

# Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE PROCLAMATION  
OF THE WORD OF GOD



Psalm 119:105  
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,  
and a light unto my path.

October 2013

## A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Pastor Dennis Hannu  
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

**C**ONGREGATIONAL SINGING IS an important part of our worship services and many of the hymns we sing are rich with meaning. Martin Luther (1483-1546) wrote the hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" sometime after the Protestant Reformation of which he was the originator. Luther nailed his 95 theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenburg, Germany, on October 31, 1517, sparking the Reformation.

Luther came to understand "the just shall live by faith" when studying the book of Romans, especially

*Romans 1:17: For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith, in connection with Romans 3:24: Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*



Luther had understood the righteousness of God to be a punishing and essential righteousness that demands we keep the whole law of God. Now he understood the righteousness of God to be an imputed righteousness, given to man as a free gift through Jesus the Christ. Luther said years later, "I pondered night and day until I understood the connection between the justice of God and the sentence: 'The just shall live by faith.' Then I grasped that the justice of God is the righteousness by which, through grace and pure mercy, God justifies us through faith. Immediately I felt that I had been reborn and that I had passed through wide open doors into paradise."

Martin Luther had discovered the Gospel afresh, and from this foundational principle of salvation by grace alone through faith alone as expressed in the Scriptures, he would make his stand against the errors that he saw in the church of his day. Eventually Luther was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church and the age of reformation was born.

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" became the "marching song" of the Reformation. This hymn is based on Psalm 46 and became the battle cry of the people. It became a source of strength and inspiration for many, even for those who were martyred for their faith and convictions. This hymn has been translated into many languages and is said to have 60 translations in the English language alone. Many Lutherans stand when this hymn is sung during a church service in honor of its majestic message and its author. The first line is inscribed on Martin Luther's tomb and can still be read today by visitors traveling to Wittenburg, Germany.

Here are the lyrics of this majestic hymn:

A mighty Fortress is our God, A trusty Shield and Weapon.  
He helps us in our ev'ry need That hath us now o'ertaken.  
The old malignant foe E'er means us deadly woe;  
Deep guile and cruel might Are his dread arms in fight;  
On earth is not his equal.

With might of ours can naught be done, Soon were our loss effected.  
But for us fights the Valiant One, Whom God Himself elected.  
Ask ye who this may be? Christ Jesus, it is He.  
As Lord of Hosts adored, Our only King and Lord,  
He holds the field forever.

Though devils all the world should fill, All watching to devour us,  
We tremble not, we fear no ill. They cannot overpow'r us.  
For this world's prince may still Scowl fierce as he will,  
We need not be alarmed For he is now disarmed;  
One little word o'erthrows him.

The Word they still shall let remain, Nor any thanks have for it.  
He's by our side upon the plain with His good gifts and Spirit.  
Take they, then what they will, Life, goods, yea, all; and still,  
E'en when their worst is done, they yet have nothing won;  
The kingdom ours remaineth.

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.  
Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and  
though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;  
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the  
mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. (Psalm 46:1-3) ~*



# Love by the Spirit

Martin Luther

But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 5:15-16

**W**HEN FAITH IN CHRIST is overthrown, peace and unity come to an end in the Church. Diverse opinions and dissensions about doctrine and life spring up, and one member bites and devours the other, meaning that they condemn each other until they are consumed. To this, the Scriptures and the experience of all times bear witness. When the unity of the Spirit has been lost, there can be no agreement in doctrine or life. New errors appear without measure and without end.

For the avoidance of discord, Paul laid down the principle that each person is to do his duty in the station in life where God has placed him. No person is to vaunt himself above others or find fault with the efforts of others while lauding his own. Let everybody serve in love.

It is not an easy matter to teach faith without works, and still to require works. Unless the ministers of Christ are wise in handling the mysteries of God and rightly divide the Word, faith and good works may easily be confused. Both the doctrine of faith and the doctrine of good works must be diligently taught, and yet in such a way that both the doctrines stay within their God-given sphere. If we only teach works, as our opponents do, we shall lose the faith. If we only teach faith, people will come to think that good works are superfluous.

