the Concordia Lutheran

"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35.

"Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path" Ps. 119:105.

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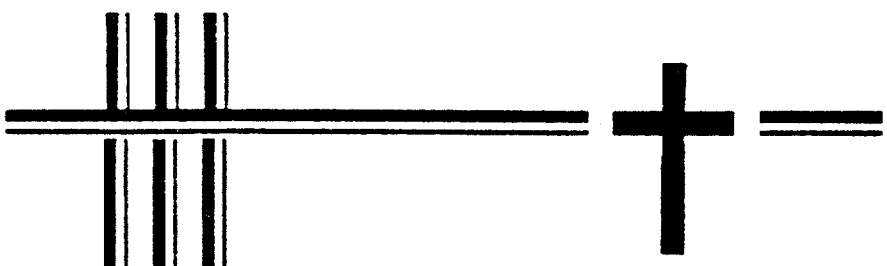

When The Fulness Of The Time Was Come, God Sent Forth His Son!

—Galatians 4:4.

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statement of 1932.**

To show, **on the basis of Scripture,** what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or a false church, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgement of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

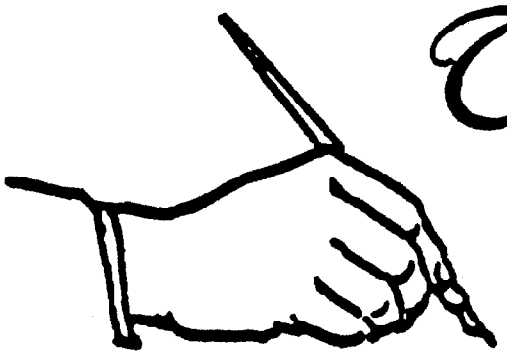
To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.



The President's Column

The Forgiveness of Sins is the Greatest Blessing in this world because of the **GREAT COST** of this blessing. It cost more than all of the gold and silver in the world. The Lord Jesus Christ paid for this blessing with His holy precious blood, by His innocent suffering, and through His ignominious death on the cross. **"There is no difference,"** writes the Apostle Paul, **"for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,"** Rom. 3:22-25. **"In whom,"** the same Apostle states, **"we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace,"** Ephesians 1:7. Thus, our redemption with its resulting blessing of the forgiveness of sins was not procured with **"corruptible things as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot,"** I Peter 1:18,19. This, all by itself, makes the forgiveness of sins the greatest blessing—far above all other blessings in this world. It cost the blood of the eternal and almighty Son of God by whom all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, Col. 1:16.

This, of course, is also the Greatest Blessing of Christmas! It was in order to procure for us and for all mankind the full and free forgiveness of all our sins that the eternal Son of God became incarnate, taking into His divine person a truly human body and soul—being born of the Virgin Mary in the fullness of time. He is the **"Horn of Salvation"** (Luke 1:69) whom the Lord God raised up in the house of His servant David and through whom He **"hath visited and redeemed His people,"** Luke 1:68. He is the One before whose face John the Baptist should go **"to prepare His ways; to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins,"** Luke 1:76,77. From such full and

free forgiveness flows the **"peace and good will toward men"** of which the angels sang to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem and makes the message of Christmas one of **"great joy!"** Luke 2:12,10.

But this greatest of all blessings which the Christ Child came into the world to procure for all people, namely, the **Forgiveness of Sins,** is **obscured** almost completely by the din and hubbub of the Christmas Season and **diluted** by the ever-popular modernistic preachers whose chief purpose is to make people feel good about themselves and **"deceive the hearts of the simple"** by their **"good words and fair speeches,"** Rom. 16:18. Christmas shopping, the giving and receiving of presents, helping the poor and homeless, outward good will and cheer, sermons about peace among the nations of this world, the outward celebration of the birthday of Jesus--**these** are the highlights of Christmas in the world today! Very little is heard about the **love** of the almighty God for our lost and condemned human race which moved Him to send His only-begotten Son into this sin-cursed world **as a true man** who would be able to take our place under His holy Law and keep it perfectly as our Substitute; also to suffer the punishment of hell which we all deserve because of our sins--thus satisfying the inexorable judgment of Hell which God's justice pronounces upon every sinner--that all who **"believe in Him might not perish but have everlasting life,"** John 3:16. The Scripture texts which teach these things about the manger Child of Bethlehem are seldom heard or stressed, such as, **"God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,"** Gal. 4:4,5; **"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us"** Gal. 3:13; **"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen,"** Rev. 1:5,6. **"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace!"** Gal. 5:4, and, **"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,"** Acts 4:12.

