

♩ Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold

Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh darein
Martin Luther, 1523
Tr. composite

8.7. 8.7. 8.8.7.

ACH GOTT VOM HIMMEL
Erfurt Enchiridion, 1524

1 O Lord, look down from heav'n, be - hold, And let Thy pi - ty
2 They teach a false and i - dle word Which their own wits have
3 God sure - ly will up - root the ones Who with their lies en -
4 There - fore saith God, "I must a - rise, The poor see de - va -

wak - en; How few are we with - in Thy fold, Thy wretch - ed
found - ed; Their hearts are not with one ac - cord On God's pure
close - us And who with bold and haugh - ty tongues Say, "Who would
sta - tion And un - to Me have come their sighs, I've heard their

saints for - sak - en. Thy Word is no - where kept a - right, And faith is
doc - trine ground - ed. Each seeks in his own way to guide, And so Thy
dare op - pose - us? We have the right and might a - lone, What we de -
la - men - ta - tion. My sav - ing Word up - on the plain Shall fight My

quenched and veiled in night A - mong all A - dam's child - ren.
peo - ple they di - vide, Though fair be their ap - pear - ance.
ter - mine shall be done, Who then shall be our mas - ter?"
foes with might and main, The poor with strength up - hold - ing."

5 As silver sev'n times tried by fire
Is found right purely shining,
So doth God's Word our trust require
Until its full refining.
When through the cross it shall be tried,
Then shall its strength and light abide
As in all lands it shineth.

6 Preserve Thy Word e'er pure and free
From this vile generation,
And keep us subject unto Thee,
Safe from their infiltration.
The goddess ev'rywhere abound,
Where'er such wicked men are found
Exalted midst Thy people.

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MARTIN LUTHER prepared the hymn "O Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold (*Ach Gott vom Himmel, sieh darein*)" late in the year 1523 as a metrical setting of Psalm 12. It was included in the first Lutheran hymnal, the "Achtliederbuch" of 1524, where, together with the Psalm settings "The Mouth of Fools May Say Indeed (*Es spricht der Unweisen Mund wohl*)" and "From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee (*Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir*)," it was assigned the tune "Es ist das Heil," now associated chiefly with the hymn "Salvation unto Us Has Come (*Es ist das Heil uns kommen her*)." The present tune appeared with this text later that same year in the Erfurt Enchiridion and has been associated with it ever since.

While Luther's paraphrase closely follows the text of the Psalm on which it is based, Luther is quick to apply the ancient Psalm to his own day. The plaintive cry of the Psalmist is applied to conditions prevailing during the early days of the Reformation, when it was by no means certain that the Evangelical doctrine would survive the attacks and persecutions of Rome. The "flattering lips" and "proud tongues" of the Psalm become the false teachers of Luther's day, who deceive the people into accepting the doctrine of salvation by works, and who impress the simple with their outward show of learning.

"O Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold" is not included in the *Lutheran Service Book*, but it appears in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 1941, No. 260, in a composite translation based chiefly upon that found in Leonard Woolsey Bacon, *Dr. Martin Luther's Deutsche Geistliche Lieder*, 1884, which is itself an altered version of the translation of Frances Elizabeth Cox, *Sacred Hymns from the German*, 1841. The text as found in *The Lutheran Hymnal* is, however, copyright 1941 Concordia Publishing House and so could not be used for the Free Lutheran Chorale-Book. A new composite translation has therefore been prepared for the Free Lutheran Chorale-Book, based upon Woolsey and Cox, as well as upon the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*, 1931, No. 278, "O God, from Heaven Look Down and See," together with some new material. The musical setting is taken from the *Mehrstimmiges Choralbuch*, 1906, No. 5, adjusted to match the original form of the melody. The text and music here provided may be freely used and reproduced for any purpose whatever, and are offered with the prayer that they may serve for the edification of Christian people everywhere.

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