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ously difficult to harmonize that it is almost impossible to form any coherent view of the nature of our Lord's Body after His Resurrection. We cannot envisage in what kind of a body He chose to appear and disappear, and disguise His form, and eat material food 'before' and 'with' His disciples. So that the appearances of the Risen Lord as depicted in the Gospels are least helpful in aiding us to think of our own future spiritual bodies. But suppose that our Lord, instead of being buried as a Jew, had been cremated as a Roman or a Greek—and very many of the bodies of martyrs of all ages have been burned before or after death without involving the smallest doubt as to their future resurrection—there could have arisen no disputes about the empty tomb or the nature of His resurrection body. Yet His resurrection, His victory over death, His continued life in exaltation, would

have been equally assured, at any rate to St. Paul, by the revelation that came to him on the Damascene road, and which turned the superbly orthodox Pharisee into a captive slave at the chariot wheels of His Lord and Master. That the flesh and blood material of our Lord's body evanesced, evaporated, sublimated, without undergoing corruption in the tomb is an old theory which was revived some time ago by Latham in his book called *The Risen Master*. This thought may possibly throw light upon St. Paul's statement about all undergoing change, whether dead or alive, at the Coming. But in our case the body does undergo dissolution and corruption; and that shows that the outer husk of our personal individuality here is only an *instrumentum* or temporary mode of expression of our true self, which lives on through and after the experience of death.

National Contributions to Biblical Science.

IV. The Contribution of Germany to Church History: Ancient Church and Reformation.

BY PROFESSOR JAMES MACKINNON, Ph.D., D.D., EDINBURGH.

II.

NEXT to the history of the Ancient Church, German scholars have eminently contributed to the knowledge of that of the Reformation. The Germans, indeed, claim the Reformation as a German product, and this claim, though not above criticism, is substantially justified by the dominating influence exercised by Luther on the initiation and early development of the movement in Germany and other lands. One is almost snowed under by the mass of the historical literature which has appeared during the last half-century and continues to appear in endless volume, and in which the Germans give unstinted scope to their rage for literary production (*Arbeitswut*). For anything like an adequate account of it in English I may refer the student to the footnotes of my *Luther and the Reformation*, or to the extensive German bibliography of Wolf (*Quellenkunde der deutschen Reformationsgeschichte*, 1915-23).¹ Corporations and indi-

viduals have alike contributed to elucidate this complex movement. As the result of this activity the number of publications in the form of editions of sources or of monographs can only be described as legion. This productivity has been fostered by the *Verein für Reformationsgeschichte*, whose organ is the *Archiv für Ref. geschichte*. Very meritorious is the interest shown in this historic research by the Prussian Government through its Commission for the investigation of the history of the Reformation and the Counter Reformation, whose foundation is a valuable fruit of the Quatercentenary of the Reformation in 1917. To this celebration the Luther Society (*Luthergesellschaft*), whose organs are the *Lutherjahrbuch* and the *Luther Quarterly*, also owes its existence. For the study of the subject from the Roman Catholic point of view there is the *Historical Studies and Texts* series since 1906, which are supplemented by the numerous publications of the *Görresgesellschaft*.

Among general collections of the utmost value it must suffice to mention the *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* still in course of publication; the series of

¹ Kawerau has published a chronological list of Luther's works in particular, *Verein für Reformationsgeschichte*, No. 129, 2nd ed., 1929. See also Albrecht, *Theol. Stud. u. Krit.*, 1926.