Because I exhort you to mutual love, you are not to think that I have gone back on my teaching of justification by faith alone. I am still of the same opinion. To remove every possibility for misunderstanding, I have added this explanatory note: *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.* (Galatians 5:16)

With this verse, Paul explained how he wanted this sentence to be understood: by love, serve one another. When I bid you to love one another, this is what I mean and require: *Walk in the Spirit*. Because you remain sinners as long as you live, we know very well that you cannot fulfill the Law. Nevertheless, you should endeavor to walk in the Spirit, to fight against the flesh, and follow the leading of the Holy Ghost.

It is quite apparent that Paul had not forgotten the doctrine of justification, for in bidding the Galatians to walk in the Spirit, he, at the same time, denied that good works could justify. When I speak of fulfilling the Law, I do not mean to say that you are justified by the Law. All I mean to is that you should take the Spirit for your guide, and that you should resist the flesh. The most that you shall ever be able to do is to obey the Spirit and to fight against the flesh.

The lust of the flesh is not altogether extinct in us. It rises up again and again, and wrestles with the Spirit. No flesh, not even that of the true believer, is so completely under the influence of the Spirit that it will not bite and devour, or at least neglect the commandment of love. At the slightest provocation, it flares up, demands to be avenged, and hates a neighbor like an enemy; or at least does not love him as much as he ought to be loved.

Therefore, the apostle established this rule of love for the believers: serve one another in love. Bear the infirmities of your brother. Forgive one another. Without such bearing and forbearing, giving and forgiving, there can be no unity, because to give and to take offense is unavoidably human.

Whenever you are angry with your brother for any cause, repress your violent emotions through the Spirit. Bear with his weakness, and love him. He does not cease to be your neighbor or your brother because he has offended you. On the contrary, more than ever before, he requires your loving attention. ~



When I say, "I am a Christian," I am not shouting, "I am clean living."  
I'm whispering, "I was lost, But now I'm found and forgiven."  
When I say, "I am a Christian," I don't speak of this with pride.  
I'm confessing that I stumble And need Christ to be my guide.  
When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not trying to be strong.  
I'm professing that I'm weak And need His strength to carry on.  
When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not bragging of success.  
I'm admitting I have failed And need God to clean my mess.  
When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not claiming to be perfect.  
My flaws are far too visible, But God believes I am worth it.  
When I say, "I am a Christian," I still feel the sting of pain.  
I have my share of heartaches So I call upon His name.  
When I say, "I am a Christian," I'm not holier than thou.  
I'm just a simple sinner Who received God's good grace, somehow!

Carol Wimmer

Submitted by Alvar Helmes; Battle Ground, Washington

# The Pure and the Lovely

Pastor Jay Weidner  
Laurium, Michigan

**Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.**

**Philippians 4:4-8**

**I**T SEEMS EVERY TIME I hear or read the news my mind goes back to these verses penned by Paul almost 2,000 years ago. Our world apparently revels in the distasteful, the wicked and the impure. Likely it was no different in the time of Paul's Rome, so he wrote to the Philippians instructions that would insulate them from the despicable things that would steal their security away and cause them to worry, thus robbing them of their peace.

It is significant then that he begins by telling them to be glad. As the children of God this is our right; we have the right to be glad. The world always wants to cause us to be troubled by focusing on its evils and so become discouraged. God wants us to focus on the finished work of His Son Jesus and be glad. This gladness leads directly to the next verse where the KJV uses the term "moderation" to translate a Greek word that means "yielding, gentle, kind," which in turn is derived from another Greek word meaning "clemency, gentleness, graciousness." Paul says let your gentleness, your graciousness be known to all people. The joy that we have in this world will be found by showing the grace of God which we all have received in abundance to one another and to all people.

