



I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

John 12:4

This is a great old Reformation hymn given us by the Lutherans and was composed during the early dawn of the Reformation as the fires of martyrdom were akindling. Certainly, if the venerable John Wycliffe was the Morning Star of the Reformation, Martin Luther and those of his era and trust represented the early rays of sunlight bursting forth in efflorescence on the horizon of Continental Europe. This hymn appears in the Lutheran Service Book as #333, and in the 1982 Hymnal of the Episcopal Church - USA as #53. Regrettably, The Episcopal Church could not bear the hard truth of the second verse and, therefore, changed it to a softer meaning; but the original is Scriptural and the change by the Episcopal Church is not (but politically correct). We will examine both renditions in the course of the devotion. I owe the wonderful experience to review this hymn to the suggestion of Mr. Walt Aardsma.

There was, for a time, some question about the author's name; but this question has been resolved. The author's name was Johann Roh. " *Johann Cornu, Johann Horn Roh. Johann, was a native of Domasbitz near Leitmeritz, in Bohemia. Roh was his name in Bohemian, but when he wrote in Latin he styled himself Cornu, and in German Horn.*" (Hymnary.org) Roh wrote the lyrics to this ADVENT hymn in 1544 - a point at which the Lutheran Church was robust and the English Reformation was in its infancy. Music "*Gottes Sohn ist Kommen*" composed by Michael Weisse, 1531.

The excellent English translation is by Catherine Winkworth and she is "*the most gifted translator of any foreign sacred lyrics into our tongue, after Dr. Neale and John Wesley; and in practical services rendered, taking quality with quantity, the first of those who have laboured upon German hymns. Our knowledge of them is due to her more largely than to any or all other translators; and by her two series of Lyra Germanica, her Chorale Book, and her Christian Singers of Germany, she has laid all English-speaking Christians under lasting obligation.*" --Annotations of the Hymnal, Charles Hutchins, MA, 1872

Once He Came in Blessing
For Advent

*Once He came in blessing,
All our ills redressing;
Came in likeness lowly,
Son of God most holy;
Bore the cross to save us,
Hope and freedom gave us.*

*Still He comes within us,
Still His voice would win us
From the sins that hurt us;
Would to Truth convert us
From our foolish errors
Ere He comes in terrors.*

NB - The 1982 Episcopal Hymnal changes the last two lines
of this verse thusly:
(not in torment hold us,
but in love enfold us.)

*Thus, if thou hast known Him,
Not ashamed to own Him,
Nor dost love Him coldly,
But wilt trust Him boldly
He will now receive thee,
Heal thee, and forgive thee.*

*But through many a trial,
Deepest self-denial,
Long and brave endurance,
Must thou win assurance
That His own He makes thee,
And no more forsakes thee.*

*He who thus endureth
Bright reward secureth;
Come, then, O Lord Jesus,
From our sins release us;
Let us here confess Thee
Till in heaven we bless Thee.*

Once He came in blessing, All our ills redressing; Came in likeness lowly, Son of God most holy; Bore the cross to save us, Hope and freedom gave us. The first stanza describes our Lord's purpose in His first ADVENT as a baby, laid in a manger, in a stables in Bethlehem. He came subsequent to an abundance of Godly prophecies whose voice is echoed from Eden until Malachi. On the Eve of His birth, there was no room found in lowly Bethlehem for this Holy Child. He made His bed in a rough-hewn, wooden manger (perhaps the same nature of wood upon which He would be crucified thirty-three years later). His first bedroom was a stable among the beasts of the field. You and I, without His Coming, are no better than those beasts of the field, and maybe of far less virtue. He bore the cross that He passes on to us. Each of us who follow Christ must follow Him in love, in good works, in teaching, in sacrifice, in bearing our crosses daily, in death - but also in RESURRECTION! There is a popular bumper sticker which avers, Only two have died for you - Jesus Christ died for your soul; the American