Nuntiaturs-berichte, containing the Reports of the papal nuncios from Germany to the Vatican; the publications of the Prussian Historical Institut at Rome, which include a number of contributions to Reformation history; the voluminous and standard Weimar edition of Luther's works, still unfinished, and the latest collection of his vast correspondence begun by Enders and continued by Kawerau and others, and containing many letters of Luther's correspondents, including those of the Electors Frederick, John, and John Frederick of Saxony. Those of Melancthon fill a large number of volumes of the 'Corpus Reformatorum.' The *Corpus Catholicorum* in course of publication furnishes competent editions of the works of Luther's opponents, and the enormous collection of documents relative to the Council of Trent has, in part, been published by the *Görresgesellschaft*. The correspondence of Luther's foremost antagonist among the German princes, Duke George of Saxony, has been edited by Gess, that of his patron, the Landgrave Philip of Hesse, by Lenz. Among the smaller collections of documents those of Löscher (*Reformations-Acta, 1517-19*), Förstemann (*Urkundenbuch*), and Balan (*Monumenta*) are useful. Similarly the more recent ones of Scheel (*Documente zu Luther's Entwicklung bis 1517, 1929*) and Köhler on the Indulgence controversy.

A foremost place among the general surveys of German Reformation history must still be assigned to Ranke's *Deutsche Geschichte* in the edition of the German Academy (1925-26), though the editors could have improved it by more copious critical notes in the light of more recent research. Bezold's *Geschichte der Deutschen Reformation* (1890) is an admirable study of the subject, and the same may be said of the volume of K. Müller's *Kirchengeschichte*, and that of Hermelink in the *Handbuch der K.G.*, edited by Krüger (1929), which treat of the Reformation. Other recent surveys are Brieger's *Reformation* (1914), Pflugk-Hartung's *Im Morgenrot der Reformation* (1926), Brandi's *Deutsche Reformation und Gegenreformation* (1927), Kaser's *Zeitalter der Reformation und Gegenreformation* (1922). The concise exposition of the general causes of the Reformation given by von Below in *Die Ursachen der Reformation* is a counter-blast to Troeltsch's *Bedeutung des Protestantismus* (1911), and other works on the general movement.

From the Roman Catholic point of view the movement is more or less elucidated in Pastor's *History of the Popes*, which is the fruit of the study of the contents of ecclesiastical archives in Germany and Italy, though its objectivity is open to question.

Far more vulnerable from this point of view is Janssen's *Geschichte des Deutschen Volkes*, which is written in a too partisan spirit to be generally relied on, though it contains a mass of illuminating material drawn from the sources.

German research in the ecclesiastical history of the sixteenth century concentrates largely on the life and work of Luther as a Reformer. It derived a stimulus from the Quatercentenary of his birth in 1883, and from the discovery of new material, especially the early lectures on the Psalms, Romans, and Hebrews, the notes on Augustine and some of the Schoolmen, etc. It was strengthened by Denifle's violent attack on the Reformer in his *Luther und Lutherthum*, which produced a heavy crop of Protestant vindications. Denifle's thesis is that Luther's breach with the mediæval Church and papacy was the result of a moral collapse, not of genuine religious experience, and he reviews his reforming activity largely in the light of this perverse assumption. The attack showed, however, weak points in the previous Protestant literature on Luther and the Lutheran movement, especially the lack of an adequate knowledge of the Scholastic Theology on the part of Protestant writers. It led to a more intensive study of the later Scholasticism in which Luther was trained. Witness Seeberg's very capable review of the Scholastic Theology in his *Dogmengeschichte*, following on his monograph on *Duns Scotus* (1900). It thus contributed to a new and most fruitful period of Luther research, which during the last quarter of a century has deepened and widened our knowledge of him and the German Reformation.

Besides the biographical matter handed down by Melancthon, Mathesius, Ratzeberger, Myconius, and other contemporaries, the great mine for the history of Luther and the Reformation is the works, correspondence, and table talk of Luther himself. The standard Weimar edition from 1883 onwards has superseded its Erlangen predecessor, though some of the earlier volumes need revision, and the introductions to most of them are too exclusively devoted to bibliographical and philological matter and do not attempt an evaluation of the contents. A number of excellent selections from his works have been edited by Clemen, Borchardt, Berger, and others. Among the biographies the solid work of Köstlin, as revised by Kawerau (fifth edition, 1903) still holds the first place, though a new edition, in accordance with more recent research, would make it more serviceable. Hausrath's *Luther*, which comes next in importance, is less thorough, but more readable (new edition by v. Schubert). Berger has