This is the Message of Christmas which is, by God's

grace, still proclaimed to the congregations of our beloved Concordia Lutheran Conference, not a "mixtum compositum" of Scripture with man's wisdom; a socially acceptable perversion of Law and Gospel with its "God loves you; Jesus loves you" theology (Gospel reductionism); or a mythological, relative approach to original and actual sin in the context of our Savior's birth. How thankful we can by that we can still hear now, by His birth in Bethlehem, the Christ Child brings to us and to all people the grace of God, God's undeserved kindness, through which alone we have the forgiveness of sins, true peace of heart and conscience, and the certain hope of a life of joy and bliss beyond the grave—for, by becoming a true man, like unto us in every respect, yet without sin, Christ, the eternal Son of God, made eternal salvation possible for every person ever to live in this world. How sad it is for those from whom this message is withheld and how eager Satan is to destroy our Conference which is perhaps the last bastion for the proclamation and defense of the Full Truth of God's Word.

A hymn that is never heard any longer at Christmas time, as it was in Christmas seasons long past, was written by Eleanor Hunter around the turn of the century. Perhaps some of you would like to read it and ponder why such words are not heard on radio or TV today.

"From every spire on Christmas Eve,
The Christmas bells ring clearly out
Their message of good will and peace
With many a call and silver shout!
For faithful hearts in the angels' song
Still echoes in the frost air,
And at the altar low they bow
In adoration and in prayer.

A thousand blessed memories throng,
The stars are holy signs to them,
And from the eyes of every child
Looks forth the Babe of Bethlehem;
But there are others, not like these,
Whose brows are sad; whose hopes are cross'd.
To whom the season brings no cheer,
And life's most gracious charm is lost.

To whom the Story, old and sweet,
Is but a fable at the best;
The Christmas music mocks their ears,
And life has naught of joy or rest.
Oh! for an angel's voice to pierce
The clouds of grief that o'er them rise
--The mists of doubt and unbelief
That veil the blue of Christmas skies.

That they, at last, may see the Light
Which shines from Bethl'em, and unfold
For Christ the treasures of their hearts
--Richer than spicery or gold.
Hope of the Ages, draw Thou near,
Till all the earth shall own Thy sway,
—And when Thou reign'st in ev'ry heart
It will, indeed, be Christmas Day."

Your servant in Christ,

Rev. Paul R. Bloedel

Peace on Earth

"And on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:14b

Just about everywhere we look and in just about everything we read and listen to during the Christmas season, the word **"peace"** appears again and again as the all-time favorite of writers, broadcasters, social commentators, and even graphic artists. The promise of **peace**, we are told, makes Christmas one of the most hopeful times of the year for countries, for families, for politicians, for warring factions in society of whatever type they may be, and for the world community in general. "Peace" is the politically-correct watchword of the season, as everyone from Christmas card designers to world leaders try to focus our attention upon this strangely-elusive commodity in their holiday messages and wishes for the new year ahead. This year they want us to remember the end of the "cold war," the fall of totalitarian communism in Europe, and the restoration of tranquility to the deserts of the Middle East, not to mention the conclusion of an ofttimes bitter election campaign with its inflammatory rhetoric and polarization of our citizenry.