Don Henley, an American songwriter once wrote: "We all need a little tenderness; how can love survive in such a

graceless age?" Little did he know that Paul had already anticipated the question many years beforehand and provided the only solution: by the people of God manifesting the grace of God to all God's offspring. This is how true love is shown, when it is selfless and full of grace, so the KJV often employs the term "charity" to render the idea of love as opposed to a selfish or romantic desire.

We are to do this because the Lord is near, indwelling us by His Spirit and directing us by His grace to live graciously. Knowing the grace of God allows us then to live without worry, we pray and know with assurance that God will provide all that we need when we ask in the name (as representatives of His Son) and by God's grace He gives us His peace which establishes us in heart and mind in Jesus the Christ. Therefore we are to direct our thoughts to those things that keep us focused rightly: the pure and the lovely.

My wife Kristine and I recently made a visit to the congregation in Hockinson, Washington. The people there were so kind and gracious that we enjoyed our time with them immensely. Rev. Chuck Bylka and I recently visited with a delegation from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and had 2 hours of very interesting, gracious conversation with them. Together with other representatives from the Laurium congregation I have enjoyed several recent visits with congregation members. Coincidentally the name of one of the people is Clement, a name derived from the Latin word for mercy and merciful. That describes how each of those visits went; they were full of grace and mercy, a joy to partake of and a pleasure to remember. Now when I hear the news of the world I let my mind go back to those visits and meetings, each of them mindful of the things of Christ, and I find peace.

How wise is the Spirit of God who directed Paul to write such wonderful words. May you dwell in your life upon those things which bring you the peace of God in Christ Jesus.

*God's peace.*



## He's Holding On

Leona Matson  
Langley, British Columbia

**My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. (John 10:27-29)**

Some time ago I was riding public transportation into town. Across from me, a father was holding his young daughter in his arms. They were looking past me out the window and talking about their day. Suddenly the train car lurched and we were all thrown forward. In that split second I saw both the sudden panic in the father's eyes as he almost let his daughter fall and the supreme trust in his daughter's eyes that her daddy was keeping her safe!

As I watched this small drama play out, God reminded me that I have a Father who is holding on so much tighter than that father on the train. My Father will never let go of me... or even almost let go. He promises that nothing can take me from His hands and His promises are always true. As I felt His love wash over me, I prayed that God would give me the faith of that little girl who trusted without reservation that her daddy would always hold her in his embrace and never let her go! ~



# Christians Are Like Sheep

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children around the globe,

Hello once again to God's little lambs and the sheep of His pasture. In the 23rd Psalm, David writes about the Lord being his Shepherd. We are so much like sheep, it's amazing. When sheep have a good shepherd (as Jesus is ours), they do very well. When sheep have a shepherd who does not give them the best care, they have many troubles. Let's see how we are like sheep.

~ **Sheep cannot take care of themselves.** They need to be given proper care every day.

We need to keep close to Christ every day and there we will receive the best care. Very often we forget to be near to God and then we experience problems; sometimes they are small, but many times they are big.

~ **A sheep farmer must put his own special mark** on his sheep. He does this by cutting a certain design into the ear of each sheep. I'm sure this is not a pleasant task, but it makes the farmer feel a great responsibility for his sheep. They are his and no one can mistake them.

God knows each of you His children and He has set His mark on you. Jesus says He is the Shepherd of the sheep and He would lay His life down for us. We know that He did give His life for us on the cross.

~ **A shepherd will go to great lengths** for his sheep. He will do whatever needs to be done for his sheep all day long, and all night long, too. A shepherd sleeps lightly (as a mother does with her children, ready to hear their needs of the night) and he hears his sheep if they have a need in the night.

Jesus never slumbers or sleeps as He is always looking out for each of His children—His sheep and lambs.

~ **A good shepherd gives his sheep** the best food, in grains, fields for grazing, and clean water. Sheep will not drink fast-flowing water. They prefer the water to be calm.

Our good Shepherd Jesus does the same for us. He wants us to be taken care of well. We shall not be in need of anything when Jesus is in our life.

~ **Sheep will not lie down and rest** if they are troubled by bugs or if they are hungry. They are very restless.