attempted to depict Luther in relation to the culture of the time (*Luther in kulturgeschichtlicher Darstellung* (1895, 1921). Troeltsch rather one-sidedly estimates the man and the movement as an embodiment of the mediæval, rather than the modern spirit, in his *Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (1912). Köhler's concise sketch (*Luther und die Deutsche Reformation*, 1917) is a model of its kind. Boehmer's *Luther in the Light of Recent Research* (1918) is a highly valuable estimate and vindication in reply to Denifle and other detractors, though there is a trace at times in this and other German works on Luther of one-sidedness. The Roman Catholic Grisar has devoted three bulky volumes to the arch-heretic of the sixteenth century, which have been translated into English. Though he writes within the limits of prescribed authority and is therefore not objective, he avoids the offensive tone of Denifle, while showing traces of his influence. A large amount of biographical literature is devoted to the elucidation of stages or phases of Luther's life. Naturally the earlier period excites the greatest interest, inasmuch as it is in the years of conflict (to circa 1530), as the emancipator of the Church from papal-mediæval domination, that Luther's work is most dramatic and formative. The partial biographers have, therefore, largely concentrated on the earlier Luther. An outstanding example of such works is O. Scheel's *Luther, von Katholicismus zur Reformation* (1916-17). More concise, but illuminative are Boehmer's *Der Junge Luther* (1925), Ritter's *Luther* (1925), Oergel's *Vom Jungen Luther* (1899), A. V. Müller's *Luther's Werdegang* (1920), Stracke's *Luther's grosses Selbstzeugnis* (1926), and the sketches of Neubauer, v. Schubert, Merz, von Walter. The two most recent are those of Wendorf (1930) and Siegfried, *Luther und Kant* (1930).

On the origin and development of Luther's reforming ideas the masterly essays of Holl (*Aufsätze*,⁵ 1927) are the most important contribution of recent times. Epoch-making in this connexion are Ficker's edition of the Commentary on Romans (1908 Ger. tr. of the Commentary by Eilwein, 1927), and von Schubert's edition of that on Galatians (1918). Loof's disquisition on his doctrine of Justification (*Stud. und Krit.*, 1917) is also of great value, in addition to A. Ritschl's extensive monograph on the subject. Wolf's *Staupitz und Luther* and Jeremias' *Joh. von Staupitz* are valuable for Luther's relation and indebtedness to the Vicar-General of his Order. The influence of the mediæval mystics on Luther's religious development is elucidated by Hunzinger (1906), A. V. Müller (*Luther und Tauler*, 1918), and others.

For the crucial period from 1517 to 1521, in which Luther enunciated and developed his reforming ideas in conflict with the traditional Church, the works of Kalkoff (*Entscheidungsjahre der Reformation*, 1917, and monographs on Hutten, Erasmus, and the Diet of Worms) are based on intensive research of the relative sources, though some of his conclusions have encountered considerable criticism. Special aspects are treated by a large number of writers, as in Köhler's (1895) and Kohlmeier's (1922) expositions of Luther's epoch-making Address to the Nobility, Bauer's exposition of the new Wittenberg Theology (*Die Wittenberger Universitäts Theologie*, 1928), Brieger's *Aleander und Luther*, Ficker's *Luther als Professor* (1928), etc.