On balance, however, there's not all that much peace to celebrate considering the brutal civil strife in Bosnia, the chaos in Somalia, on-going turmoil between the I.R.A. and Britain and between Israel and her Islamic neighbors, and, closer to home, gang violence in our streets and schools, domestic violence in the family circle, and a broad spectrum of social violence stirred up by "activists" just spoiling for a fight. No one with his eyes open to what is happening around him in the world today should be living under false illusions of an imminent earthly peace in these latter days of sore distress! And yet, the vast majority of Christmas messages and New Year's wishes grossly misrepresent the **peace** of which the angels sang and tragically mislead people into false hopes and false expectations for their future!

The **"good tidings of great joy"** which the Christmas angel brought and of which the heavenly choirs sang was not an **earthly peace** AT ALL in any quarter of society. On the contrary, the Lord Jesus Himself foretold **"distress of nations with perplexity"** (Luke 21:25); turmoil in the family caused by those who desert Christ and His precious truth and cause no end of grief for faithful Christians (Matthew 10:34-37); strife and schism in outward Christendom as **"the love of many shall wax cold"** (Matt. 24:12), as false prophets arise and deceive many (Mark 13:5-6), and as **"there shall come a falling away"** (II Thess. 2:3) on the part of those who simply will not tolerate sound doctrine anymore (II Tim. 4:3-4). **Earthly peace** will continue to elude us, even though the Lord may temporarily halt certain strife and distress as evidence of His longsuffering mercy to the children of men, whom He earnestly desires to save through the preaching of His Gospel (I Tim. 2:4).

Particularly in the face of all the turmoil we see from day to day, **"peace on earth"** remains a mystery to the children of this world. They can't rightly comprehend it, because it must be **"spiritually discerned"** (I Cor. 2:14) by faith created in the heart of man by the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace. Those who reject the Word of God, those who depart from the truth and turn their ears unto fables (II Tim. 4:4), have only a perverted notion of what **"peace on earth, good will toward men"** is all about!

You see, **"peace on earth"** is not a condition yet to come sometime in the future—it's already **HERE!** It's the peace which the world cannot give; but it's GOD's gift already given to all men in Christ Jesus their Savior! For, when we consider what took place on that first Christmas night, the true nature of **"peace on earth"** is as clear as the voices of the heavenly host. **"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman,"** born of a **virgin** in fulfillment of the prophecies, **"made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,"** Gal. 4:4,5. The **"unspeakable Gift"** of His only-begotten Son to be man's Substitute under the Law and the perfect payment for man's sins made it possible for God to be both **just** and **merciful** at the very same time. He visited the fury of His wrath upon

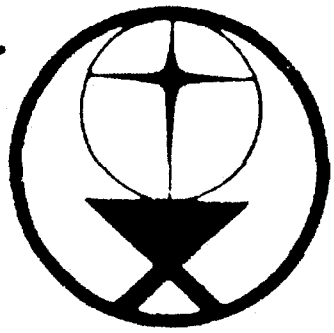
Christ, the "scapegoat" for sinners, and He declared the guilty to be innocent for the sake of Christ's perfect righteousness offered to all men in the Gospel—**"the garment of salvation"** to cover their sin and shame. Thus Paul writes to the Corinthians: **"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,"** II Cor. 5:19. This was a completely **one-sided,** forensic (judicial) act on God's part, with no work of man counted or even considered as contributing anything at all to it; for St. Paul writes to the Romans: **"To him that worketh NOT, but believeth on Him that justifieth the UNGODLY, his faith is counted for righteousness,"** Rom. 4:5. Thus **GOD** was the one who DECLARED THE **ULTIMATE TRUCE** between Himself and sinful men, forgiving their sins and declaring the ungodly righteous for Christ's sake. THAT **TRUCE** or **reconciliation** IS THE **PEACE** OF WHICH THE ANGELS SANG: **"Peace on earth and mercy mild: God and sinners reconciled!" — GOD'S** GOOD WILL **TOWARD** MEN! Luke 2:14.