When a Christian has sin in their life, that person will not be at peace. I pray that we will always hunger to learn more of our Shepherd. That is a good hunger.

~ **Sheep need special oils** put all over their heads to ward off disease from flies and other insects that give them much discomfort.

We need the anointing of the Holy Spirit daily to keep our minds on Jesus. When we have the Holy Spirit, we can keep the devil away. He will always try to bother us, just as flies that will constantly trouble sheep.

~ **Sheep have a tendency to follow** one another. If a naughty sheep finds a way out of its pasture, the other sheep will follow.

This is much like people. If someone is with their friends and is doing wrong, very often the friends follow along

and do not correct the wrong. We must be careful to avoid this.

~ **A farmer always leads his sheep;** he does not chase them or beat them from behind. Often he will have a dog to help him to make sure everyone follows. There are times when a naughty sheep tries to run away and needs to be brought back.

This is a picture of God's children following the Lord our Shepherd, and the ones who leave the flock because of temptations to do things that take us away from Jesus.

~ **A good shepherd provides good shelter** for his sheep during bad weather and for the winter months.

Our Good Shepherd Jesus is our shelter from the storms or tough times in life. We can go to Him in prayer and be comforted and feel His protection.

~ **Sheep are some of the dumbest animals on earth.**

I am not saying you children are dumb! What I am getting at is this: sheep need full time care and keeping to do well, and so do people. We always need to be guided back to what is right. If we do wrong, we learn lessons the hard way. We have to always deal with our mind that thinks to do or say many things. Our mind can think not-so-good thoughts and it can also think many good thoughts. We need our mind to go through each day; this is a gift from God. We so badly need Jesus to lead us in our thoughts and actions to stay in the "green pastures" that He would have for us. I pray that you children will listen to your Shepherd Jesus and let Him lead you on your journey of life. He will never lead you on a wrong path, but always the RIGHT ones.



Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord GOD. And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel 34:30-31

I pray that God will protect your minds and bodies from sin and harm as each of you children go back to school. Do your best; you'll be blessed.

# Our Blessed Heritage

## Brief History of the New Ipswich Apostolic Lutheran Church

Roland Goddard

### Original Settlers

The first Laestadian Christians moved from Finland to New Ipswich in the early 1900s, including the families of Issac Aho, Antti Antilla (said to be the first Finnish settler in New Ipswich), Michael Gedenberg, Leander Somero, and Matti Muhonen.

Issac and Liisa Pittiaho came from Haapajärvi, Finland, in 1901. Their son Matti was only two months old. Issac was the first pastor in the church on Poor Farm Road, and his son Emmanuel also preached there. Many descendants of Issac live here today.

Leander Somero came to Michigan from Ylivieska, Finland, in 1882. In 1904 he moved to New Hampshire and bought a farm. His wife Amanda and 7 children came later that year. Leander Somero and Issac Aho co-founded the Apostolic Lutheran Church in New Ipswich. There are also many descendants of Leander living here today.

Michael and Maria Gedenburg came from Laihia, Finland, to Worcester, Massachusetts, about 1901 and moved to New Ipswich in 1907. He was one of the purchasers of the Poor Farm Road Church.

Matti Muhonen moved from Kivijärvi, Finland, in 1908 to Greenville, New Hampshire, adjacent to New Ipswich.

Before a church building was purchased, it is assumed they had home services. The following is from Nick and Olga Somero's history: "On rainy days when Leander Somero couldn't do farm work outdoors, he often went around the neighborhood with his Bible tucked under his arm and preached to his neighbors. Frequently, he walked through the blueberry pasture to discuss the Bible with the Gedenbergs. The ladies also went often to each other's homes in the quiet afternoon hours to share coffee and read the Bible and Laestadius."

### Poor Farm Road Church

The first church—a cute little church about 35 feet by 40 feet with a steeple—was on Poor Farm Road. It was bought from Antti Anttila for \$450 in May 1917.

