



## All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall

**Text: Lazarus Spengler (1479-1534)**

**Tune: Louis Bourgeois (1510-1561)**

Lutherans confess that our hymnody is more than just a time to sing. When we sing hymns, we are singing the faith. This confessional role of hymnody has always been acknowledged by the Church. As proof that our hymns truly make a confession, even the Book of Concord, the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, use a hymn to assert a point in the Formula of Concord's article on Original Sin. The hymn honored as confessing so succinctly that it deserved a place in the Book of Concord is "All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall."



Lazarus Spengler

This hymn was written by Lazarus Spengler. Spengler was born March 13, 1479, the ninth of 21 children born to his parents, Georg and Agnes. His father was the Clerk of the Imperial Court of Justice in Nürnberg. Spengler entered the University of Leipzig in 1494. However, when his father died in December 1496, he returned to Nürnberg and began working in the town clerk's office. By 1507 he advanced to the position of Town Clerk and by 1516 was the *Rathsherr*, a position equivalent to the chairman of the town council.

In 1518, when Martin Luther was passing through Nürnberg going to Augsburg, Spengler and Luther met. Spengler eagerly adopted the Reformation doctrines, and in 1519 authored an extensive work in Luther's favor, and in that way became one of the leaders of the Reformation work in Nürnberg. When Pope Leo X issued *Exsurge Domine*, the Bull excommunicating Luther, in June 1520, Spengler was also included by name. Though Johannes Eck,

Pope Leo X's emissary, urged the Town Council of Nürnberg to hand over Spengler, they ignored the Bull and Eck and sent Spengler to represent them at the Diet of Worms in April 1521. In 1525, Spengler worked with Luther and Philipp Melancthon to convert Nürnberg's monastery into a Lutheran *gymnasium* (the equivalent of an honors high school).

Spengler was very interested in the Church's Liturgy. After much work with Luther, in 1532 Spengler was able to have an authorized Liturgy and Agenda (book of Church Rites; a *Kirchenordnung*) printed. He was also a prolific writer of poetry, both sacred and secular, though only two known hymns are ascribed to him.

The version of "All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall" that Spengler wrote and what we know today are very different. The modern equivalent of this hymn was a translation by Matthias Loy, for the 1880 *Lutheran Hymnal* of the Ohio Synod. When Loy translated the hymn, he made a *free translation*, a translation that is more of a paraphrase, capturing the essence of the hymn, rather than a literal translation. Nevertheless, it is still a superb hymn. On it, *Julian's Dictionary of Hymnology* writes, "During the Reformation period it attained a wide popularity as a didactic and confessional hymn of the Evangelical faith. It is one of the most characteristic hymns of the time, conceived in the spirit of deep and earnest piety, eminently Scriptural, and setting forth the Reformation teachings in concise form."

"All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall" is very catechetical, teaching the severity of our Original Sin, the bane that descends from sire to son (st. 1). But from this Original Sin flows Actual Sin, sin that proceeds "from hearts depraved, to evil prone" (st. 3). Mired completely in sin, we neither find nor seek heaven, but rather seek our own pleasure. But into this world of sin, "to bear our sin and woe and shame" came Christ, the second Adam (st. 4). Just as, "by one man all mankind fell," "by one Man, who took our place, we all received the gift of grace" (st. 5). By Christ's death and resurrection, forgiveness is ours, and He attends us with His grace "until we reach our journey's end" (st. 6).