And now, to **receive** God's gift and make it **our very own,** Paul says: **"Be ye reconciled to God,"** II Cor. 5:20. **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,"** Acts 16:31. FAITH is nothing but the beggar's hand that reaches out to receive what God has given to each and every sinner by grace, as His free, unmerited gift. **"Therefore being justified BY FAITH, we HAVE peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"** (Rom. 5:1)—we are already in possession of God's forgiveness, of God's **objective justification,** by faith in Jesus, the Child of Bethlehem, just as Abraham and all the believers of the Old Testament had it by faith in the promises **before the fact** (Rom. 4).

THAT is the **peace** that is given us, not just at **Christmastime,** but all through the year and throughout our life by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. It's not a **FUTURE PEACE,** but a **PRESENT PEACE** that the world cannot give, a peace that unbelievers reject and forfeit, in spite of God's earnest desire that they have and enjoy it with us. May that **PEACE OF GOD** which passeth all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus in the New Year and unto life everlasting!

-D.T.M.

"GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH!"



"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," I Timothy 3:16.

How often it happens that when people have repeatedly heard and seen something, they finally begin to take it for granted and no longer regard it as extraordinary or spectacular. What a miracle it is, for example, that out of a tiny kernel of corn there springs forth the stalk, and from the stalk comes an ear of corn to feed and nourish man. But who pays any attention to that? But in a far more glorious and incomprehensible manner we have the extraordinary event of Christ's birth. But how many within the pale of Christendom actually give proper heed to this miracle of miracles -- **"God was manifest in the flesh!"** God becomes man to save all mankind—the wonder of all wonders, **"which things the angels desire to look into"** (I Peter 1:12), and we must sadly observe the utter coldness and indifference on the part of many Christians to meditate upon this glorious truth!

Just think! God dwells within the hearts of all true believers in Christ and therefore the Apostle Paul refers to the Christians as the **"temple of God,"** II Cor. 3:16. Yet, even though we can say that God dwells within the heart of every true believer in Christ, **we certainly cannot and dare not say that every Christian is God!** But with the Christ-Child, God is united in such a manner that not only can we say that God lives in this Child, but also that **this Child is God!** For **"God was manifest in the flesh!"**

No man can tell God how He must do something. No man can be God's advisor. The Apostle writes: **"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding**

out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?" Rom. 11:33,34. After our first parents had fallen into sin, incurring God's wrath—temporal and everlasting condemnation, no man, not even an angel from heaven, would have been able to answer God what was now to be done that man might be able to escape this justifiable punishment—**"the wages of sin is death,"** Rom. 6:23. Since God has revealed His plan of salvation in His Word, we who have been brought to faith in Jesus through that precious Gospel message, must now stand in awe of His almighty power and unsearchable wisdom and praise His boundless love and mercy.

For on the one hand, God is holy, righteous and just; on the other hand, God is full of unending love, grace and mercy. What was He to do since man had transgressed His holy Law? Could He simply have pardoned man and taken him into the joys of heaven? Indeed not, for had He done that He would have ceased to be the righteous and just God. What would be the reaction of decent people if a judge were simply to pardon a man who had been guilty of murder? Obviously, people would object. The Lord Himself demands that the judges **"shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked,"** Deut. 25:1. And now should God act contrary to what He had commanded? Moreover, when God created man He wrote His Law into man's heart and told him concerning the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **"the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,"** Gen. 2:17. If God would have simply pardoned man, then what about His attributes of holiness, righteousness and justice? He reminds us, **"Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, <u>till all be fulfilled</u>,"** Matt. 5:18.

Who was able to fulfill God's Law? Man was unable to do it. After all, **"death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,"** Rom. 5:12. **"They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one,"** Psalm 14:3. And what else can be expected? **"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be,"** Rom. 8:7. The original sin with which every man is born (John 3:6) breaks forth into all manner of actual sins, as the Lord so

plainly declares: **"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies,"** Matt. 15:19. There is no man who was able to fulfill God's Law as He demanded that it be kept—**perfectly** in thought, word and deed. Humanly speaking, there was no hope, man had nothing more to look forward to than eternal destruction in hell.