The buyers are listed in our original church record book, written in Finnish, of course: Johan Aho, Issac Aho, Leander Somero, Johan Somero, Matti Somero, Emanuel Aho, Michael Gedenberg and Peter Salo. They held services at the church every other Sunday, mostly in Finnish.



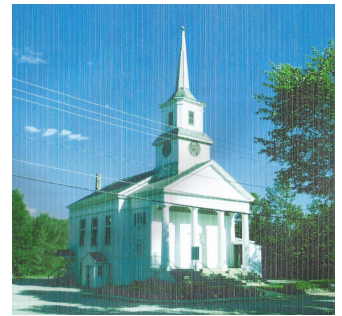
Matti & Hilja Aho

The children usually sat in the balcony. In 1932-1933 Antti Krekula and Ville Kaikkonen from Finland held services here. Martin Seppala's book says: "One of the preachers stopped preaching and glared at the boys in the balcony and said, 'If you boys don't stop talking up there, I'm going to preach all night.'" From the balcony Martin and Wallace Seppala saw their mom signaling for them to come down and sit with them.

The Poor Farm Road church had grown to nearly 100 children. A new and bigger church was needed.

### Village Center Church

Our second church was bought in 1936. The Baptist Meeting House, built in 1815, was taken down in 1850 and moved to the center of the village of New Ipswich. A basement and steeple were added. The original heat was a big pot-bellied stove in the basement. Later an oil-fired furnace was added.



The following description of its purchase is from Martin Seppala's book: "The Baptist congregation had dwindled to three elderly women, and indeed, they were willing to sell their building, especially when they heard the buyers were believers in Jesus, too. Mom loved the clock in the steeple tower, and with a basement, a large sanctuary and a roomy balcony upstairs, the Baptist church building had plenty of room for more children!"

The next week the decision was made to purchase the Baptist church, and four Apostolic Lutheran men tramped off to pay three Baptist ladies for their church. They greeted the Finns politely and with grace. After the polite small talk, our representatives handed over the agreed-upon price of \$200, but the Baptists suddenly smiled and shook their heads. "I'm sorry, but \$200 is quite difficult to divide between the three of us. Could you please just give us \$50 each, to make it easier for us?" Our thrifty Finns happily agreed.

The Articles of Association or By-Laws of the Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Congregation of New Ipswich, New Hampshire, were adopted August 29, 1939. The secretary wrote the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting in the Finnish language until about 1953.

The preachers in the forties were Emanuel Aho, Matti Aho, Frank Peltonen, Semmi Frigard, Arthur Hakala, Waino Hill, Arvo Korpi, Richard Niemala, and Huuko Pulkkinen. We often had visiting preachers from America and Finland. They would hold services in church and also in homes in Jaffrey, Dublin, Fitchburg, Maynard, Quincy and Cape Cod.

We had many precious services in this church. A short elderly lady, Pikku Hilda, would get up and walk up and down the aisle, waving her white handkerchief, rejoicing



and saying, "Jeesus ole Kiitettu! Jeesus ole Kiitettu!" which means "Jesus be thanked!" One dear Christian brother must be mentioned, namely "Uncle Bill" Somero. He was probably the most sincere Christian brother we had. If he had a burden, no matter how small, he often went up before the congregation and asked for forgiveness.

This church served us well for 36 years, but we outgrew it and started looking to relocate and upsize.

#### **Goen Road Church**

The Goen Road Church was built by the members and Seppala and Aho. The original building size was 50' x 100.' In 1986 we built a 43' x 56' addition, a new entryway and additional toilets.



The first service was held on Sunday, July 23, 1972, over 41 years ago. The first speaker was Semmi Frigard, followed by Roy Davidson. John Paana and Carl Kulla spoke in the evening. At that time we had 6 speakers: Matti Aho, Semmi Frigard, Wilfred Sikkila, Bernie Lampinen, Walter Aho, and Waino Hill. The first morning service was a translated service from Finnish to English; it changed to all English in 1989 when our elder members who understood Finnish best passed away.