In the period succeeding the Diet of Worms the salient features are the conflict with the radical wing of the movement, represented by Carlstadt and Münzer and culminating in the Peasant Rising, the organization of the Lutheran evangelical Church, and the Anabaptist movement. On the struggle with the radical reformers Barge's *Karlstadt* (1905) is the most extensive work, though it has been subjected to sharp criticism by K. Müller and others (*Luther und Karlstadt*, 1907). See also Nik. Müller, *Die Wittenberger Bewegung* (1911). Much research has in recent years been bestowed on Th. Münzer as the protagonist of the prophetic-spiritual movement, which was influenced by mediæval mysticism. Witness the recent monographs of Zimmermann (1925), Boehmer (1922), Schulz (1928), Bloch (1922), Holl (1927), which have modified the old superficial estimate. On the Peasant Rising in relation to the Reformation fresh contributions have been made by Stolze (*Bauernkrieg und Reformation*, 1926), Althaus (*Luther's Haltung im Bauernkrieg*, 1925), Brandt (*Der grosse Bauernkrieg*, 1925), Rosenkranz (*Der Bundschuh*, 1927). For Luther's conception of the Church and its constitutional organization there is also a considerable volume of new literature as the result of the discussion of this highly controversial subject. Whilst Luther conceived of the Church as an autonomous spiritual association based on the faith of the individual Christian (the Church as the Communion of Saints), he was driven by circumstances to align it with the civil power in the work of organization. There is thus a certain inconsistency in his attitude to the State, which varies with the attitude of the State towards the Reformation movement, and this lack of a definite policy from the outset is reflected in the controversial tone of the works dealing with this subject, which have not reached anything like exact agree-

ment. Besides the general reviews in the Histories of *Kirchenrecht* (Mejer, 1869; Richter, 1851; Sohm 1892; Brodt, 1921, etc.), the discussion has been enriched by the special monographs of Rieker (1893), Kattenbusch (*Theol. Stud. und Krit.*, 1928), Rietschel (*ib.* 1906), Sohm (*Weltlicher und geistlicher Recht*, 1914), Drews (*Zeitschr. für Theol. und Kirche*, 1908), Hermelink (*Zeitschr. für Kirchen Gesch.*, 1908), Köhler (*ib.* 1917-18), Holl (*Aufsätze*, 1927), K. Müller (*Kirche, Gemeinde, und Obrigkeit nach L.*, 1910), Kohlmeyer (*Entstehung der Schrift Luther's an den Adel*, 1922, and 'Die Bedeutung der Kirche für Luther,' *Zschr. K.G.*, 1928), Meinecke ('Luther über Christliches Wesen,' *Hist. Zeitsch.*, 1920), Hashagen (*Zsch. K.G.*, 1922 and 1927), Pallas (*Kirchenregiment in Kursachsen vor der Reformation*, 1910), Althaus (*Die Gemeinde im Lutherischen Kirchengedanken*, 1929). The German territorial church constitutions of the Reformation period have been collected by Richter (*Die Evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des 16^{ten} Jahrhunderts*), and more recently by Sehling, whose work under the same title has, in part, superseded his.

In the practical task of maintaining his distinctive views against dissidents of a variety of type, Luther unfortunately resiled from the cardinal principle of toleration, which he vindicated so nobly in his early conflict with the mediæval Church and Papacy. This is rather tragically apparent in his ultimate attitude towards the Anabaptists and the Spiritual Reformers, who are to be distinguished from the earlier radicals of the Münzer type. This movement has also received an intensive study in a number of German monographs, in some of which at least a more sympathetic and objective treatment of it has become apparent, and which have largely superseded the older works of Ritschl (*Geschichte der Pietismus*, 1880), Keller (*Geschichte der Wiedertäufer*, 1880), Zur Linden (Hoffmann, 1885), Loserth (Hubmaier, 1893), Heberle (Hans Denck, 1851-55). It must suffice to mention those of Tumbült (*Die Wiedertäufer*, 1899), Troeltsch (*Soziallehren*, 1912), Sachsse (Hubmaier, 1914), Detmer (Rothmann, 1904), Geisberg (*Die Münsterischen Wiedertäufer*, 1907), Löffler (*Die W. zu Münster*, 1923), Paulus (*Protestantismus und Toleranz*, 1911), Wappler (*Die Stellung Kursachsens und Landgraf Philipp*, 1910), Nestler (*W. Bewegung in Regensburg*, 1926), von Schubert and Schönebaum (*Kommunismus*, 1919), and H. Ritschl (1923) and L. Müller (1927) on the same subject. The other type of dissent, represented by Schwenckfeld and Franck, which is often wrongly slumped with Anabaptism, has been elucidated by Hartranft in his