How comforting to know that, on the other hand, God is full of unending love, grace and mercy. **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"** John 3:16. What man was unable to do, God did! Our dear heavenly Father sent Jesus into the world who assumed a true human nature within the womb of the Virgin Mary and willingly placed Himself under the Law, suffering and dying on the cross as the worst of criminals. Why all of this? Not because He was a sinner who had to endure all of this for His own justification. On the contrary, **"For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens,"** Heb. 7:26. **"In Him is no sin,"** I John 3:5. The human nature of Christ was absolutely free from every taint of original sin and actual sin. For this Child born of the Virgin Mary was **God manifest in the flesh!** The heavenly Father made Him **who knew no sin** to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (II Cor. 5:21). That Child born of the Virgin Mary was conceived by the Holy Ghost as the angel told Mary: **"Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,"** Luke 1:35. That manger in the little village of Bethlehem cradled the long-awaited Messiah who is true God and true Man in one undivided Person. **Why was He able to fulfill the Law perfectly in our stead, atone for all of our sins, and overcome death and the devil for us? Because here we behold God manifest in the flesh!**

The so-called enlightened intelligence and reason of man rejects this blessed mystery which the Lord has made known unto us in His Word. In his pride man declares that it is not possible that this tiny Child who depends upon His mother's care is **God manifest in the flesh!** Even some of those who desire to be known as Christians reject this divine

mystery. The Jehovah Witnesses, for example, contend that the Child in Bethlehem's stall was "certainly not the Supreme God Almighty in the flesh" ("Let God Be True," edit. 1946, p.87), that He was a perfect man, no more, and no less. In line with their blasphemous false teaching, they make John 1:1 read "a god" instead of "God" in their New World Translation. Similarly, we observe the Mormons speaking in such a blasphemous manner of the birth of our dear Savior. Listen to the words of their prophet, Brigham Young: "When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. And who was the Father? He was the first of the human family (Adam);...Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the garden of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven" ("Journal of Discourses," Vol. I, pp. 50,51).

We know what the popular opinion of Christ is in our day and which has even infested the pale of Christendom. It reads a little more polished than the brazen errors of the Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons. It states that Jesus was nothing more than a good and pious man, an example worthy of being copied by the generations that succeed Him on earth; a man who was so illustrious and self-sacrificing that His birthday is still celebrated with great acclaim after twenty long centuries; a great man indeed, but **not God.** If Christ were only a mere man, then His birthday is of no more importance to us than any other great man in the history of the world, and the fact that we would attach so much weight to His birth would be mere foolishness. But thanks be to God, that we can declare with the prophet who had foretold some 700 years **before** the Savior's birth: **"Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord,"** Isaiah 25:9. Thanks be to God, that we can exclaim with the Apostle John **after** the Savior's birth, **"This is the true God and eternal life,"** I John 5:20. Thanks be to God, that our faith does not depend upon the opinions of men, but stands upon the solid foundation of the Word of God which tells us that the Child born in the little town of Bethlehem is **God manifest in the flesh!**

M.L.N.

DEPRESSION

Most people are at some time or the other in their lives plagued with depression. For some it lasts merely a short time and for others it may persist. We Christians are not exempt from this affliction since we have our sinful flesh and the devil gives us no peace or rest in his untiring efforts to destroy our faith. Look at the example of David. He writes in Psalms 42 and 43: **"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the Health of my countenance, and my God,"** (vs. 11 & 5). As we Christians experience the various woes of this life the devil delights in plaguing us with melancholy thoughts in an effort to drag us down into the dark pit of depression and gloom. Such a state is extremely dangerous mentally and physically. But far worse is the hard done to the **soul**!