In 1977 a large group came from Finland and Sweden for big meetings in Laurium, Michigan. Before they left, we had all-day services in New Ipswich. We had several speakers and there was much rejoicing. It was wonderful to see Lars Simberg, a 6'-7" Swedish boy, jumping in the aisle praising God!

We have eight elected speaking brothers: Gary Bertram, Ed Estola, Tim Ojala, Bernie Lampinen, Paul Seppala, Wilfred Sikkila, Al Traffie and Mike Traffie. We conduct Sunday school classes with about 180 children before our morning service starts. Confirmation classes have been held for 76 years or more, and were in Finnish until about 1944.

We seek the Lord's future blessings for our speakers and our congregation of about 500 members. The Lord has blessed us and we wish to thank Him. ~

## **Hear and Your Soul Shall Live**

*Pastor Chuck Bylkas  
South Range, Michigan*

**Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.**

**Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.**

**Isaiah 55:1-11**

**D**uring the time of the Reformation, Martin Luther sought to correct some of the abuses in the church by bringing it back under the authority of God's Word. Luther understood that the problems within the church were a result of a departure from the teachings of the Holy Scripture. This is no less true in the church today. As the Body of Christ seeks to minister to the various concerns of a fallen world, our temptation is to listen to reason or emotion, rather than to the voice of God.

In the midst of the turmoil, God continues to cry out: *Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live...* God's Word gives life to all who hear in faith. It does so because all of Scripture points us to the Living Word, Jesus Christ. It is the redemption by His blood that gives life and salvation for sinful mankind.

*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* As both a preacher and hearer of the Gospel, this second promise gives great comfort to me. It means that God's Word will bear fruit regardless of the skills or efforts of the preacher, or the understanding of the hearer. God has the power to minister to us in this marvelous way through the power of His glorious Word. May God grant us grace to hearken unto the voice of the Good Shepherd, so that we may hear and live. ~



STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP,  
MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION  
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Title of Publication: Christian Monthly; 2. Publication Number: 0009-5494; 3. Date of Filing: September 10, 2013; 4. Frequency of Issue: Monthly; 5. Number of Issues Annually: 12; 6. Annual Subscription Price, \$12.  
7. Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: PO Box 2126, Battle Ground, WA 98604; Contact Person: Anders Sundqvist; Telephone (360) 896-7344.  
8. Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: PO Box 2126, Battle Ground, WA 98604.  
9. Name and Address of Publisher: Apostolic Lutheran Book Concern, PO Box 2126, Battle Ground, WA 98604; Editor: Lois Matson, PO Box 2996, Battle Ground, WA 98604; Managing Editor: Lois Matson, PO Box 2996, Battle Ground, WA 98604.  
10. Owner: Apostolic Lutheran Book Concern, PO Box 2126, Battle Ground, WA 98604.  
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities: None.  
12. Tax Status: Has not changed during preceding 12 months.  
13. Publication Title: Christian Monthly.  
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data: September 2013.  
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation: Christian Devotional  
a. Total Number Copies Printed: Average Number of Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months, 316; Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 300.  
b. Paid Circulation: 1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions: Average, 220. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 226. 2) Paid In-County Subscriptions: Average, 36; Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 34. 3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, and Counter Sales: Average, 26; Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 21. 4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS. Average, 0. Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date: 0.  
c. Total Paid Distribution: Average, 282; Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 281.  
d. Free Distribution by Mail: 1) Outside-County, 0; 2) In-County, 0; 3) Other Classes, 0; 4) Free Distribution Outside the Mail: Average, 0; Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 0.  
e. Total Free Distribution: Average, 0; Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 0.  
f. Total Distribution: Average, 282; Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 281.  
g. Copies Not Distributed. Average, 34; Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 19.  
h. Total: Average, 316; Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date, 300.  
j. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation: Average: 100%; Single Issue Nearest to Filing Date: 100%.  
16. Publication of Statement of Ownership: October 2013.  
I certify that all information above is true and complete.

