

Gottschalk: Servant of God. A Story of Courage, Faith, and Love for the Truth. Connie Meyer. Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2015. Hardcover. 160 pages. \$17.95. Reviewed by Ryan Schipper, member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church.

Gottschalk: Servant of God. A Story of Courage, Faith, and Love for the Truth by Connie L. Meyer recounts the life, faith, doctrine, and suffering of a little known but mighty servant of God, Gottschalk of Orbais. Written from a perspective that puts the reader inside Gottschalk's mind, the book details his monastic upbringing which provided the opportunity for him to read the works of church fathers, particularly Augustine, which would bring him to a knowledge of and love for the truth of predestination. It then explains the negative attention this drew from the apostate leaders of the church. Always contrasting the truth that Gottschalk maintained with the hate-filled accusations of these leaders, the book provides a valuable demonstration of how unjustly the righteous can be and are treated, and strikingly presents the necessity of a sure and firm knowledge of the truth for all of God's people.

The real points of interest in the book are the details regarding the various synods to which Gottschalk was summoned. Already at quite a young age he was called before kings, priests, and emperors for an explanation of his teachings. Who among the book's readers can imagine being on trial before kings? Yet Gottschalk had numerous such encounters, and indeed admirably represented and defended the truth. This, of course, escalated the conflict with those who opposed him, and ultimately brought about his martyrdom. Yet therein lies the tremendous merit of this little book. Its record of such Spirit-granted courage, boldness, and strength in a suffering saint is encouraging and comforting, while also causing the reader to look inward, to examine his own spiritual growth. It is an exhortation to hold the truth dear, and to hold it in absolute surety.

Throughout, the book provides the historical context which helps to place the events into our understanding of the time period. It clarifies the often scattered facts and murky information that most tend to have about the so-called Dark Ages, placing the events of the book into their proper historical position

alongside Charlemagne and the political strife between his sons. Encouraging about this aspect of the book is the glimpse it provides into perhaps the scale of the true church of those days. From the perspective of our day, the Dark Ages were indeed dark. I dare say that most readers would scarcely need two hands to list off every man of the church they could think of between Augustine and Wycliffe. Yet God's church existed somewhere! By reading about Gottschalk's wide-ranging preaching and the influence of his many writings, the reader is encouraged to bring to mind the certainty of God's faithfulness to his church. Even amid darkness, God will maintain the light of the gospel, the light of his church.

Taken together, the fine research that is evident in this book, the easy flow and interesting perspective of the writing, and the detailed account of this great story of faith make it valuable for all ages. Also, the narrative frequently digresses to draw the reader's attention out of the mere story and into the larger reality. God's people can only have confidence in the truth. Therefore, when the truth is at stake, God's people must be bold to stand for that truth, to fight for it and defend it. The truth is opposed today, opposed on many fronts. Take up, therefore, and read of a man gone long before us, who stood for the truth as we must stand for the truth. Take an example, as well as encouragement, from Gottschalk, the servant of God.