The Lord wants us to be cheerful and happy individuals. The Apostle exhorts us, **"Rejoice in the Lord,"** Phil. 3:1; **"Rejoice evermore,"** I Thess. 5:16; **"Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: And shout for joy,"** Psalm 32:11. And the Lord reminds us through the pen of Solomon, **"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine,"** Prov. 17:22. Therefore it is the devil who wants us to be depressed and sad. Hence we Christians must also ask God to forgive us our depressive and gloomy thoughts.

We Christians have no reason to be lulled into a state of depression! Just consider what the Lord has done for us! When we lay bound in sin, **"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"** John 3:16. Believing in Jesus as our Savior, we have as our own possession the forgiveness of all sins and the promise of an eternal life in the joys of heaven. All this without any merit or worthiness on our part but rather with all thanks to our dear

heavenly Father **"who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins,"** Col. 1:13,14. As children of our heavenly Father who loves us in Christ our dear Savior, we now know **"that all things work together for good to them that love God"** (Rom. 8:28), and that He will never allow us **"to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it,"** I Cor. 10:13.

When we are tempted by the devil, the author of all depression, then let us ask our dear heavenly Father to grant us the help of His Holy Spirit that our depressed spirits may be uplifted by such assurances from His Word so that we can rejoice and sing with the Psalmist: **"I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth,"** Psalm 34:1.

M.L.N.

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"From heaven above to earth I come,
To bear good news to every home!"

Dr. Martin Luther was not only a diligent and faithful theologian, pastor, and teacher; but he was also a specially gifted poet and musician, as his hymns amply demonstrate. A devoted "family man" and Christian father, Luther brought all of his God-given talents to bear upon the upbringing of his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Christmas in the Luther home was only one of many opportunities for the Christian training of the young to manifest itself as a high priority in the great reformer's life.

The Christmas hymn, "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come," was written by Luther in 1534 specifically for his children. It was not only an instructional hymn, the first five stanzas being a poetic paraphrase of the Christmas angel's message in Luke 2:10-14, but the remainder of the hymn placed before the family a wonderful opportunity to respond personally to **"the good tidings of great joy"** with the highest possible motivation, that of the saving Gospel of the Lord Jesus--who became poor that we might be rich; who became man that we might become the adopted children of God; who was given to us, that He might give His life a ransom for our sins and satisfaction of God's justice in our place, making possible God's reconciliation of the world unto Himself. In stanzas 13-15, the children fold the little Christ Child to their breasts in faith and take to themselves **"peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"** (Rom. 5:1), to the glory of God in the highest!

Catherine Winkworth's translation, on which the version in our Lutheran Hymnal is based (#85), is typically true to Luther's original German; and we offer it here as our Christmas gift to the children of our beloved Conference, courtesy of Martin Luther, and to the glory of God! May it always maintain a treasured nook in our hearts at Christmas-time and all through the year!

"From heav'n above to earth I come
To bear good news to ev'ry home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
Whereof I now will say and sing:

"To you this night is born a child
Of Mary, chosen virgin mild;
This little child, of lowly birth,
Shall be the joy of all the earth.

"This is the Christ, our God and Lord,
Who in all need shall aid afford;
He will Himself your Savior be
From all your sins to set you free.

"He will on you the gifts bestow
Prepared by God for all below,
That in His kingdom, bright and fair,
You may with us His glory share.

"These are the tokens ye shall mark:
The swaddling-clothes and manger dark;
There ye shall find the Infant laid
By whom the heavens and earth were made."

Now let us all with gladsome cheer
Go with the shepherds and drawn near
To see the precious Gift of God,
Who hath His own dear Son bestowed.

Give heed, my heart, life up thine eyes!
What is it in yon manger lies?
Who is this Child, so young and fair?
The blessed Christ-child lieth there.

Welcome to earth, Thou noble Guest,
Through whom the sinful world is blest!
Thou com'st to share my misery;
What thanks shall I return to Thee?

