

## In Memoriam

AARON E. KOPF

1926 - 1963

OUR LORD'S promise, "Because I live ye shall live also," had a memorable fulfillment in the lifetime of our sainted friend and colleague, Aaron Kopf.

He lived—for years in ill health—fully and intensely pursuing the work of building the Church of Jesus Christ as an educator, church musician, educational administrator, counselor, and secretary of our Synod's Board of Stewardship. His poetic and artistic talent was an integral part of his service, wholeheartedly dedicated to the goal he described in a poem written in February, 1959 when he was well aware of living in the valley of the shadow.

O Christ, I want to die!

Please take me home. I plead with plaintive sigh.

This world's so desolate, so bleak; I see

Men everywhere who have forsaken Thee!

Would that my earthly pilgrimage would cease.

Satanic armies all around increase—

Rebels, cursing and denying God

And, as dumb beast, they ever onward trod

Into the muck and quagmire of despair—

Into a black eternity.

Does no one care?

Have all joined with these wretched souls: hell-bent,

Voluptuous, sensual, seeking self-content,

Yet knowing all the while their search for bliss

Will take them to a certain, damned abyss?

But why? Why don't these people turn aside?

Are they all ignorant of the suicide

Their egotism brings?

Did no one tell

These souls they can escape the throes of hell?

Ah, now, dear Lord, shamefacedly I see

My life is but an opportunity

To be a courier of Thy saving Word.

How can they know of Thee if they've not heard?

I must speak to each foolish fugitive!

Oh Christ, I want to live!

One of Aaron Kopf's deepest wishes, born of the faith that Christ lived in him, was that men would yield their hearts to the life of God in Christ and become living temples of God's love. That

wish found expression in another work entitled *Cantus Firmus*, inspired by II Timothy 2:21.

If man can take some impure ore from out the ground,  
Remove the dross from it, and shape it long and round,  
And, with a gust of wind, produce such beauteous sound;

Must not the mighty, rushing Wind of God in me  
Take this vile dust and, cleansed by Christ, then  
    mold it, free  
To sound forth praises to His name with ecstasy?

If pipes, when juxtaposed, make up an instrument  
And skillfully some organist controls each vent,  
What great, melodic harmonies are heavenward sent!

If all of us who know Christ's love with one accord  
Would, through God's Spirit, join in praises to our Lord,  
How beautiful and heavenly could be that chord!

The beauty, though, depends upon who plays the keys—  
If lives and deeds are tuned to men's philosophies  
Discordant and confused come forth the melodies.

But if Christ's law of selfless love designs the tone,  
And His own cantus firmus guides men's hearts alone,  
What perfect concerts then ascend God's wondrous throne!

God ministered graciously to us through our brother, and in his life we beheld the power and value of God's promise. May the fulfillment of that promise, and of Aaron Kopf's poetic prayer, find an echo in the lives of all who, above all else, desire to be like our brother—"A vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the Master of the House, ready for any good work."

Curtis E. Huber