Anders Sundqvist, Business Manager

# Preface to the New Testament

Martin Luther

**A**S THE OLD TESTAMENT is a book in which have been recorded the Law and commandments of God, together with the history of both those who kept them and those who did not keep them, so the New Testament is a book in which have been recorded the Gospel and the promises of God, together with the history of those who believed them and those who did not believe them. For the term *Gospel* is a Greek term; its German meaning is: a goodly message, glad tidings, good news, a good report, of which men speak and sing in cheerful strains. As, for instance, when David had conquered the great Goliath, a good report, or the good news, circulated among the Jewish people that their worst enemy was slain and that they had been delivered and restored to happiness and peace. So the Gospel of God and the New Testament are glad tidings and report, which were spread throughout the world by the apostles, concerning One who was a true David, fighting against sin, death and the devil and conquering them and by His victory redeeming, justifying, quickening, saving and restoring to peace with God, all those who were in bondage under sin, tormented by death, and overcome by the devil, and causing them to sing, thank and praise God and rejoice forever, provided they firmly believe it and remain steadfast in this faith.



This report and comforting message, these divine evangelical glad tidings, are also called a *new testament*, because, as in a testament, by which a dying person disposes of his goods and orders them to be distributed among his appointed heirs after his death, Christ, prior to His death, has given command and directions to proclaim this Gospel throughout the world after His death, therewith bestowing upon believers, as their possession, all His goods, to wit, His life, by which He has swallowed up death, His righteousness, by which He has wiped out sin, and His salvation, by which He has defeated eternal damnation.

Now, a poor human being that is dead in sins and consigned to hell cannot be told anything more precious than this blessed, lovely message concerning Christ. If he believes that it is true, he must rejoice in his heart of hearts and be glad...

The Gospel, then, is nothing else than preaching concerning Christ, the Son of God and David's son, true God and man, who by His death and resurrection has overcome sin, death and hell for all those who believe in Him. Accordingly, the Gospel may be set forth in a brief or in a long statement by various writers. An extensive account is given by the four evangelists, who recount many works and words of Christ. A brief account is given, for instance, by Peter and Paul, who do not describe the activities of Christ, but indicate briefly how He, by His death and resurrection, has conquered death and hell for those who believe in Him.

See, then, that you do not make Christ a new Moses or His Gospel a book of law or instruction, as has been done heretofore in some prefaces that have been written to the New Testament, also by St. Jerome. For the Gospel, properly so called, does not require our works for making us godly and serving us; yea, it abominates our works. On the contrary, it demands we believe in Christ, namely, that He has conquered sin, death and hell for us and makes us godly, quickens and saves us, not by our works,

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**Christian Monthly** Vol. LXIX—No. 10

Subscription Rate: 1 Year

US: \$12 (Washington residents add your local sales tax)

Canada: \$18 (US money order only) Foreign: \$25

Send articles for publication to:  
Lois Matson, Editor  
Email: [cm@apostoliclutheran.org](mailto:cm@apostoliclutheran.org)  
Phone: (360) 904-6951  
Postal Mail to:  
CHRISTIAN MONTHLY  
PO Box 2996  
Battle Ground, WA 98604 USA

Address subscriptions, payments,  
and Book Concern orders to:  
Anders & Clara Sundqvist, Managers  
THE BOOK CONCERN  
PO Box 2126  
Battle Ground, WA 98604 USA  
Phone: (360) 896-7344  
Email: [books@apostoliclutheran.org](mailto:books@apostoliclutheran.org)

**Apostolic Lutheran Church of America**

[www.apostoliclutheran.org](http://www.apostoliclutheran.org)

Western Mission: [western@apostoliclutheran.org](mailto:western@apostoliclutheran.org)

Eastern Mission: [eastern@apostoliclutheran.org](mailto:eastern@apostoliclutheran.org)

Foreign Mission: [foreign@apostoliclutheran.org](mailto:foreign@apostoliclutheran.org)

The *Christian Monthly* (ISSN 0009-5494) is published monthly for \$12 per year by the Apostolic Lutheran Book Concern, 19113 NE 144th Street, Brush Prairie, WA 98606. Periodical permit paid in Brush Prairie, Washington.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: PO Box 2126, Battle Ground, WA 98604

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Christian Monthly

October 2013



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but by His works and His suffering and dying, so that we may appropriate His death and victory as if we had achieved it ourselves.