Ah, Lord, who hast created all,
How weak art Thou, how poor and small,
That Thou dost choose Thine infant bed
Where humble cattle lately fed!

Were earth a thousand times as fair,
Beset with gold and jewels rare,
It yet were far too poor to be
A narrow cradle, Lord, for Thee.

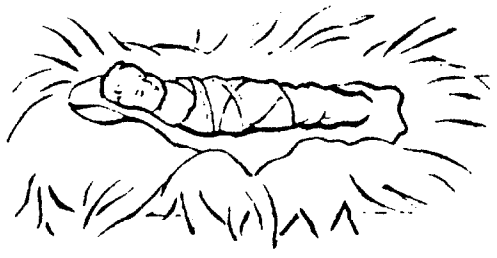
For velvets soft and silken stuff
Thou hast but hay and straw so rough,
Whereon Thou, King, so rich and great,
As 'twere Thy heaven, art throned in state.

And thus, dear Lord, it pleaseth Thee
To make this truth quite plain to me,
That all the world's wealth, honor, might,
Are naught and worthless in Thy sight.

Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Make thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.

My heart for very joy doth leap,
My lips no more can silence keep;
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradle song:

Glory to God in highest heaven,
Who unto us His Son hath given!
While angels sing with pious mirth
A glad new year to all the earth.



Around the World

with editorial comment

by M. L. Natterer

Several times a year, thousands of believers flock to Naples, Italy, to witness a miracle. As religious leaders turn a small glass vial upside down several times, the congealed contents—believed to be the blood of Saint Januarius—begin to flow. For decades skeptics have tried to explain away this remarkable event, first noted in 1389, with various theories: For example, the heat from the officiant's hands and the altar candles liquifies the substance. The latest explanation comes from three Italian researchers who say that the saint's "blood" may in fact be something else, a mixture say, of water, salt, and molysite, a mineral that was available six centuries ago. When combined, these substances form a dark brown gel that not only resembles congealed blood, but becomes liquid upon being picked up or tilted, a chemical property called thixotropy. Other mixtures available in the 1300s, including clay in water and beeswax in alcohol, they say, can also behave in this manner. The researchers, headed by chemist Luigi Garlaschelli of the University of Pavia, admit that their theories so far will have to be taken on faith: The Roman Catholic Church forbids opening the vial.

The Roman Catholic Church is well-known for its "relics." Its official position was set forth in the Council of Trent which convened in the 16th century: "The holy bodies of which holy martyrs and of others now living with Christ...are to be venerated by the faithful; through which many benefits are bestowed by God on men, so that they who affirm that veneration and honor are not due to the relics of saints or that these and other sacred monuments are uselessly honored by the faithful and that in the places dedicated to the memories of the saints are in vain visited with the view of obtaining their aid, are wholly to be condemned" (Session XXV.) It

was common knowledge at the time of Luther that Frederick the Wise, the Elector of Saxony, had at least 5,000 relics which meant that he would be able to get out of purgatory 1443 years sooner. The Roman Catholic Church has attributed all manner of miraculous happenings, cures, and healings to such objects. The veneration and superstitious use of such relics is completely unscriptural. But such practices are the characteristics of the Antichrist "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" **(II Thess. 2:9) to lead men away from** "the only true God, and Jesus Christ" **(John 17:3), who alone** "is the Propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" **(I John 2:2), and teach them to put their trust in relics!**

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The highest-ranking Episcopal priest in the nation, who headed a national committee examining the church's position on sexuality and the priesthood, has resigned following charges that he sexually abused young men in his upstate congregation, church officials announced. The allegations surrounding the priest, the Rev. Wallace Frey, rector of St. David's Church in the Syracuse suburb of DeWitt, are expected to stir uncertainty as the 2.4 million-member Episcopal Church continues to struggle with the issue of ordaining homosexuals, a debate that dominated the denomination's General Convention last year in Phoenix. The 56-year-old priest had played a central role in achieving a compromise on the issue at the convention, staying off a resolution that would have declared sexual relations allowable only for married priests. Frey cold not be reached for comment on the charges.

