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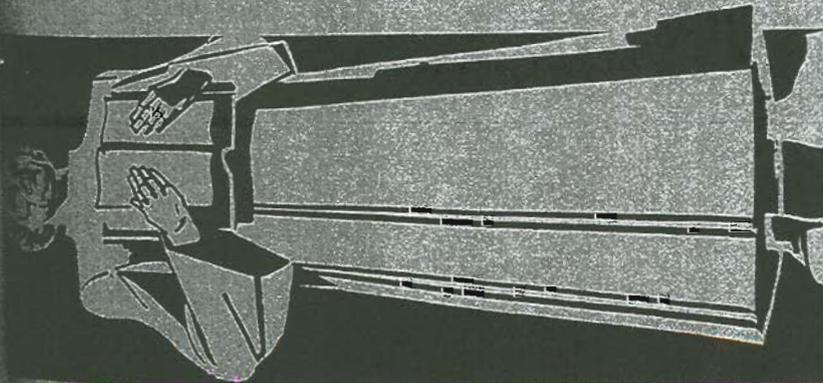
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VOL. XXXVI • NO. 3

DECEMBER, 1972



And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us . . .

IN THE NAME OF HIM WHO BECAME A LITTLE CHILD
THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

JOHN D. FRITZ

It means, of course, that Jesus, the eternal Word of God, came down to earth and assumed human form. Became a man of real flesh and blood like you and me. That He was born an infant of a virgin in a place meant for the housing of beasts, not babies. That He nursed at His mother's breast. That He grew up as our children do. That He took His first steps and spoke His first word. That He stretched into teenage years and strode into manhood. That He got broken nails and hard callouses. That He lived among people like us up to and through Calvary until His ascension into heaven.

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. I guess we take that for granted every Christmas season. That He dwelt among us. But, as someone has suggested, what might have happened should He have disappeared soon after He was born? If He had returned to heaven with the choirs of holy angels that first Christmas night? Or what if the Word made flesh had withdrawn from the world of common man and lived the life of a recluse in complete detachment from life and the world and the problems of ordinary human beings? Then, of course, not much would have happened. To say the least we would not have had a "Savior-man" with whom we could identify and who was identified so closely with us. Who knew definitively all that sin and time and death could do to us.

But that didn't happen, thanks be to God! The Word dwelt among us. He became real flesh and lived among men. And the men with whom He lived were just like us, human, altogether sinfully human. It was with them the Word ate and drank and prayed and cried and worked and spoke. He watched them casting out their nets for a draught of fish. Sowing seed, pruning vines, shepherding flocks, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage. He noted their simple joys and their heartbreaking sorrows. He watched the children playing wedding and funeral in the marketplace. He knew the travail of a woman in labor and the joy that filled her heart when a child was born into the world. He met and healed people who suffered from revolting and disgusting diseases. He talked with the social outcasts who could never call anyone friend. He cuddled little children. He touched the blue and icy hands of a corpse. He comforted the mourners. And He wept.

What is more, the Word that became flesh never remained detached or aloof from any of the experiences of the people among whom He dwelt. He participated in all the affairs of men. He helped all kinds of people and blessed little children and soothed the hearts of the bereaved. He revealed to people the **mysteries** and the glories of the Kingdom of God. He taught men how to pray and for what to

pray. He castigated the hypocrites. He broke into tears at the thoughts that came with death of His friend, Lazarus, and at the contemplation of the fate of Jerusalem. He healed every manner of disease. He raised the dead. He suffered and died the death of a common criminal. He went through hell for all of us to redeem us from sin, and death, and hell; and rose again to grant us His blessed presence forever. All that and more is included in the terse statement, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us . . ."

Remember Dr. Martin Luther saying, "Behold God's Son lies in the manger, draws milk from His mother's breast, lies in bed, fetches the axe for His father, and wood and cheese and bread for His mother. When John leaned on the Master's bosom, He leaned on the bosom of God. When He and other disciples heard the Master's voice, they heard the voice of God."

And the Word which became flesh dwells among us, too! Right here in this company of sinner/saints. Right in His body, the Church, for His Church is made up of people like us. People upon whom God has staked His claim in Holy Baptism. People like us, who by the power of the Spirit in the Word believe Him to be victorious Savior and everliving Lord. People like us who love and worship Him in the one-hundred-and-one ways we go about our daily tasks.

The Word made flesh talks to us again today through the holy writings of the Scripture. Through each other, too, when we minister God's grace to each other and share our glorious faith in Him. Today we sense His presence in every baptism, in every celebration of the eucharist, in every faithful preaching of the Word, in every absolution that conveys to the penitent the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the Father, the Father who for His Son's sake accepts us and forgives us and loves us to the end.

And that is precisely why the Word was made flesh . . . to die for our sins according to the Scriptures and on the third day rise again. To grant people like us forgiveness for every writhing sin. The Word was made flesh that through the forgiveness of sins which He wrought for us with the shedding of His blood we might be free and clean and holy and thankful again.

The Word was made flesh and came into this world of sin as a baby, coming into this world and into our lives in a rude and smelly stable. He came to Mary and Joseph, to the shepherds and the wise men. And He comes to us again this Christmastide. He comes to us one by one, in the ordinary places of life and in ordinary times. And He comes to people of high and low degree, but He comes always in person.

He is so close to His people, between them and among them and in them. Yes, the miracle of the birth of the Son of God is once again alive. And the Gospel of His love for us spreads and encircles the globe.

We call Him, Immanuel, God with us! And He has freed us and kept us from sin and we call Him Savior! He has released us from the slavery of our passions and we call Him Redeemer! He teaches us the love of the Father and we call Him Rabbi! And He

molds and masters our lives and we call Him Lord! He walks with us through the valley of the Shadow and we call Him Resurrected Brother, the Captain of our faith! He prepares a place in heaven for us, and we call Him Author and Finisher of our faith.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us so that again this Christmastide we might hear the blessing of the message of the angels and feel the great flowing river of eternal joy springing up in our hearts as we marvel at the love of God for people like us.

I guess that's about all I want to say this morning. Soon we shall come again to the snow and the lights and the hymns and the trees and the presents and the love—to everything that Christmas is and everything that Christmas means for us by the grace of God. We shall hasten to the manger, to the Child and to the acceptance by the Father which He brings. It will be good for us to have that again by the grace of the Word made flesh. It will be good for us to know again that the Word made flesh became just that—because He loves us so much He would not let us live on the earth without Him—because He loves us so much that He would not live in heaven without us.

God keep you strong in that love. Have a merry Christmas.

Advent, 1971

Editorial Policy

In addition to expressions by faculty members, *The Springfielder* has carried and will continue to carry significant theological comments from other theologians. Selection of such articles depends upon availability, space and obviously subjective value judgments. Publication of such articles does not constitute blanket agreement with or approval of the total content. Nor does it preclude deliberate editorial disagreement or response in the same issue or subsequent issues. Also, in such cases, the norms are Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. We are well aware that according to section 11.153c of Synod's *Handbook*, "Each of the Synod's terminal schools is accountable to the Synod through its respective president and Board of Control for the content of its professional journals and publications which are not the official publications of the Synod. The members of the editorial board of such publications shall serve as its doctrinal reviewers."

THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE