete surprise, "hey, who put a leaf on my bread?" Soon all the natives were checking their sandwiches and removing the leaves. None of them had ever seen lettuce before! The natives began chuckling to each other as if to say, "these crazy city people," as they removed the offensive ingredient and stacked them on the table. The Tarapoto ladies looked crestfallen as they retreated with the used glasses and unwanted leftovers.

Our Bible story class continued with the receding of the floodwaters and the opening of the door of the ark. The natives were excited to see the picture of Noah and his entire family standing in the open doorway all safe and sound, while animals, reptiles and birds of every kind were already leaving the ark. However, I immediately noticed the natives whispering to each other in serious, hushed tones. Something of concern had obviously caught their eye. They were pointing to a huge black bird in the sky that they apparently recognized. Sikembo explained:

Just as the natives would suspect, Noah had indeed saved the giant, dreaded black jungle eagle. Sikembo went on: Giant black eagles were known to live in the jungle close to their village. Though no one had actually seen one now for about two years, the older natives had seen them in the past. These eagles were known to carry off native babies, who were never seen again. Perhaps Noah should have thought twice before keeping them, the natives thought!

Finally we concluded the flood account, and continued on in our illustrated Bibles. Soon we came to the story of Noah's drunkenness. Now, as many a fine commentary will tell you, the story of Noah's drunkenness serves as both a comfort to us, (even the heroes of the Bible were weak sinners) and a warning, (there are serious consequences to sin). The students took this story to heart, as drunkenness is a serious problem in many villages. It was emphasized that as spiritual leaders their behavior must be above reproach. With the story completed, there were as always, a few extra observations and questions.

First, the students assured me they would not get drunk, and lie around uncovered. If that did happen they went on, unlike Noah's sons, their children would all run in the other direction. Besides, they asked, where was Mrs. Noah during all this? If they lay around drunk like Noah did, their wives would come running and beat them on the head!

Finally, the natives had a question regarding the curse Noah announced, - that the family of Canaan would eventually be slaves to the peoples of the other brothers. The natives all wanted to know, "what is a slave?" Incredibly, in their culture they had never heard of slavery!

And so the week of classes went on, with Ronal and I getting more excited by the day, as we had clear indications that our students were listening intently and learning. The Holy Spirit was obviously working mightily amongst our dedicated group!