The above news item from "The Seattle Post Intelligencer," October 7, 1992, reveals the sad condition existing within the Episcopal Church both doctrinally and morally. Doctrinally the Episcopalian Church has deteriorated down through the years. This is particularly the case when one remembers the Book of Common Prayer which was in use through the turn of the century and which contained the Articles of Religion adopted by them in 1801. The 20th Article of these 39 Articles state that "it is not lawful for the Church to ordain

any thing that is contrary to God's Word written...It ought not to decree any thing contrary to the same..." Unfortunately, however, these articles of Religion proved to be nothing more than mere words. Adherence was not generally required and as the years rolled by, the voices of the nonconformists openly preached contrary to these Articles. Rationalism and modernism were tolerated and finally these Articles of Religion was simply set aside. In 1967 a prominent Episcopalian Bishop declared, "I'll go the God-is-Dead theologians one better and say that if that God isn't dead, he ought to be." The Episcopal Church has allowed one doctrine after another to be attacked (the Triune God, the Virgin Birth of the Savior, the deity of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, etc.). Observe how the downward trend has continued. The Episcopal Church also accepts the theory of evolution, the ordination of women pastors, and now the abomination of homosexuality. Is it any wonder then that we also observe their moral decay?

Since the denial of the existence of hell by many Episcopalian pastors is declared to be "within the allowable latitude of the church," what else can be expected as far as their morals are concerned? Since there is no punishment for those who live in such abominable sins, why not live in them! But the Day is rapidly approaching when such, if they do not repent and believe the Gospel, will hear the awful sentence, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," **Matt. 25:41.**

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Disillusioned worshippers in Seoul, South Korea, attacked preachers who had led them to believe that doomsday would come. Police said church leaders could be charged with fraud. Some of the church's estimated 20,000 believers, many of whom had left their jobs or sold homes to prepare for the expected end of the world reacted angrily. The believers had expected the "rapture"-- the ascent to heaven of the faithful--at midnight Wednesday, Oct. 28, followed by seven years of apocalypse, bringing the earth's annihilation and the second coming of Christ. Some 2500 believers had gathered at the main church in Seoul on that date for the rapture. As many as 20,000 other believers

assembled at 200 other churches across South Korea and in one church in the Philippines. Most leaders of the Seoul-based church, who had predicted that Wednesday would bring the end of the world, said their timing had been wrong. Police said nineteen people were already in jail or under investigation for fraud, including church founder Lee Jan-Rim, 46, and a man who said he talked to God through a piano. Lee has been jailed on charges of swindling church members of $4 million in donations.

The date-setters never seem to learn their lesson! William Miller, the founder of the Adventists, declared that Christ would return and the world would end on March 21, 1844. The Jehovah Witnesses have also had their share of date setting. Charles Taz Russell, the founder, taught the invisible advent of Christ for 1874 and the "open manifestation" after a "hidden presence" of forty years in 1914. They predicted in 1941 ("Watchtower," 9/15/41) that Armageddon was only "months" away. Then in 1966 ("Awake," 10/8/66) they foretold that the end would come in 1975. In 1988 a so-called Bible scholar claimed that Christ would return on September 13th of that year. And so it goes on and on. Such date setting should not seem strange to the Christian since the Lord Jesus had foretold that there would be those in the last days who would arrogate this right to themselves. "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be," **Matt. 24:23-27. We have no right to pry into that knowledge that God has reserved for Himself and arrogantly presume to know what He has not revealed unto us in His Word!** "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only," Matt.24:36. **As we observe these various Scriptural signs being fulfilled, let us take to heart the Savior's promise,** "So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors," **Matt. 24:33.** "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," **Revelation 22:20.**

ST. LUKE

The birth of Jesus Christ according to the Gospel of Saint Luke, Chapter two:

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the City of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and lineage of David: To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ✦ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them: Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. ✦

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