The many commandments and instructions, however, and expositions of the Law which Christ in the Gospel and also Peter and Paul have given, are to be received like all other works and blessings of Christ. Knowing the works and history of Christ is not yet knowing the true Gospel; for that does not embrace the knowledge that He has conquered sin, death and the devil. Even so, knowing the doctrine and commandments recorded in the New Testament is not yet knowing the Gospel; but this is the Gospel, when you hear the voice which tells you that Christ is your own with His life, teaching, works, dying, rising from death, and everything that He is, has, does and is able to do.

Accordingly, He is not compelling men, but invites them with kind words: "Blessed are the poor," etc. The apostles use terms like these: "I exhort, I beseech, I pray you." All of which shows that the Gospel is not a law-book, but, properly speaking, a sermon concerning the blessings of Christ, given us to have as our own if we believe. Moses, however, in his writings drives, compels, threatens, beats and chastises men in a horrible fashion; for he is a writer and enforcer of the Law.

That is the reason why no law is given to believers to make them righteous in the sight of God, as St. Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:9, for the believer is made righteous, is quickened, and is saved by Christ. Nothing is required of him but that he manifest his faith by his works. Indeed, when there is faith, it cannot be constrained; it manifests itself, it breaks forth in good works, it confesses and teaches the Gospel publicly and risks its life in doing so. All that a believer does during his life is made to tend to the advantage of his fellow-men and their aid; not only that his fellow-men may also obtain the grace of the Gospel, but also that he follows the example of Christ and sacrifice his life, possessions and honor for others as Christ has done for him. That is what Christ means when at the end of His life He gave His disciples no other commandment than this, that they love one another, telling them that thereby men would see who were His disciples and sincere believers. For faith, unless it breaks forth in works of love, is not genuine, and in such persons the Gospel has not yet taken root, nor have they come to know Christ aright. Observe, therefore, and apply this when you read the New Testament, that you may be sensible that you read it rightly. ~

**L**INA SANDELL was born October 3, 1832, at Fröderyd, her father being the parish pastor at that place. She was a frail child who preferred to spend hours in her father's study rather than join her comrades in play. When she was twenty-six years old, she accompanied him on a journey to Gothenburg, but they never reached their destination. At Hästholmen the vessel on which they sailed gave a sudden lurch and the father fell overboard, drowning before the eyes of his devoted daughter.



This tragedy proved a turning point in Lina Sandell's life. In the midst of her grief she sought comfort in writing hymns. Her songs seemed to pour forth in a steady stream from the depths of a broken heart. Fourteen of her hymns were published anonymously the same year (1858). Although she lived to write 650 hymns in all, these fourteen from the pen of the grief-stricken 26-year-old girl have retained a stronger hold on the hearts of her countrymen than most of her later productions. Among these "first-fruits" born in sorrow is this hymn:

Children of the heav'nly Father  
Safely in His bosom gather;  
Nestling bird nor star in Heaven  
Such a refuge e'er was given.

God His own doth tend and nourish;  
In His holy courts they flourish;  
From all evil things He spares them;  
In His mighty arms He bears them.

Neither life nor death shall ever  
From the Lord His children sever;  
Unto them His grace He showeth,  
And their sorrows all He knoweth.

Though He giveth or He taketh,  
God His children ne'er forsaketh;  
His the loving purpose solely  
To preserve them pure and holy.

Lo, their very hairs He numbers,  
And no daily care encumbers  
Them that share His ev'ry blessing  
And His help in woes distressing.

Praise the Lord in joyful numbers:  
Your Protector never slumbers.  
At the will of your Defender  
Ev'ry foeman must surrender.

*Story of Our Hymns*