Soldier died for your FREEDOM! Well, that is a catchy little motto, but it is totally wrong, for without Christ, there is no freedom and liberty! *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.* (Isaiah 61:1) There is not a single reader of this devotion, or believer past, present, or future, who has not been set free by the Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Still He comes within us, Still His voice would win us From the sins that hurt us; Would to Truth convert us From our foolish errors Ere He comes in terrors. If we are truly the Temple of the Living God, there must have been a point in time at which the Lord Jesus came into our hearts. Jesus not only comes to us, we must also hear and heed His Voice to come unto Him. Being converted to Truth does not mean simply KNOWING the truth (evidence the flood of evangelical imposters on TV) - it means devouring the Truth, digesting the Truth, and making the Truth a part of your soul's constitution. Sin is, indeed, foolishness. Why would any sensible person sell out his eternal soul for a bowl of red porridge as did Esau? The very last line of this stanza relates to the Second Advent of Christ when He comes to execute judgment. The pallid and compromising modern Episcopal church cannot brook this hard doctrine, so, like the Bible itself, they CHANGE its meaning to not in torment hold us, but in love enfold us. One who is being tormented is not necessarily foolish and sinful - to ECUSA, perhaps God is unfairly tormenting them. Instead of the dreaded return of Christ to judge (by the licentious sinners), *Ere He Comes in Terrors* becomes to the Episcopal Church, *but in love enfold us*. If they can engineer away the meaning of the Bible itself, they feel free to change ancient hymns to suit their filthy lifestyles.

Thus, if thou hast known Him, Not ashamed to own Him, Nor dost love Him coldly, But wilt trust Him boldly He will now receive thee, Heal thee, and forgive thee. To truly KNOW Christ once is to know and love Him eternally! The love of God is the progenitor of all love - our love is simply an echo of His love. Had He not loved us first, we could never return (echo) love. *We love him, because he first loved us.* (1 John 4:19) There is no such thing a cold love - love is warm and even hot. It takes courage to have faith in the unseen. The Christian is no wimp, but a strongly constituted man or woman of strong back-bone. That faith is not native to the human spirit, but an act of grace of the Holy Spirit!

But through many a trial, Deepest self-denial, Long and brave endurance, Must thou win assurance That His own He makes thee, And no more forsakes thee. We are all commissioned in the Army of God. We are - men, women, and children - soldiers of Christ. The soldier endures hardships and deprivation that those who lack the courage of battle are not privileged to undergo. Not only does the Soldier of Christ bear the battle in courage, he does so, as well, with the full knowledge that his battle is not time-limited, but long and for the duration of Satan's hostilities. Read the thoughts of the great man of God, Matthew Henry, on the matter: *This fitly follows upon denying ourselves; for he that will not deny himself the pleasures of sin, and the advantages of this world for Christ, when it comes to the push, will never have the heart to take up his cross. 'He that cannot take up the resolution to live a saint, has a demonstration within himself, that he is never likely to die a martyr.'* so Archbishop Tillotson. Matthew Henry. We do not make ourselves His people but, rather, He chooses whom He will and makes them His own.

He who thus endureth Bright reward secureth; Come, then, O Lord Jesus, From our sins release us; Let us here confess Thee Till in heaven we bless Thee. Please observe how carefully great hymns of the faith follow precisely the Word of God and reinforce biblical doctrine! Endurance is one of the basic characteristics of a good and faithful

soldier. He gains that endurance through the basic training of Bible Study, preaching, fellowship, Communion, self-denial, hardships, and labors of love. Our Lord's first Advent was to make salvation available and to seal that salvation for those who are His Elect. He releases us from our sins as we repent and confess those sins. It is not a one-time experience, but the Mercy Seat is made available to each believer that he may come to Christ in confession and once more erase the distance that divides him from the will of God. The qualifying seal of election in Christ is measured by this standard: *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.* (Matt 10:22) Are you?