edition of Schwenckfeld's works (1907-13), Ecke (Schwenckfeld, 1911), Grützmaker (*Wort und Geist*, 1902), Hegler (*Geist und Schrift bei Sch. Franck*, 1892), Reimann (*S. Franck als Geschichtsphilosoph*, 1921), Bornkamm (*Mystik, Spiritualismus*, 1926), Kühn (*Toleranz und Offenbarung*, 1923), Dilthey (*Weltanschauung und Analyse des Menschen seit Renaissance und Reformation*, 1914), Maier (*Der mystische Spiritualismus Weigels*, 1926), Bornkamm (*Luther und Böhme*, 1925). There is, in fact, a marked tendency at the present time to explore more intensively this interesting, but somewhat obscure field of research.

German research has been less interested in the later period of Luther and the Reformation, of which the distinctive feature is the effort to vindicate and consolidate the movement in the face of the papal and imperial attempts to suppress it. Nevertheless the literature on the movement from 1530-46 contains a number of outstanding contributions: for instance, Gussmann's monograph on the Augsburg Confession (1911) and Schirmacher and Tschackert on the same subject. The quatercentenary of the Confession in the present year has added a goodly array to their number, for which see Liebisch's catalogue, May 1930, 41-42. Von Schubert has illuminated the political negotiations relative to it in 1529-30 in his monograph on *Bekennnis und Bündnisbildung* (1920), von Walter in *Die Depeschen des Nic. Diepolo*, 1530 (1928). See also Winckelmann on the Schmalkald League (1892), Vetter, *Religionsverhandlungen* (1889), Pruser, *England und die Schmalkaldener* (1929), Rosenberg, *Der Kaiser und die Protestanten* (1903), Moser, *Religionsverhandlungen* (1889), Korte, *Konzilspolitik Karls V.*, 1905, Cardauns, *Geschichte der Kirchlichen Unions und Reformbestrebungen* (1910), Pastor, *Correspondenz des Card. Contarini* (1880), Dittrichs, *Contarini* (1885), Rückert, *Theologische Entwicklung Contarini's* (1926), Druffel, *Kaiser Karl V und die Römische Kurie* (1875), Hasenclever, *Politik Karls V und Landgraf Philipp* (1903), Joachim Müller, 'Politik Karls V am Trienter Konzil' (*Z.K.G.*, 1925), Brandi, *Die Augsburger Religionsfriede* (1927), Susta, *Die römische Kurie und das Konzil von Trent* (1904-14), Schmidt, *Studien zur Geschichte des Konzils von Trent*, 1925, etc. Boehmer's work on Loyola (1914) is the standard German one, and to that of Duhr on the Jesuit order belongs the same predicate.

The distinctive ideas to which Luther gave expression in his didactic and controversial writings have been minutely investigated and elucidated afresh during the last quarter of a century. Hence

the plethora of treatises on his theology which issue from the German press year by year, and in which his cardinal principles of justification by faith and the supreme authority of Scripture, the anti-hierarchical nature of the Church, Christian individuality and liberty have been the subject of keen and often controversial discussion. Some would deny to him the title of theologian, and there is a grain of truth in the denial in the sense that he was not a systematic thinker like Calvin or Melancthon. But as a creative genius in the sphere of religious thought he is the greatest of all the theologians since Paul and Augustine, and his lofty eminence as a theologian is evidenced by the enormous literature that has been devoted to the exposition of his religious thought. The best German review is perhaps that of Seeberg in the fourth volume of his *Dogmengeschichte* (1917), which is superior to A. v. Harnack's more general survey.

Holl's *Essays* are alike a profound contribution to the themes treated by him and symptomatic of the present reaction from the more purely cultural and ethical to the religious aspects of the Reformation. A new edition of Theodore Harnack's *Luther's Theologie* (1927) is worthy of perusal alongside Loof's *Leitfaden*. As evidence of the concentrated interest on Luther the theologian, see, for example, the recent monographs of C. Seeberg (*Luther's Theologie*, 1929), Hirsch (*Luther's Gottesanschauung*, 1918), Stange (*Studien zur Theologie Luther's*, 1928), Tschackert (*Entstehung der Lutherischen und Reformierten Kirchenlehre*, 1910), O. Ritschl (*Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus*, 1912), Loewenich (*Luther's Theologia Crucis*, 1929), Mensching (*Glaube und Werk bei Luther*, 1926), Preuss (*Frömmigkeit Luther's*, 1917), and innumerable articles in the theological journals.

Luther's translation of the Bible, which was alike the grand fruit and force of the movement, has been discussed with ample learning in the recent works of Walther, Risch, Hirsch. On his attitude to the Scriptures, which he critically evaluated, see Scheil, *Luther's Stellung zur Heiligen Schrift* (1902), Thimme under the same title (1903), Preuss, *Die Entwicklung des Schriftsprincipis bei Luther* (1901).

Numerous monographs have appeared on Luther's collaborators in the movement. As samples, mention can only be made of Ellinger's *Melancthon*, Clemen's *Melancthon und Alex. Alesius* (1929), Diehl's *Bucer* (1904), Thiele on 'Agricola' (*Theol. Stud. und Kritiken*, 1907), Kawerau on the same Reformer under the title of *Joh. v. Eisleben* (1890), Vogt's *Bugenhagen* (1888), etc.

A voluminous literature has been produced on Humanism in relation to the Reformation, with which it was closely associated, though in some respects differing from it in spirit and purpose. Many of the evangelical Reformers had been votaries of the new culture before becoming followers of Luther, and Luther himself was influenced by it, though not so directly, and deeply appreciated it as an adjunct of religious reform. Melancthon—the Praeceptor Germaniae—is the outstanding representative of this combination of devotion to the new culture and the new cult, and the edition of his works in the *Corpus Reformatorum* is a contribution of great importance to the history of both. Fresh light has been thrown on the movement as influenced by Hutten and Erasmus and other humanists by Kalkoff, Mestwerdt (on Erasmus), Bömer (critical edition of the *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*, 1924), von Walter on Erasmus's conception of Religion (1906), Wernle on the Renaissance and the Reformation (1912), Ritter, 'Geschichtliche Bedeutung des Deutschen Humanismus' (*Hist. Zeitschr.*, 1923), Hermelink (*Religiöse Reformbestrebungen des Deutschen Humanismus*, 1907), etc.

German scholars have also contributed to the elucidation of the Reformation in lands outside Germany. To the German-Swiss Egli and Finsler we owe the standard edition of Zwingli's works from 1895 onwards (continued by Köhler and Farner, *Corpus Ref.*). R. Stähelin of Basle has given us the standard biography of Zwingli, C. Stähelin the *Correspondence of Æcolampadius* (1927). Köhler has published the first volume of his standard work on Luther and Zwingli (1924). Wernle has devoted the second volume of his exposition of the evangelical faith, as contained in the principal writings of the Reformers, to Zwingli (1919). Calvin, the standard edition of whose works is also contained in the *Corpus Ref.*, has similarly been the subject of recent German or German-Swiss research. Witness the publications of Lang (1909), Barth's selection of his works, *Calvinstudien*, edited by Bohatec (1909), Anrich (1928), Quervain (1926). The study of Calvin's theology and political views has produced quite a crop of treatises. On his theology, Bauke (1922), Brummer (1925), Bechmann (1926), Friethoff (1926), Riesel (1928), Wernle (1919), Wolgendorff (1916), Bergerhaus (1910). On his political teaching, Hausserr (1923), Barm (1924), von Schubert (1923). Space permits only to mention examples of recent contributions to the Reformation History of some other lands—those of Wotschke on the Polish Reformation (1921), Arbusow for the Baltic lands

(1921), Makower and Lang for England, Doerries on Calvin and Lefèvre (*Z.K.G.*, 1925), K. Müller ('Calvin and the French Libertines,' *ib.* 1921).

In conclusion, I plead guilty to the omission, for the same reason, of many worthy contributions to the History of both the Ancient and the Reformation periods and apologize to the many scholars who have enriched the history of these periods by their

researches. As a fellow-worker in this field who knows the exacting laboriousness of genuine historic research, and has derived much edification from the research of these scholars, I would add the expression of my appreciation of this unflagging labour, which reflects high honour on German scholarship and affords convincing proof of its distinguished ability and industry.

In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

A Village Vow.

BY MRS. A. THRELFALL VICKERY, PRESTWICH,
MANCHESTER.

'Pay thy vows unto the Most High.'—Ps 50¹⁴.

SOME three hundred years ago there was vowed in a tiny village a solemn vow. It came through illness, and has been kept ever since. There had been war in Europe for a generation—the Thirty Years' War, your books of history call it—and after the war, in 1633, came pestilence, or plague, like our influenza, only worse. It spread like wildfire over Bavaria. But there was one village which escaped in a marvellous way; Oberammergau was its name. The villagers had kept most careful guard from the beginning; they let no outsiders come into their village, neither would they let their villagers go into other villages. But, at last, one man evaded the quarantine. He was a labourer of Oberammergau, working in a neighbouring village. He climbed the mountain passes, crept stealthily through the tracks, and, all unsuspected, came back to his own home. Poor Caspar Schuchler! He was desperately home-sick and longed to see his wife and children; he was terribly anxious about them, and wanted to make sure that they were not in need. Alas! he had come from a plague-stricken village, and he had plague upon him; in two days he was dead, and in thirty-three days threescore-and-ten people of his own village had died too!

The few who were left were filled with dread for the future. In their distress they prayed earnestly to God; they repented of their past sins, and they made a great vow—just as Jacob did, at Bethel.

Wasn't the vow a strange one? They promised that if God would remove that plague from them

they would for ever afterwards hold a religious play, showing God's love to men, and that this Play should be shown every ten years. What happened? The plague ceased immediately, so the villagers, showing their sincerity, prepared to keep their vow, and they have kept it practically ever since.

The pastor of the village was a gifted man; he took the story of Christ's crucifixion, added a few scenes from the Old Testament, and then he set the villagers to work to perform this new Play. The custom was common in those days of performing Religious Plays, Miracle Plays, Nativity Plays, Passion Plays, much as we have Missionary Plays, Hospital Plays, Pageants, etc., nowadays, so the people were quite accustomed to that sort of thing. The pastor kept before them their vow. He made them feel that, in taking their parts, they were pleasing God, and he led them to put in their very best work, as an offering to God.

At first the Play was given in the churchyard, but that soon became too small to hold the crowds who wanted to see it. So a great theatre was built, with an open-air stage, and, as you watch the Play, the birds fly in and out, and you can see the mountains in the distance, and can hear the noise of tinkling cattle-bells and goat-bells in the street outside.

Who are the players? They are Oberammergau villagers, and are chosen by a committee of about twenty members. One takes the part of Christ; another of Mary, His mother; another Mary Magdalene; or Annas, Judas, or Peter. There are the crowds, too, the traders in the Temple, the crowd who shouted 'Hosanna!' and the crowd on the Crucifixion Day. Then there are the tableaux. These are Old Testament pictures, brought in to show how the Old Testament is linked to the New Testament. For instance, just before the scene where Judas sells Jesus for thirty pieces of silver,